DECOLONIAL PORTRAiture: CHALLENGING COLonIALITY AND RE-IMAGINING SOCiaL WORK EDUCATION

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by
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August, 2020
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Dedication

This is dedicated to all of the people who put their lives in harm’s way to protect the earth from nuclear testing, oil pipelines, and thirty meter telescopes. This is dedicated to all of the people who held drumming circles, sang, danced, cooked food, and prayed for unity and peace.

This is also dedicated to all of the troublemakers, the oppositional and defiant ones, the dissenters and whistleblowers, and all those folks who stirred it up. I’m talking about the folks who just wouldn’t keep quiet. The people who wouldn’t take it anymore. The communities who are fed up. The workers who revolted and went on strike. The protestors who screamed and chanted and marched and occupied. The activists who set all the animals free from factory farms, cages, and experimenting labs of torture. The students who organized, strategized, and risked it all to show us what power is.

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Preface

Indigenization: Land Acknowledgment is Critical for Research Work

I begin my project by acknowledging the land and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. I am conducting the majority of this project on the traditional and ancestral lands of the Tataviam Tribe (Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, 2018). The Tataviam Tribe’s commitment and fight for sovereignty and land is a clear example of resilience, self-determination, decolonization, and indigenization. I have been honored to work and collaborate with members of the Tataviam on community event projects and feel humbled to have the opportunity to listen and learn from them.

Beginning with land acknowledgement brings into focus the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and is consistent with an indigenizing process and practice that centers indigenous knowledge, and perspectives (Smith, 2012; Morelli, Mataira, & Kaulukukui, 2013) thereby de-linking from the dominant Western paradigm (Mignolo, 2009). It also unsettles settler colonial logics of land ownership and other colonial narratives that attempt to eliminate Indigenous peoples.

Reflection on the Use of the Word Indigenous

While I have been shaped and influenced by Indigenous traditions, knowledges, wisdoms, and philosophies (Wilson, 2013), simultaneously I recognize the strengths and limitations of using the word Indigenous (Smith, 2012). The use of the word “Indigenous” has the potential to overgeneralize and lump all Indigenous peoples into one category, thereby erasing complexity and diversity. That is to say, I am aware of how settler colonialism has created single-stories (Adichie, 2009) that essentialize Indigenous peoples’ spirituality, identity, customs, rituals, knowledge, language, and dress (Barker, 2011; Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, &
Hetherington, 2013; Pewewardy, 2004; Smith, 2012; Yellow Bird, 2004). Smith (2012) explains how the term ‘indigenous’ has taken on different meanings over time as a way to meaningfully bring Indigenous peoples together. Smith (2012) writes:

the world’s indigenous populations belong to a network of peoples. They share experiences as peoples who have been subjected to the colonization of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty, by a colonizing society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives, even after it has formally pulled out. (p. 7)

My intention is to remain mindful and recognize the diversity and complexity of Indigenous perspectives globally. My hope is that through dialogue with MSW educators who are challenging coloniality, this research project can link with the critical anticolonial scholarship toward a re-imagined social work education.

Social Location of Self in a Research Project

"It's my first day teaching," I say to her, "Give me some advice."

"Two things," she says, "One: know all their names by tomorrow. Two: It's more important that they know you than that they know what ya know." (Boyle, 2010, p. 54)

The quote from Father Gregory Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries, “the largest gang intervention, rehab, and reentry program on the planet” (Boyle, 2017, p. 3), demonstrates the central importance of relationships in the work we do. Father Boyle’s quote goes beyond people knowing about our accolades, accomplishments, research grants and awards. He is saying that to be known requires vulnerability and humility, along with a belief in mutuality—"a focused, balanced, attention to the person in front of us" (Boyle, 2017, p. 188). As teachers, we are often
positioned as the holders of all “knowledge,” in the classroom; we might embrace such a position only to become the “sage on the stage” who in many ways is “unknowable” to the students.

However, this stance may interfere with the practice of mutuality, and thus reaffirm a Westernized “machine universe” (Wheatley, 2006, p. 31) devoted to objectivity, individualism, and the preservation of boundaries/borders. Wheatley (2006) points out that for 300 years Western explanations to make sense of reality have been totally incorrect as they fail to understand what Indigenous people have known forever and what quantum physics is just now confirming—“None of us exists independent of our relationships with others” (p. 35). Or as Indigenous researcher Shawn Wilson (2013) explains, “We are not just in relationships, we are relationships. And so is everything else in the cosmos” (p. 314). Therefore, maybe what matters most in the work we do is that people know us, that we are known within a spirit of mutuality and relationship.

Thus, I begin my project by honoring our connection to one another, with the hope and aim of establishing relationship with you, the reader. Chilisa (2012) and Wilson (2008) each describe this process of centering relationship as part of an indigenizing research methodology that aims to re-center Indigenous principles of being, while de-linking from Western research notions of objectivity and neutrality. This research project is of special importance for me, as it allows opportunity to extend the learning from theoretical to personal. While on this journey of inquiry to better understand the efforts of educators in the social work profession, I am also on a journey that opened up areas of family history previously unknown. I view this project as a pathway to learning, struggling with, complicating, and reclaiming family ancestral connections and knowledges.
I locate myself within the scope of this project to be accountable to the ways that I have unearned benefits resulting from historical and contemporary social-political-cultural operations of power (Raheim, 2004). I identify as a multi-ethnic person of color, cisgender, a heterosexual male (gender pronouns he/him/his), upper-middle income, hearing, temporarily able-bodied, a U.S. citizen, and currently pursuing a doctorate degree. I am the oldest of four children (I have a younger brother and 2 younger sisters). My mother was born in the United States and identifies as Mexican and Italian American. My father was born in the Philippines and identifies as Filipino and Native American. We are enrolled members of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz located in the western and southern regions of Oregon, and our ancestors are from the Galice Creek and Rogue Rivers Tribes. Our language is Siletz Dee-Ni or Siletz Athabaskan.

The effects of colonialism are evident throughout both sides of my family history and have resulted in unspeakable traumas, undiscovered familial relations, loss of language, ritual, custom, and knowledge; simultaneously, my family has also received the material benefits of colonialism, conferring advantages within an overlapping matrix of capitalist, cis-hetero-patriarchal, Christian, citizenship, ableist, audist hierarchies. I cannot separate what I have inherited, but I can work to be answerable to my family and ancestors who were the victims of land theft and military takeover in the Philippines and the United States, boarding schools, discriminatory immigration and housing policies, and heterosexist and heteropatriarchal domination in the home, school, and work. In some way, I hope I can honor their sacrifice to ensure I would have benefits they could not imagine or access.
Getting Oriented: Mixtape/Collage Format of this Dissertation,
A Poem by José Paez

“The selective approach provides the essential conditions for creative freedom, uh-oh”
“Return of the Loop Digga” by Quasimoto (Madlib, 2000)

I use the lyrics from Loop Digga to open this section,
the influence of Madlib sparked my reflection,
the intentional design, display, and direction,
to organize this research in respect of the connection.

“The selective approach provides the essential conditions for creative freedom, uh-oh”

It’s always relational, you are my other me,
Enacting In Lak’Ech, men-ta-li-ty.
Close eyes, center mind, inhale and breathe.
Exhale, slowly, and say I am we.

I am because we are, we are because I am.
Ubuntu principle connects the whole fam.
Kapwa virtue, together with the person,
All my relations, Mitakuye oyasin.

“The selective approach provides the essential conditions for creative freedom, uh-oh”

Coloniality is the effort to control and suppress
While knowledge is reduced to what they can test
Borders imposed to forbid critical thinking
Generations of re-searchers colonize without blinking.

We’re supposed to have faith in imperial ways
Use their tools to repress and keep us under a western gaze.
But the truth has been out, we’ve known the smoke screen haze.
It’s nothing more than a racist colonial phase.

And those times are ending, we are no longer in a daze.
We organize to decolonize our minds out of this maze.

“The selective approach provides the essential conditions for creative freedom, uh-oh”

My ideas are informed by digging in the crates,
Library searching to build this mixtape.
Of multi. discipline. samples and breaks.
A rhythm of theory begins to formulate.
The material is presented in the style of collage,  
A portraiture aesthetic, an artistic barrage.  
Academic theory and knowledge from community  
Mixed with poetry, songs and visual imagery.

This project aims to subvert dominant paradigms of modernity.  
With stories and experiences that challenge coloniality.  
To reclaim imagination and regain collectivity.  
The intent is to live in infinite hope and possibility.

“The selective approach provides the essential conditions for creative freedom, uh-oh”

Poem written by José M. Paez
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ABSTRACT

DECOLONIAL PORTRAITURE: CHALLENGING COLONIALITY AND RE-IMAGINING SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

by

José Miguel Paez

Doctoral Candidate of Education in Educational Leadership

This study is a qualitative analysis of the experiences of Master of Social Work (MSW) educators who are engaged in challenging coloniality and re-imagining social work education. This project applied a multi-theoretical framework (coloniality, settler colonialism, decolonial, critical race theory (CRT), TribalCrit, and intersectionality), along with a multi-methodological approach (decolonial, portraiture, and arts-based) to understand their experiences as well as to identify applicable strategies. Additionally, a Community Advisory Board (CAB) composed of six social work practitioners, was created to provide community feedback related to the research process and to ensure researcher accountability. Fourteen MSW educators with extensive knowledge, scholarship, and lived experiences with coloniality were interviewed. The findings reveal that these MSW educators challenge coloniality and re-imagine social work education through five key themes:

- **Insistence**: Emphasizing the experiences of historical and present-day resistance to coloniality and demands for dignity and respect.

- **Persistence**: Illustrating the efforts to move forward despite coloniality, while restoring, renewing, and recovering what is needed for healing and empowerment.
• **Influence:** Applying multiple strategies used to disrupt the colonial consciousness within the classroom, while planting seeds for future growth.

• **Transformation:** Embracing radical pedagogical strategies that aim to transform the classroom into a space of liberation, healing, and community.

• **Connection:** Practicing and enacting their radical imaginations aimed at cultivating community and connection within social work education.

Collectively these themes tell an overarching story of power. The definition of power is inspired by American Indian poet, activist, and artist John Trudell’s (1980) speech titled *We Are Power*:

> Power. They can't stop the wind and they can't stop the rain. They can't stop the earthquake and the volcano and the tornado. They can't stop power. We are a spiritual connection to the earth. As individuals we have power and, collectively, we have the same power as the earthquake, the tornado, and the hurricanes. We have that potential. We have that connection.

Trudell’s definition describes natural elements of power—fire, land, wind, water, and spirituality, and the importance of interconnected relationships between people and the earth. To tell the story of these MSW educators as power, the natural elements were linked to the identified themes: Fire/Insistence, Land/Persistence, Wind/Influence, Water/Transformation, and Spirituality/Connection. Policy recommendations were developed based on the findings, and included increasing further support to MSW educators through critical pedagogical training, as well as strengthening the ongoing collaboration and effort to break down the walls between academia and community. Specifically, the call is for MSW educators to take the active steps now to develop and enact decolonizing and Indigenizing practices throughout all social work education.
Chapter 1: Hope in Dangerous Times

My project begins with, and continues to be sustained by, hope. I must believe this, there is no other option. I take my cue from James Baldwin who when asked if he was a pessimist, responded by saying, “I can’t be a pessimist, because I’m alive. To be a pessimist means you have agreed that human life is an academic matter, so I’m forced to be an optimist. I’m forced to believe that we can survive whatever we must survive” (Morgenthau III, 1963.) Baldwin’s words help me remember the hope my relatives and ancestors had during their lifetimes as they endured boarding schools and occupation. Their struggles were not “an academic matter” but a matter of survival sustained by optimism of future generations. Similarly, the inequity, inequality, and discrimination today cannot be reduced to strictly theoretical musings, nor relegated to spaces of academia to be discussed, debated, and dissected without producing material benefits to those most affected. This project is fueled by the countless people, communities, and collectives who despite unfavorable conditions continue to insist, persist and resist with hope and aspiration.

Indeed, at the moment of this writing our world is experiencing a deadly pandemic known as COVID-19, which has infected over 8 million people and killed over 400,000 worldwide (WHO, 2020). The pandemic has wreaked havoc disrupting every aspect of daily life, causing massive unemployment and economic crisis, and placing an increased strain upon physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. In particular, and not surprisingly, the communities and populations most affected by racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and other intersecting forms of oppression, have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, so do all the other pandemics of oppression. Specifically, the pandemic of racist policing and white supremacist violence rages on, resulting in the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man, Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old
Black woman, George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, and Rayshard Brooks, a 27-year-old Black man. Their killings ignited a global uprising and rebellion in which millions of people have taken to the streets, risking their physical health due to militarized police action, batons, tear gassing, rubber bullets, in addition to the possibility of catching a deadly virus. The people risked all of that to say Black Lives Matter, Say Her Name, Defund the Police, and Abolition Now! The protests echo generations of historical resistance to lack of police accountability, state sanctioned violence, hyper surveillance, discrimination, and unequal treatment under the law. While the escalated aggression and violence toward protestors has been grotesque, the protestors have persisted, showing us all what justice and hope look like.

With all of this happening, the current cultural and political climate can be described best with the words and knowledge of the great poet and author, James Baldwin. In 1963, Baldwin (1985) began his brilliant “Talk to Teachers,” by telling the audience “that we are living through a very dangerous time…We are in a revolutionary situation…” (p. 325). For Baldwin there were many dangers. One danger was the process of how our educational systems cause harm to Black people, specifically Black children, by teaching dominant myths, “fantasies created by very ill people,” (p. 332) that preserve white supremacy while absolving the violence and lasting consequences of slavery. This is the recipe for reproducing “a backward society” (p. 331) that denies the feelings, memories, experiences, and histories of Black people, while at the same time casting white people as “missionaries” (p. 330) to save and civilize Black children.

Baldwin (1985) argues the purpose of teaching should be the opposite. It should be to encourage critical interrogation of reality, acknowledge the lived experiences of those being oppressed, hold accountable the structures of power, and prepare Black children to fight racism, which he refers to as the “criminal conspiracy” that seeks “to destroy” Black people (p. 331).
Thus, Baldwin sees education, the classroom, as the revolutionary situation where teachers can be revolutionaries. He implores teachers to listen to Black children’s experiences especially those with racism and oppression; challenge the fiction of white supremacy and all other systems of supremacy; create space for dissent, critical thinking, and empowerment; and “liberate all those silent people so that they can breathe for the first time and tell you what they think of you” (p. 330). So great are the stakes, that Baldwin believes “[t]his is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change” (p. 326).

While Baldwin’s “Talk to Teachers” was delivered in 1963, his critique of education and his call to action for teachers are still relevant today. All along the way there have been activists, students, and teachers, who spoke truth to power, advancing radical visions of what education and teaching could become. bell hooks (1994), in her book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, echoes Baldwin’s revolutionary view about the classroom referring to it as “the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (p. 12). Baldwin’s hope for what teachers could become, is all at once inspiring and daunting; teaching bears the responsibility to shape thinking and spaces for transformation and justice. Similarly bell hooks (2003) envisions and pushes teachers to be daring, to build community and “mass based political movements” (p. xiii), and to create spaces for a “pedagogy of hope” (p. xiv) to renew our sense of relationality to one another.

I have had the privilege and honor to be a teacher and learner in a Master of Social Work (MSW) Department for eleven years. Always wanting to improve my skills and get closer to the visions of Baldwin and hooks, I have sought out the guidance, support, community, and knowledge from teachers and students across disciplines. I have been fortunate to know and learn from teachers and students who recognize the “revolutionary situation” (Baldwin, 1985, p.
and who seek to dismantle “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (hooks, 2003, p. 30) and other intersecting systems of domination (e.g. cis-sexism, ableism, audism, sanism). They are uncompromising in their vision to disrupt and challenge coloniality and settler colonialism in order to build a transformative, radical educational experience centered in healing, community, equity, hope, and love. Their practice has inspired and nurtured me, challenging me to re-think and un-learn the ways I hold power and privilege. They have invited me into spaces, where together we have created communities rooted in mutuality, respect, accountability, resource sharing, and ongoing support. It is within the spirit of building community and hope, that this project begins.

**Problem Statement**

To begin this section, I will illustrate the broader context of coloniality and discuss the importance of naming systems of domination. I will offer definitions of key terms, describing the grip that coloniality has held on education. Finally, I will provide an analysis of the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality within social work practice. This naming, confronting, and disrupting is revolutionary work and at the center of this qualitative research project, which aims to identify and understand the experiences of MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality within their classrooms in order re-imagine social work education.

**Broader Context**

Taken from a collection of his writings from 1948-1985, Baldwin’s statement that we are living in “dangerous times” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 325) is just as relevant today as it was almost 60 years ago. For instance, there has been an increase of hate crimes based on race, religion, and sexual orientation in the U.S. in the last three years (FBI, 2018), a 77% increase “of white
supremacist propaganda efforts targeting college campuses, including the distribution of racist, anti-Semitic and Islamophobic fliers, stickers, banners and posters” (ADL, 2019a, para. 1) and 182% rise of “white supremacist propaganda” off campus (ADL, 2019b, para. 2). Additionally, rapidly rising global temperatures threaten oceans, rainforests, and all of living beings (Masson-Delmotte, et al., 2018), while “worrisome nuclear trends” (Mecklin, 2019, p. 3) put the doomsday clock to “two minutes to midnight” (Mecklin, 2019, p. 2). Finally, increasing pressures to appease neoliberal agendas—normalized under the guise of free markets, free choice, and entrepreneurship (Chomsky, 1999; Darder, 2012)—are transforming essentially every aspect of human life into commodified markets for profit (Harvey, 2005).

As is most often the case, this “‘modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system’” (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 4) has disproportionate impact on Indigenous people, poor people, and the environment. For example, although 3.8 billion people globally have seen their wealth decline at the same time important social services, healthcare, and education are being underfunded, billionaires continue to see their wealth increase dramatically (Oxfam, 2019). Furthermore, according to the Food Security Information Network (2019) Global Report on Food Crises, war, conflicts, economic instability, and severe climate changes have combined to create conditions that leave over 113 million people in 53 countries experiencing severe hunger, lack of nutrition; African countries continue to be disproportionately harmed and impacted by food shortage. Adding to this crisis, is the destruction of the environment. Indigenous people all over the world, continue to face systematic violence and land dispossession, and are constantly engaged in resistance and protest movements.

Briefly, I also want to point out that animals are being impacted by the forces of capitalism and coloniality. Coloniality has fractured our connection to animals, destroying their
natural habitat through deforestation, massive oil spills, and climate change. One of the most violent ways coloniality has impacted animals is through the factory farm system (also known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs)), which is the most common system of raising and slaughtering animals worldwide. There has been a significant rise in the global demand for producing and consuming animal products, resulting in a 23 percent increase worldwide in the number of animals being raised for food consumption (Worldwatch Institute, 2012). This pattern means more animals will be placed into CAFOs, which are known for their cruel treatment and torture of animals (Solotaroff, 2013). According to la paperson’s (2017) description of CAFOs, “Chickens grow like vines into cages; cattle are planted in boxes of mud where they are watered, fertilized, and fed growth serum. In modern animal industrial processes, the ‘livestock’ are already in a state of living death” (p. 15). While this imagery is particularly striking and disturbing, CAFOs, along with the increase in meat consumption, are widely considered one of the largest threats to “every major category of environmental damage now threatening the human future—deforestation, erosion, fresh water scarcity, air and water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, social injustice, the destabilization of communities, and the spread of disease” (WorldWatch Institute, 2004, p. 12).

**Importance of Naming Systems of Domination**

Descriptive accounts of violence and oppression serve to contextualize historical and contemporary systems of domination. In other words, these problems need to be thought of as the symptoms or manifestations of deeper root causes. This is important because when the analysis solely focuses on the symptoms, it actually functions to ignore the structural foundations of supremacy and domination. As an instructive example, Leonardo’s (2004) brilliant analysis of
white privilege discourse illustrates why naming systems of domination and supremacy are so important.

Leonardo (2004) explains that while “the conditions of white supremacy make white privilege possible” (p. 137) the discourse around white privilege actually conceals history by “obfuscating agents of domination, and removing the actions that make it clear who is doing what to whom” (p. 138). Thus, Leonardo (2004) points out that the scholars, activists, and students who engage in whiteness studies and/or white privilege discourse end up attributing “the symptoms for causes” (p. 138). Failing to look at the causes ignores the fact that domination “does not form out of random acts of hatred… but rather out of a patterned and enduring treatment of social groups” (Leonardo, 2004, p. 139). Reflecting on the examples that I selected without a structural analysis of domination, for instance, would result in covering up the history of white supremacy that fuels the rise in hate crimes, while disguising the neoliberal workings producing global hunger and environmental destruction. Therefore, following Leonardo’s (2004) call to engage in a “discourse of supremacy” (p. 150), I enact this practice by naming and defining coloniality, settler colonialism, white supremacy, neoliberalism, cis-hetero-patriarchy, and Christian hegemony as intersecting components of domination.

**Coloniality and settler colonialism.** Coloniality and settler colonialism articulate the historical and contemporary positioning of people and land in order to maintain the dominant Western project of modernity (Patel, 2016). Quijano (2007) defines the term coloniality as a way to describe the current social, political, and cultural structures of power created by 500 years of European colonial domination. He argues that during the violent process of European colonialism, a “specific colonial structure of power” (Quijano, 2007, p. 168) emerged to produce social and cultural categories such as race, gender, class, citizenship, etc. These categories were
considered objective and scientific, and used to discriminate, exploit, and dominate the colonized. European culture (i.e., renamed Western) subsequently became the universal standard for all legitimate and scientific knowledge, economic systems, military theory and structure, religious beliefs, ability status, physical beauty, and so on.

These systems of violence and domination make up the fabric of coloniality, or “the logic, culture, and structure of the modern world-system” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017, p. 117). For example, Bonds and Inwood (2016) point out that western modernity relies on white supremacy as an organizing factor to “produce social and spatial relations that frame broad understandings of difference” (p. 720). According to Maldonado-Torres (2016), coloniality continues to be reinforced in innumerable ways:

… reflected in contemporary “development” policies, nation-state building practices, widespread forms of policing, surveillance, and profiling, various forms of extractivism, the increasing concentration of resources in the hands of the few, the rampant expression of hate and social phobias, and liberal initiatives of inclusion, among other forms of social, economic, and political control. (p. 1)

Importantly, Lugones (2008) points out how these scholars hold too narrow of an analysis of Women of Color within the discourse on coloniality. Lugones (2008) applies an intersectional analysis of the coloniality of power, noting a coloniality of gender needs to be integrated to address these limitations. Hernández-Wolfe (2013) advances Lugones’ ideas by suggesting the use of a feminist standpoint epistemology to challenge the male, cis-heteronormative dominated scholarship by “making visible the ways in which social location shapes and limits scientific inquiry” (p. 27).
Coloniality, essentially, is the product of various forms of colonialism. While Shoemaker (2015) has created a list of twelve types of colonialism so as to reflect “the complexity of colonial motivations and consequence,” (para. 16), this project will focus on settler colonialism. The literature on settler colonialism is also expansive, but for the purpose of this section, I am defining settler colonialism as occurring when one society (later to be referred to as settlers) violently settles permanently on “the terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial places lived in by one or more other societies” (e.g., Indigenous peoples) (Whyte, 2018, p. 323). Settler colonialism has at least three dimensions: (a) the logic of elimination of Indigenous people and land (Tuck & Yang, 2012), (b) anti-blackness carried out through systematic subjugation, chattel slavery, and disposability (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and c) the violent enforcement of rigid heteropatriarchal and heteropaternalistic hierarchies (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013). Whyte (2018) points out that settlers develop “moralizing narratives” to rationalize their genocidal policies “literally seeking to erase Indigenous economies, cultures, and political organizations” (p. 324).

According to Wolfe (2006), “Settler colonialism destroys to replace” (p. 388), employing a logic of elimination toward the Indigenous peoples to fulfill the settlers “insatiable dynamic” for land (p. 395). The logic of elimination can take many forms, but it is always in the service of “access to territory” (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). As Wolfe (2006) points out the “settler-colonial logic of elimination has manifested as genocidal” (p. 387) of Indigenous peoples, but can also comprise of:

- officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole
range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier
homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism. (p. 388)

One example of the logic of elimination are blood quantum laws, which the U.S. government
created in the 1700s “to exclude indigenous peoples from having civil rights” (Whyte, 2017, p.
98). According to Whyte (2017) these laws are a colonial tool to “disappear the social, cultural,
and political (sovereign) aspects of Indigenous peoples, thereby erasing indigenous collective life
and self-governance in the US” (p. 98). Patel (2016) argues that erasure is made possible because
“Settler colonialism trains people to see each other, the land, and knowledge as property, to be in
constant insatiable competition for limited resources” (p. 72).

While Wolfe’s comprehensive analysis of settler colonialism has been highly influential
for its framing, it does not appear to take into account the processes and effects settler
colonialism has related to gender and sexual identity. In fact, Robertson (2016) highlights the
critical contributions of Native feminists whose efforts:

have established that the imposition and naturalization of heteropatriarchy is intimately
enmeshed with the creation and maintenance of the settler state. Consequently…various
eliminatory strategies emerge from and/or result in the heteropatriarchal subordination of
Indigenous peoples. (p. 11)

Critiques by Native feminists and LGBTQ/Two-Spirit are important in making visible cis-

e-heteropatriarchal colonialism has sexualised indigenous lands and peoples as violable,
subjugated indigenous kin ties as perverse, attacked familial ties and traditional gender
roles, and all to transform indigenous peoples for assimilation within or excision from the
political and economic structures of white settler societies. (p 4)
Native feminists and LGBTQ/Two-Spirit critical analysis of gender and sexual identity are essential to understanding how heteropatriarchal norms are replicated. Hokowhitu (2012) argues that colonialism produced a specific form of Indigenous masculinity that mimics “dominant forms of invader/settler masculinity” (p. 32) and that “Indigenous hetero-patriarchal men have willingly enjoyed a dividend through association with dominant forms of colonising subjectivities” (p. 33). Further, Hokowhitu (2012) explains how “elite Indigenous masculinities” (p. 24) has resulted in Indigenous women being excluded from leadership positions, as well as “alternative forms of masculinity” (p. 30) being viewed as “deviant” (p. 30) and thus excluded from community, from ritual, from existence” (p. 30). Robertson (2016), Hokowhitu (2012), and Morgensen’s (2012) valuable critiques enhance and advance thinking and action that can be taken to challenge the practice, processes, and effects of coloniality.

**White supremacy.** There is a vast amount of literature on white supremacy, racism, whiteness, and white privilege. White supremacy, according to Ansley (1989), is:

> a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. (p. 1024)

Ansley’s definition reflects the historical and ongoing nature of white supremacy, and thus its insidiousness, and pervasiveness. There may be many reasons to explain how the “system of white supremacy is able to reproduce itself even in the absence of racist sentiments” (Meister, 2017, p. 15). Bonds and Inwood (2016) note that white supremacy is the ideology and logic (e.g., the root cause) of racism that allows for the “naturalization and invisibility of white racial
identities and white skin privilege” (p. 720). Viewed this way might explain why social discourse and analysis tend to focus on the symptoms (e.g., racism and privilege) of white supremacy.

The critical and preeminent scholar Charles Mills (1997), author of the seminal text, *The Racial Contract*, provides a comprehensive analysis of the invisibility of white supremacy. He begins his text by explaining that “White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today” (p. 1). Mills (1997) goes on to describe and lay out his arguments for his idea of the racial contract, which is a way to conceptualize the long-standing political system of white supremacy as a “‘contract’ between whites” (p. 7).

While there are numerous examples and illustrations of the racial contract, I think Ta-Nehisi Coates’ (2017) illuminating descriptions in his article “The Case for Reparations” deserve attention. As Mills (1997) writes, the racial contract helps explain how white supremacy serves as “the actual genesis of the society and the state, the way society is structured, the way the government functions, and people's moral psychology” (p. 5). In the following lengthy excerpt, Coates (2017) makes visible the structures and foundations of the United States by articulating the deep interconnections with white supremacy and capitalism, and the devastating effects they have had on Black families. Coates (2017) writes:

The early American economy was built on slave labor. The Capitol and the White House were built by slaves. President James K. Polk traded slaves from the Oval Office. The laments about “black pathology,” the criticism of black family structures by pundits and intellectuals, ring hollow in a country whose existence was predicated on the torture of black fathers, on the rape of black mothers, on the sale of black children. An honest assessment of America’s relationship to the black family reveals the country to be not its nurturer but its destroyer. And this destruction did not end with slavery. Discriminatory
laws joined the equal burden of citizenship to unequal distribution of its bounty. These laws reached their apex in the mid-20th century, when the federal government—through housing policies—engineered the wealth gap, which remains with us to this day. When we think of white supremacy, we picture Colored Only signs, but we should picture pirate flags. On some level, we have always grasped this. (p. 201)

The powerfulness in Coates’ prose is his ability to succinctly summarize the “political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources” (Ansley, 1989, p. 1024). And yet despite his clarity, there continues to be widespread efforts to minimize or outright deny that white supremacy exists. This denial is evidenced by what DiAngelo (2018) defines as white fragility or “white people’s responses to racial discomfort” (p. 2).

**Neoliberalism.** According to Harvey (2005), at the core of neoliberalism is the idea that human welfare is “best advanced by…individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Generally speaking, as a structural factor neoliberalism has shaped and influenced policy, institutions, socio-cultural dynamics worldwide, centering individualism and competition above all else (Gahman, n.d.). Within academia, neoliberalism has shifted the conversation so that students become consumers, teachers become service providers, and knowledge is transformed into a tradeable commodity (Smith, 2012).

**Cis-hetero-patriarchy.** Cis-heteropatriarchy is the historical and systematic construction of socio-political-cultural values, norms, laws, and policies that normalize and assign power and privilege to cisgender, heterosexual people, and patriarchal control. As Smith (2013) argues, cis-heteropatriarchy is essentially the foundations of U.S. empire. Mogul, Ritchie, and Whitlock
(2011), in their text *Queer (In)Justice*, provide numerous examples of how cis-heteropatriarchy is enforced through the criminalization of LGBTQIA communities. As hooks (2004) points out, patriarchy teaches and socializes men to dominate while denying any feelings that could be considered weak and thus feminine; in this way, male power is maintained and violence is naturalized and normalized.

**Christian hegemony.** According to Kivel (2013), Christian hegemony is “the everyday, systematic set of Christian values, individuals and institutions that dominate all aspects of US society” (p. 3). Christian hegemony underlies the thinking that normalizes able-bodied, hearing, heterosexual, and cisgender people resulting in multiple forms of oppression such as ableism, audism, and sanism.

An example of Christian hegemony is the Doctrine of Discovery. According to Dunbar-Ortiz (2014), European nations utilized the Roman Catholic papal bulls (also known as the Doctrine of Discovery) to acquire “the lands they ‘discovered,’” meaning “Indigenous inhabitants lost their natural right to that land after Europeans arrived and claimed it” (p. 3). According to Newcomb (1992):

In 1823, the Christian Doctrine of Discovery was quietly adopted into U.S. law by the Supreme Court in the celebrated case, *Johnson v. McIntosh* (8 Wheat., 543). Writing for a unanimous court, Chief Justice John Marshall observed that Christian European nations had assumed "ultimate dominion" over the lands of America during the Age of Discovery, and that - upon "discovery" - the Indians had lost "their rights to complete sovereignty, as independent nations," and only retained a right of "occupancy" in their lands. In other words, Indians nations were subject to the ultimate authority of the first
nation of Christendom to claim possession of a given region of Indian lands.

[Johnson:574; Wheaton:270-1]. (para. 8)

Christian hegemony, in this case, helped make land dispossession legal, leading to the U.S. government creating numerous genocidal policies and laws to eliminate Indigenous people.

Having named and defined these intersecting systems of domination, my hope is that this context provides some clarity as to ways the privileges are made possible. In the following section, I will discuss how these systems of domination have shaped and influenced education, with specific focus on MSW education. I will also highlight efforts of resistance within social work that serve as inspiration and hope for MSW educators to re-imagine social work education. Finally, as a way to illustrate the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality in MSW education, I will share two personal stories related to my experience as an MSW student.

**Education Under the Grip of Coloniality**

Looking more closely at educational institutions, Patel (2016) notes that for hundreds of years education has been “within the grip of coloniality” (p. 6.). Wilder’s (2013) comprehensive and rigorously researched historical analysis described in his book *Ebony & Ivy*, confirms Patel’s claim. Wilder (2013) writes:

the earliest American academies became rooted in the slave economies of the colonial world. Colleges arrived in the Americas in response to European nations’ attempts to seize territories and hold off rivals. European powers deployed colleges to help defend and regulate their colonial possessions and they turned to African slavery and the African slave trade to fund these efforts. (p. 9)

For Du Bois, schools played a central role in preserving the caste society established in the colonial-plantation period. After the fall of the old caste system based on slave codes, a type of reconstruction took place, according to Du Bois—one in which the public school became a primary place where the racial privileges of the ‘white world’ and the dehumanizing conditions the ‘dark world’ were educated into existence and the old caste codes were dressed in new Jim Crow clothing. Du Bois’s work on caste formation through schooling underscores the dynamic and adaptive nature of caste control in U.S. society, which continues today in the school, prison, hyper-policed communities, court, housing, and health systems (Alexander, 2010). (p. 24S)

Here, the sociohistorical contexts of coloniality can be seen across institutions that intersect with educational systems of control and oppression.

Obviously, there are numerous examples to illustrate the grip of coloniality within education. However, some may be tempted to argue that things have improved and education is different today. Grigorieff (2016) counters with descriptions of educational reforms (specifically in California) that have been used to re-inscribe whiteness, maleness, and normalizing temporarily non-disabled bodies through “social efficiency in educational policy” (p. 147). Social efficiency models are interested in maximizing utility and minimizing “‘waste’” (Grigorieff, 2016, p. 147); thus educational systems seek to get rid of students who fail to meet the educational standards that uphold cis-heteropatriarchal, ableist norms, and white supremacy (Grigorieff, 2016).

**MSW education under the grip of coloniality.** MSW education is also under the hold of coloniality. While there is a history of social work radicalism rooted in predominately white feminist organizers, socialist, labor, and anti-war movements (Reisch & Andrews, 2001), there is
a parallel history of social workers openly promoting white supremacy (Fox, 2010; Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013) and reinforcing cis/heteronormative and patriarchal (Mogul, Ritchie, & Whitlock, 2011) hierarchies of domination that are often unnamed and minimally addressed (Almeida, Werkmeister Rozas, Cross-Denny, Lee, & Yamada, 2019).

Undoubtedly teachers have a role and obligation to engage students and communities in critical learning and action to coloniality. This is especially true in MSW education, where students are receiving training to learn how to provide vital social services to communities who have been oppressed. For social work educators, the question becomes how are they preparing students to become social workers who can address the intersection of these oppressive systems when working with individuals, families, and communities who have suffered from and been harmed by dominant institutions that reproduce racist, heterosexist, ableist norms of exclusion? How do MSW educators engage students toward a re-imagining of social work practice with aims of liberation and decoloniality? Next, I reflect back to my time as an MSW student, and share two personal stories that illustrate the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality.

**Practices, processes, and effects of coloniality in MSW education.**

*Story #1.* Reflecting on my experience as an MSW student, I recall the practice of using textbooks that had chapters making claims about what was “known,” what to “look for,” and what to expect when working with specific “disadvantaged” populations. There was a chapter dedicated to working with African American people, another chapter on how to work with “Hispanics”, and then Asian Americans, Native Americans, Lesbian and Gay people, and people with Disabilities. But there was not a chapter exploring white people, white history, white demographics, or explaining how social workers should approach a white family while being aware of white customs and rituals. Furthermore, there was not a chapter on hearing people,
cisgender people, men, heterosexual people, temporarily able-bodied people, or very wealthy people. My classmates and I would not learn: What risk factors are important for social workers to understand when working with cisgender people? What would be the “culturally competent” approach to working with hearing people? What should social workers expect if they encounter a heterosexual person in their practice? What is “known” about the behaviors of wealthy people?

When I tell this story now as a teacher, my students are often surprised and remark that this is the first time they have considered just how normalized white supremacy, male domination, and all other interlocking systems of oppressions are. Together we attempt to deconstruct the colonial processes that keep our view locked and trained on the “other” (e.g. non-dominant groups) while normalizing the dominant group values, behaviors, and perspectives. One of the key processes are a “colonialist consciousness” based schooling grounded in an assimilationist effort (Grande, 2015, p. 99). Such schooling seeks to include “marginalized groups in the universality of the nation-state, advocating a kind of multicultural nationalism” (Grande, 2015, p. 51).

Story #2. In this next story, I share my experience as a second year Master of Social Work (MSW) student when I worked as an intern in a community-based outpatient clinic. I served as a bilingual mental health clinician, providing services to a predominantly low-income, Latino, and African American community. The families we served experienced a myriad of struggles including chronic poverty, domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, grief and loss, and severe mental illness. Sometimes families had endured years of numerous and simultaneous issues, prior to accessing supportive services. Other families had been receiving treatment from multiple social service systems for many years, so much so that it dominated their lives. Despite all of the challenges they faced, family members regularly showed
up to support one another, offering respect, love, generosity, and kindness, finding strength and resilience, and celebrating achievements.

Early in my internship, I had begun my work with a low sense of confidence due to a lack of knowledge regarding therapeutic interventions, clinical assessment, mental illness, and diagnosis. However, I remained motivated to learning and improving my skill; further, I was fortunate to have a tremendous community of support from supervisors and colleagues in the clinic. I also had wonderful instructors in the MSW program offering me guidance and teaching me the theories and values they believed would help me become an effective social work practitioner.

Week by week, as I gained knowledge from the classroom and outpatient clinic, I began to feel more confident in my overall therapeutic skills. As a result, I was assigned to work with families who were experiencing more immediate and pressing concerns. One particular family to whom I was referred consisted of a 70-year-old African American grandmother who was raising her two grandsons aged 9 and 7. Even though she had been granted custody, she was still deeply involved with child protective services who continued to monitor her grandsons’ progress. Both boys showed signs of depression, anxiety, and self-harming behaviors such as cutting, banging their heads against walls, and verbalizing thoughts of wanting to die. They also struggled to follow directions and commands, and would sometimes yell, scream, and throw things when pressed to complete a task. In response, their grandmother would sometimes hit them with a belt.

I had been working with the family for several months, and had developed a strong connection of trust and respect before I learned about the hitting. Given my position, this meant I had to make a child abuse report, breaking the confidentiality of the therapy to inform child protective services. While the family understood my legal obligation, they were clearly frustrated
and angry about the situation. I attempted to explain to them that the hitting was considered physical abuse, and that it did not seem to be helping.

But Grandmother shot back, “Abuse? You think I want to abuse my kids? Is that what you think?” I said I didn’t think she was trying to abuse her kids, but at the same time we needed to look for alternative ways to discipline. She said, “You don’t get it. You just don’t get it. And that’s disappointing. I expected more.” I could feel her disappointment and sense of betrayal. I was also confused, because I thought I did get it. My education and training had taught me to view her actions as abusive, and prompted me to think first about how she needed to be “reported” to a child protection agency. Clearly, however, there was something I was missing.

I was about to respond, but before I could offer any additional explanation, she said, “You know where I grew up? In the South during Jim Crow. You know what they did to Black people in the South if you stepped out of line? Do you realize that white people could do whatever they wanted to you and not face any consequence? So when we were kids, if we stepped out of line, acted up, we got hit. But it wasn’t abuse. It was never abuse. It was keeping us alive. It was making sure we were safe from white people. I really thought you understood all of this. And now I know you don’t. And that’s very disappointing because I trusted you. We trusted you. But you don’t understand and you’re just like everyone else. I don’t think we’ll be back.” I was stunned and deeply embarrassed. She was right, I didn’t get it.

Sharing this story with students is never easy and though it was close to 20 years ago, continues to bring up feelings of shame and guilt. The effects of coloniality within MSW education left me unprepared to adequately understand and respond to the historical trauma of slavery and terrorism, along with the intersecting oppressions of sexism and classism that this Grandmother had endured. Although I had knowledge of the historical context of what she
described, I had neglected to ever talk about white supremacy, or for that matter any other form of oppression. In fact, my approach was sanctioned by course content and class discussions that over emphasized pathology, risk assessment, and liability concerns.

Fortunately, I had clinical supervisors who provided the support, feedback, and guidance to raise my critical consciousness of institutional racism and its legacy within child welfare services; additionally, I was able to identify ways to go back to this family and attempt to make amends. It was not easy. True to her word, the family missed the following sessions; however, eventually they did return. Or maybe, they allowed me to return and re-enter their lives again. Maybe they had extended to me a second opportunity to get things right, to make amends. I apologized for causing disappointment and for the sense of betrayal they experienced. I also addressed my lack of attention to historical trauma and how this lack of historical context limited my work. Further, I shared my personal conflict with having to “report” them while also trying to maintain the trust and integrity of the relationship. I discussed how social workers were in a conflictual space of being agents of control, carrying out punitive policies as opposed to practicing from a stance of solidarity and anti-racism. I also utilized supervision time to unpack my areas of power and privilege that I had needed to be accountable to. It took time to re-establish trust, but eventually we found a new rhythm. I am beyond grateful that they offered me a second chance, as it allowed us to work and grow together over a full year of continued treatment. Remarkably, our relationship strengthened over time and the family made significant improvements to their relationships and well-being, culminating in a very positive transition to end the therapy.

Reflecting on the experiences as a student and now in my role as an MSW educator, I am of the mindset that we are in a “revolutionary situation” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 325), where
coloniality and settler colonialism, white supremacy and cis-heteropatriarchy, must be named, confronted, and disrupted. This naming, confronting, and disrupting work is at the center of this qualitative research project, which aims to identify and understand the experiences of MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality within their classrooms in order re-imagine social work education. For the purpose of this project, MSW education is defined as pedagogy, curriculum, and all other aspects of an MSW program. Within this project, I am applying a multi-theoretical framework of critical race theory (CRT), tribal critical theory (TribalCrit), and intersectionality to weave the threads of scholarship of coloniality and settler colonialism, across disciplines of social work, critical education, and critical ethnic studies. Doing so troubles the dominant portraits of MSW education by exposing the practices (e.g., repeated actions of teaching cultural competency, multiculturalism), processes (e.g., historical and contemporary research that upholds white logic, settler moves to innocence), and effects (e.g., unexamined anti-blackness, histories and sovereignty of Indigenous people made invisible) of coloniality. However, at the same time, I build from the work of previous scholars (Almeida, Werkmeister Rozas, Cross-Denny, Lee, & Yamada, 2019; Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013; Tamburro, 2013) that maintain MSW education can be a site of decoloniality, and liberation-based practice (Almeida, Melendez, & Paez, 2015).

Significance

Examining the Social and Local Context for this Research Project

Examining the social and local context surrounding this research supports the need to learn from and understand the efforts by social work educators engaged in challenging the practice and processes of coloniality. According to Stuart (2013), social work as a profession
emerged in the late 1800s in an effort to address “the paradox of increasing poverty in an increasingly productive and prosperous economy” (p. 1). Over time, social workers organized and expanded their endeavors to improve the lives and social conditions of those affected by issues such as poverty, mental illness, and unfair work conditions, with additional focus on child and public welfare, and healthcare (Stuart, 2013).

Today, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) (2015), which is the accrediting organization for all undergraduate and graduate social work programs, states that:

The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a...respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, the purpose of social work is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons, locally and globally. (p. 5)

Social workers are involved at all social, cultural, and political institutions including federal, state, and local governmental agencies, non-profit and for-profit organizations, hospitals, schools, military, religious organizations, and environmental agencies. Professional practice areas for targeted intervention are often described as occurring at three levels of practice: micro level (individual/family), mezzo (community), macro (policy/institutional). Social workers also specialize their work with certain populations (e.g., veterans, older adults, LGBTQIA, gender-based violence). Of tantamount importance is that social workers uphold a professional practice that remains aligned with the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics which hat explicitly calls for challenges to injustice and for political involvement (NASW, 2017)

The social work profession has grown tremendously since its beginnings with sizeable increases in the number of people earing Master of Social Work (MSW) degrees (Stuart, 2013).
According to a 2017 report on the social work workforce, there are just over 650,000 self-identified social workers in the United States, and having an MSW offers greater opportunities for job advancement. Further, the report found that “the greatest concentration of social workers is found in individual and family services (36.6%), followed by 11.4% in administration of human resource programs, 10.6% in hospitals, and 8.3% in outpatient care centers” (Salsberg, Quigley, Mehfoud, Acquaviva, Wyche, & Sliwa, 2017). Both nationally and internationally, and more than any other profession, social work is the quickest-growing (Truell, 2018). The reason for the such growth, according to Truell (2018), is “evidence showing a positive economic return when governments invest in social services. When social workers are active in a community, it tends to have a positive impact on crime rates, health statistics, school attendance and employment” (para. 3).

Social work educators play a significant role in shaping “the profession’s future through the education of competent professionals, the generation of knowledge, the promotion of evidence-informed practice through scientific inquiry, and the exercise of leadership within the professional community” (CSWE, 2015, p. 5). CSWE has created a “competency-based curriculum” that emphasizes “an outcomes-oriented approach” (CSWE, 2015, p. 6). There are nine competencies that social work educators must address within program and course content, and that students are expected to demonstrate upon graduation from an MSW program:

1. Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
3. Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
4. Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
5. Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

6. Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

7. Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

8. Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

9. Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities (CSWE, 2015, p. 8)

While there is no specific mention of coloniality, settler colonialism, white supremacy, neoliberalism, cis-heteropatriarchy, or Christian hegemony, the competencies do reflect language consistent with critical social justice analysis. For example, the description for Competency 2 emphasizes the importance of understanding intersectionality, and explains that “Social workers…understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power” (CSWE, 2015, p. 7). Competency 3 states that social workers should apply a global perspective and “understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected” (CSWE, 2015, p. 7). However, it is up to the programs and teachers to “develop the substantive content, pedagogical approach, and educational activities” for students to learn and “demonstrate the competencies” (CSWE, 2015, p. 6).
Clearly, CSWE is aware of oppressive structures, evolving the competencies to reflect a more progressive social justice perspective. However, why has CSWE not been more explicit in naming these historical and enduring systems of domination and violence? Furthermore, what are the costs of failing to do so? Therefore, my project not only confronts CSWE’s omission of coloniality but also seeks to raise questions about how MSW educators are challenging coloniality. Questions that emerge are: What does a pedagogy that challenges coloniality look like? How does it contend with the intersections of race, gender, class, sexual identity, disability or variation in ability? What are the ways MSW educators carry out a decolonizing agenda that supports and advocates for Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination? How do MSW educators confront white logic, anti-Black racism, cis-sexism? What sort of attempts do MSW educators make toward challenging the capitalist and neoliberal forces that are impacting education? Thus, it is vital to explore with MSW educators their ideas and perspectives of the current state of social work and MSW education.

**MSW Education: Practices, Processes, and Effects of Coloniality**

**Cultural competency practices, assimilationist processes, and effects of “othering” as coloniality in MSW education.** MSW education is not immune from the paradox of being both a space of coloniality and liberation, erasure and meaningful acknowledgment, individualism and collectivism. Social worker education and practice is rooted in a history of social justice and advocacy, and it is also rooted in a history of assimilationist processes (Reisch, 2008) and violence enacted onto Indigenous and communities of color, LGBTQ people, and people with differing abilities. Social workers of color and white allies during the Civil Rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s, pushed back on dominant Eurocentric perspectives embedded within the profession (Abrams & Moio, 2009). In response CSWE created curriculum
mandates for schools of social work to address cultural diversity/sensitivity, race/ethnicity, and “cultural groups” (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011, p. 286). Social workers of this era embraced multiculturalism (Reisch, 2008) also known as “cultural competency,” which became the dominant educational and practice model of understanding race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability status (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

It is critical to consider the important point that these changes were based on the efforts and advocacy of students and faculty of color, calling attention to the critical role of dissent, protest, and resistance (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011). Without such efforts, would CSWE have made any changes to address increase in students and faculty of color? Even with the positive step toward addressing issues of racism and discrimination, Jani, et al. (2011) note the CSWE curriculum mandates emphasized assimilationist views, “and made no specific reference to institutional racism” (p. 286) which meant social workers were trained to view racism as an individualized or group issue as opposed to critically examining institutions and structures. In the 1980s-1990s, CSWE continued to make additional revisions to curriculum mandates to be more responsive to social political changes, and to include content regarding “other special populations” (Jani, et al. p. 288); again, these changes occurred only after persistent advocacy and protest by students and faculty from those “special populations.”

In the 2001, the National Association of Social Work (NASW) integrated cultural competency within the NASW Code of Ethics, which serves as the centerpiece for all social work practice (Cross, 2008). CSWE adopted a cultural competency framework in 2002, “under pressure from advocates of color and other diverse populations within the social work education community” (Cross, 2008, para. 12). Widespread critiques of cultural competency have
prompted a shift to cultural humility that focuses on lifelong learning and attention to self-awareness (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998).

Undoubtedly, these approaches have been influential in social work practice and education toward creating a greater sense of awareness about historical and contemporary difference between cultural groups (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Almeida, Hernandez-Wolfe, & Tubbs, 2011). However, Abrams & Moio (2009) challenge the impact of cultural awareness models arguing that “the cultural competence model is largely ineffective and that its tendency to equalize oppressions under a ‘multicultural umbrella’ unintentionally promotes a colorblind mentality that eclipses the significance of institutionalized racism” (p. 245). Essentially, these approaches appear to be limited in scope and language, viewing culture as a static concept, something that anyone can learn to become competent in, and perpetuating a colorblind paradigm (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011). In fact, Almeida, Hernandez-Wolfe, and Tubbs (2011) raise the question if anyone can actually ever be competent or expert in a culture without knowing the language? Indeed, this question raises important doubts about an allegiance to cultural competency.

These specific practices and processes are also rooted in a white logic that normalizes Eurocentric viewpoints as objective and thus free from critical interrogation (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). It remains a harmful practice because the method of using a multicultural/culturally competent approach teaches a positioning to view the “other” (e.g., non-dominant groups) while normalizing the dominant groups. Tochon and Karaman (2009) suggest this is a form of colonial positioning by failing to consider “the perceptions others express might have a valid ground” and thus “‘superior selves’ impose their worldview on others as the single best way of viewing reality” (p.136).
Together, the practice of cultural competency is part of a historical process of assimilationist views that continue to reinforce white, cis-hetero-male dominated paradigms (Dumbrill & Green, 2008). For example, Tamburro (2013) points out that MSW education continues to lack critical content addressing Indigenous people as well as the legacy of colonization. Further, U.S. social work education has continued to be part of promoting a colonial agenda globally through expanding into international markets and projecting a sense of academic superiority in knowledge, research, and practice (Askeland & Payne, 2006).

Cognitive ploys, settler moves to innocence, and dysconsciousness. While multiculturalism/diversity/cultural competency-based approaches have been important contributions in MSW education, they attempt to address social justice without any analysis of coloniality (Almeida, et al., 2019). They are insufficient in training social work students to become practitioners who can effectively take action to address settler colonialism, white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy, capitalism, militarism, audism, ableism, sanism and all other intersecting forms of oppression. And yet they continue to be widely put into practice, causing some scholars to argue that cultural competency "may encourage faculty and students to address concerns about access to existing structures, but it does not encourage the development of strategies to change those structures" (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011, p. 295). Indeed, Sinclair (2004) explains that such an approach is “a cognitive ploy that risks passing for anti-oppressive and anti-racist pedagogy and practice in social work” (p. 52). Sinclair goes on to point out that raising awareness without involving action inevitably “contributes to silence and inactivity” (p. 52) about systems of domination. Functioning as a cognitive ploy, cultural competency may play a role in minimizing feelings of anxiety and guilt about social work history that has been complicit with and advocated for violence against certain communities. For
instance, social workers have supported and participated in the forced separation and assimilation of Indigenous children via Indian boarding schools (Grande, 2015), the disproportionate removal of Indigenous (Sinclair, 2004) and Black children (Roberts, 2002) in the child welfare system, and perpetuated racist, xenophobic stereotypes about Mexican immigrants throughout the 1920s leading to a denial of health care, housing, and employment (Fox, 2010).

Within the context of settler colonialism, cultural competency practices can be described as moves to innocence “characterized by strategies to remove involvement in and culpability for systems of domination” (Mawhinney, 1998, p. 17). Tuck and Yang (2012) build on Mawhinney’s idea by adding the settler colonial context and outlining the ways that “positionings…attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all” (p. 10). Tuck and Yang (2012) identify several settler moves to innocence, including: “free your mind and the rest will follow,” (p. 19) characterized as a “focus on decolonizing the mind, or the cultivation of critical consciousness, as… the sole activity of decolonization” (p. 19), and “re-occupation and urban homesteading,” (p. 23) illustrated by social justice movements like Occupy that fail to recognize Indigenous land, sovereignty, while advocating for a redistribution of wealth irrespective of Indigenous ties to land.

The reinforcement of coloniality poses problems not only for the social work profession, but more importantly for those who seek helping services from social workers. Social work students trained from a curriculum that reinscribes hierarchies that normalize materialism, whiteness, cis-male-heteropatriarchal, sanist, ableist, and audist values and knowledges, are likely to result in causing harm to non-dominant groups through erasure and silencing. King
(1991) refers to such a process as dysconsciousness, defined as “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (p. 135). For instance, imagine the experience of non-binary and transgender social work students of color in an MSW program that upholds the gender binary; or consistently fails to acknowledge gender pronouns; or continues to teach human behavior models solely developed from a cisgender perspective. Imagine the experiences of Indigenous social work students being taught a history of social work without ever acknowledging genocide, the violence of land theft and displacement, or the outrageous numbers of Indigenous children removed from their homes based on the belief that white parents were a better option.

**Pedagogies of Hope: Re-Imagining of MSW Education as a Site for Decoloniality and Liberation**

A major first step toward a decoloniality and liberation could be to follow the lead of the Maine-Wabanaki Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], which was created to give the Wabanaki people space to address the trauma they suffered as a result of “an experiment” carried out by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League of America “where they took hundreds of Indian children from their families to raise them in white homes, thinking it was better for them” (Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2018a). Social workers in Maine publicly apologized for their role in this violence of cultural genocide. While this was a positive start, much work needs to continue. The final report suggests that “significant institutional and public racism toward Wabanaki people continues to exist…. The state has yet to reckon with the impact of historical trauma” (Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2018b).
I believe that another area social work education could benefit is by integrating and applying the work of social work educators and practitioners who are and have been doing the work of decolonization. Prominent examples include the writing and research of Dr. Rhea Almeida and her colleagues at the Institute for Family Services (IFS). Dr. Almeida’s texts *Liberation Based Healing Practices* (Almeida, 2018), and *Transformative Family Therapy: Just Families in a Just Society* (Almeida, Dolan-Del Vecchio, & Parker, 2008) critique the traditional Eurocentric and male dominated, capitalist approaches to family therapy, and provide an alternative rooted in intersectionality and feminist theory, and decolonial and trauma scholarship. Specifically, Almeida (2018) calls for family therapists to embrace decolonizing strategies that “encompass the multiplicity of personal and public institutional locations that frame identities within historic, colonial, economic, and political life” (p. xii). Through the use of healing circles that aim to develop critical consciousness through sociopolitical and economic education (SEE), while creating spaces of accountability, and empowerment, Almeida and her colleagues help families grapple “with the matrix of coloniality” (Almeida, 2018, p. 60) toward healing. Further, their model of practice debunks “the myth of healing through diagnostic codes, individual structures, and the rigid bifurcation of individuals, their families, their context, and their healing spaces” (Almeida, 2018, p. xii). Thus, both texts offer an important and critical resource for MSW educators challenging coloniality.

Another important example is the text *Decolonizing Social Work* by Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, and Hetherington (2013). This is a critical and essential text offering rigorous research and ideas explaining the need and process for decolonizing social work. The authors write:
Decolonizing Social Work requires that the profession acknowledge its complicity and ceases its participation in colonizing projects, openly condemns the past and continuing effects of colonialism, and collaborates with Indigenous Peoples to engage in decolonizing activities against public and private colonizing projects.” (p. 7)

Additionally, Razack’s (2009) article “Decolonizing the Pedagogy and Practice of International Social Work” offers specific techniques for teachers to engage in decolonization within the classroom. Razack details a historical counterstory of social work demonstrating the complicity with imperialism and colonialism. Razack points out how this early history continues to impact social work education. She writes, “Entrenched notions that Western ideology and practices are infinitely superior continue to reign even after the end of formal colonization” (p. 12). Their comprehensive analysis includes global movements and offers hope about a decolonial future.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study is to learn from and understand the experiences of MSW educators who actively challenge, resist, and disrupt coloniality toward a re-imagining and re-envisioning of the social work profession. The goals of this study are to share space with educators informed by an ethic and understanding of relational interdependence, engage in a meaningful and respectful dialogue of inquiry, and to share ideas and strategies toward re-imagining social work education from a decolonial approach. Additionally, my hope is that by bringing together these educators, a supportive and resourceful collective may emerge to continue beyond this research project. The study blends decolonial methodologies with portraiture methodology to understand the experiences and approaches of social work educators as they engage in resisting and disrupting coloniality. A further goal of this study is to make sure this information can become accessible to current and future social work educators and students.
Research Questions

The research questions guiding this qualitative study are:

1. Who are the MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?
2. How do they challenge and disrupt the practices, processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?
3. What do they envision as a re-imagined social work education?

Overview of Theory

In this section, I briefly review the literature and analysis on the theoretical foundations of critical race theory (CRT), TribalCrit, and intersectionality informing my journey into this multi-disciplinary-theoretical research project. I would like to take a moment and acknowledge the scholars who have kept these critical perspectives at the center of their work; they continue to inspire and challenge me to re-think and unlearn the dominant narratives associated with coloniality.

**CRT.** CRT is a lens that can be used to provide a vital analysis of how racism and intersecting oppressions affect social work education. There is a tremendous amount of research, writing, and thinking about CRT (Hutchinson, 2004), and integration across professional fields and academic disciplines (Yosso, 2005) including social work. Both theories are rooted in justice, empowerment, and liberation, and have been instrumental in helping to articulate historical patterns of systematic white supremacy, capitalism, and cis-hetero male domination. According to Bernal and Villalpando (2002), “CRT challenges a Eurocentric epistemological perspective by recognizing people of color as creators and holders of knowledge that may challenge and critique mainstream traditions” (p. 172). Solórzano (1997) identified five central
tenets of CRT in education, which have become widely accepted and utilized. According to Solórzano (1997, pp. 6-7), they are:

- **The Centrality and Intersectionality of Race and Racism:** racism is all around us, deeply woven into all of our institutions and social-cultural-political norms; it always intersects with other forms of oppression such as classism and sexism.

- **The Challenge to Dominant Ideology:** CRT challenges the false claims of color-blindness, objectivity, and meritocracy promulgated with the legal system, educational institutions, and social services. CRT scholars identified the concept of interest convergence, which “stresses that racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideologies of Whites” (Milner, 2008, p. 333). As Almeida, Hernandez-Wolfe, and Tubbs (2011) pointed out cultural competency and multicultural approaches serve the interests of dominant groups whose interests, in this context, relate to having competence (e.g., they can “know”) about culture while appeasing calls for more diversity, equity, and justice within social work education. And this can be accomplished without having to critically interrogate settler colonial logic, cis-heteronormativity, homophobia and transphobia enacted through state sanctioned violence against LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ people of color (Mountz, 2016), reification of heteropatriarchal and heteropaternalistic structures and institutional violence embedded in key legislation such as the Tribal Law and Order Act (Robertson, 2016), or without having to even realistically consider reparations for African Americans (Coates, 2017).

- **The Commitment to Social Justice:** “the abolition of racism or racial subordination is part of the broader goal of ending other forms of subordination such as gender, class, and sexual orientation” (Solórzano, 1997, p. 7). However, Grande (2015) argues,
While critical pedagogy provides the tools for constructing a more potent and overtly challenging critique of the colonialist project…it remains deeply informed by Western theory…in terms of its failure to acknowledge the complexities of contemporary Indigenous struggles and the colonialist context within which they operate. (p. 96)

This is an important critique and one that social work educators who use CRT need to consider and address if we are to imagine a decolonial future.

- The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge: CRT recognizes the historical and contemporary importance and significance of centering on people of color’s voices.

- The Interdisciplinary Perspective: CRT “challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus” (Solórzano, 1997, p. 7) within education and law. This is exemplified by the intersectional and transdisciplinary work on audism by scholars in Deaf Studies who incorporate CRT, decolonial analysis, and intersectionality. One example is Garrow and Fleischer’s (2015) work on unpacking and dismantling audism. They define audism as:

  the diachronic and dynamic societal construct that oppresses Deaf people based on the ideological stance that humanizes specific perceived characteristics (e.g. hearing, speaking) while simultaneously dehumanizing the opposite perceived characteristics (e.g. don’t hear, don’t speak) that manifest itself in a complex weave of micro, meso, and macro-aggressions that creates both real and perceived barriers which leads to a system of overprivilege for hearing people and underprivilege for Deaf people.

  Their definition reflects a nuanced understanding of the importance of working across disciplines by deconstructing the dominant paradigms of modernity that seek to erase deaf people.

  TribalCrit. TribalCrit builds from CRT and was conceptualized by Brayboy (2005) “to analyze the problems encountered by American Indians in educational institutions and the
programs that are in place to uniquely serve American Indian communities” (p. 427). According to Brayboy (2005), while TribalCrit is similar in many ways to the values of CRT, its first tenet is that “Colonization is endemic to society” (p. 429). Centering the analysis on colonization does not take the focus on white supremacy and racism, but does suggest that neglecting to address the effects of colonization limits the overall analysis of oppression.

Importantly for this project, TribalCrit maintains that “Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). Claiming that stories passed down from generation to generation are just as legitimate as empirically tested theories within social sciences, might be the nightmare scenario for researchers and scholars steeped in white logic traditions. However, as many Indigenous scholars have pointed out, western social science theories are now just catching up and confirming what Indigenous peoples have known for generations; further, there is a long colonial tradition of western researchers taking Indigenous ideas and knowledge, re-purposing and re-packaging them for white audiences, without ever attributing where they learned their ideas. Examples abound, but one very prominent example is the erasure of the Blackfoot Nation’s influence and contributions to Abraham Maslow’s famous hierarchy of needs (Blood & Heavy Head, 2007). Thus, TribalCrit is used throughout this project to center Indigenous perspectives as a counter storytelling to the dominant narrative of colonialism and white logic.

**Intersectionality.** Intersectionality is based on the ideas, research, and analysis from the work of many women of color scholars, poets, and activists (Anzaldúa, 1987; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015) who have illustrated the ways “patriarchy interacts with other systems of power—namely, racism—to uniquely disadvantage some groups of women more than others” and can be traced back to at least the late 1800s (Cooper, 2016, p. 4). The term intersectionality
was developed by Crenshaw’s (1989) powerful analysis of race, gender, and class, pointing out that the lenses society uses are inadequate in creating a full analysis of how some women are disadvantaged. She explains that “Intersectionality draws attention to invisibilities that exist in feminism, in anti-racism, in class politics, drawing attention to the erasures, to the ways that ‘women of colour are invisible in plain sight’” (Adewunmi, 2014, para. 7).

One of the key erasures that has occurred in feminism are the contributions of Native women. Grande’s (2015) thorough and critical analysis illustrates that whitestream feminism has traditionally relied on essentialist and racist stories about American Indian women, while projecting white, Christian, middle-class values onto American Indian families. Whitestream feminism has centered patriarchy as its sole point of focus and intervention, thereby largely ignoring or at best, minimizing the interlocking effects of colonization, racism, and capitalism. Grande (2015) notes that American Indian women have always held positions of power and prestige within traditional tribal societies. She (2015) explains that:

… many Indigenous women share historical memories and contemporary experiences of women as warriors, healers, spiritual leaders, clan mothers, tribal leaders, council members, political activists, and cultural proprietors, and thus already live with a sense of their own traditional “feminist agency.” (p. 204)

A failure to contend with white supremacy in whitestream feminism, was one of the reasons the Combahee River Collective (2001), a Black feminist national organization, penned their highly influential statement in 1977. They wrote that “it is apparent that no other ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered our specific oppression as a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression” and thus “the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us” (Combahee River Collective, 2001, p. 294). While
addressing the invisibility within white feminist movements, they also “realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy” (Combahee River Collective, 2001, p. 295). Not only is this statement consistent with challenging coloniality, but it also helps establish the foundation for intersectionality.

**Overview of Methodology**

**Research Methodologies**

I use a multi-methodological approach, including decolonial methodologies and portraiture methodology. Chilisa (2012) defines decolonial methodologies as “a process of conducting research in such a way that the worldviews of those who have suffered a long history of oppression and marginalization are given space to communicate from their frames of reference” (p. 14). Patel (2016) suggests a “decolonial stance” (p. 30) for researchers that begins with an understanding of how settler colonial logics “have shaped realities and subjectivities” (p. 30); with this understanding, researchers can “situate educational research genealogically and illuminate its operating structure” (p. 44). Applying a decolonial stance is instrumental and empowering within my project, giving me space to subvert the dominant Western traditions (e.g., settler colonial logics) of qualitative research.

Similarly, portraiture methodology emerged from the critical work of Dr. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) in her book, *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture*. However, Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot points out she did not “invent” portraiture as a methodology, but instead was influenced “by a long arc of work, reaching back two centuries, that joined art and science” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 6). This acknowledgement and respect paid to
previous generations is consistent with decolonizing methods that rely on Indigenous views, both of which will inform this study.

Another key value of portraiture is an emphasis on looking for the “goodness,” strengths, or resilience of the people or community involved in the research (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (2016), “Portraiture very purposefully says we’re going to try to understand what’s worthy and strong; always recognizing of course that goodness is inevitably laced imperfection” (p. 20). Applying a “goodness” approach is similar with social work strengths-based practice. Instead of looking for pathology or what needs to be fixed, this research study will seek to understand what is being done toward disrupting coloniality and thus re-imagining the MSW education.

Learning about, understanding, and interpreting the experiences of participants takes skill and time. To achieve this, portraiture methodology utilizes of a variety of techniques including in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, as well as mapping out contextual and thematic aspects (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016). Essential to the effectiveness of these techniques, portraiture methodology places the highest premium on building trusting, sincere, and authentic relationships between participants and researcher (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016). Similarly, decolonizing methodologies and Indigenous perspectives center the importance of relationships. Wilson (2013) refers to as relational accountability, “a process of systematically bringing relationships into consciousness and becoming accountable with, for, and to them” (p. 314). The social work profession also recognizes the significance of relationships, going so far as to include this as a key value of the profession within the code of ethics (NASW, 2017). Portraiture methodology is thus a complimentary research tradition helping to connect decolonizing
methodology and social work practice. The participants for this study are MSW educators that I either know personally or have been recommended through a network sampling strategy.

**Research Plan: Research Site, Data Source and Sample, Instruments and Procedures, Data Collection and Analysis**

For this study, the research site were Master of Social Work (MSW) educational sites, and data sources are MSW educators. I utilized a purposeful mixed sampling approach of criterion, network, and chain strategies to identify MSW educators who belong to communities or populations that have historically and currently been Othered within the Western dominated academy and social work profession. I initially used my personal network to locate MSW educators who (a) have a depth of knowledge regarding intersectionality, coloniality, settler colonialism, and decolonization, and (b) make active efforts to challenge coloniality.

Consistent with portraiture methodology's call for in-depth interviews, I gathered and collected data using semi-structured individual interviews. First, I used a purposeful mixed sampling approach to identify participants and then invited fourteen participants to be part of the semi-structured individual interviews. The individual interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes; I also utilized brief follow-up meetings when needed. I analyzed data integrating the critical theories and a three-step thematic analysis that includes: a) preliminary data analysis, b) thematic data analysis, and c) interpretation.

Throughout the process I not only relied on my dissertation committee for ongoing feedback, but I also formed a Community Advisory Board (CAB) composed of MSW level practitioners. As stated in Appendix E, the purpose of the CAB is to provide a critical perspective, feedback, and share insight toward clarifying/adjusting/evaluating goals of the study, strategies and methods for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting stories/data, and
developing a concrete arts-based representation to share with the wider community (Pinto, Spector, & Valera, 2011, p. 1006).

**Limitations**

A limitation to this project is the amount of interaction and observation with the participants. While I had originally planned to use focus groups, due to scheduling conflicts I was not able to do so. I relied on individual interviews to understand MSW educator experiences, and while it helped me understand better who each person is, and what it is they do, I know that I only scratched the surface of learning. Portraiture methodology requires an in-depth study of participants, usually meaning multiple intensive interviews and observations with each participant. According to Hampsten (2015):

> Participants must be open to a long-term relationship in which they participate in extensive interviews and shadowing. This process can be intensive for both the researcher and the participant in terms of time and emotion. Depending on the individual’s story and situation, the portraitist will likely need several meetings to collect enough data. (p. 469)

However, this type of in-depth study was not realistic given the varying schedule and location of educators.

While this project is aimed at understanding the experiences of MSW educators, a larger project would seek to understand the experiences of students. Specifically, what do students think about their educational experience in MSW programs? How do they respond to MSW educators’ active and intentional efforts to challenge coloniality? What are their critiques and suggestions for how to challenge coloniality? What are their experiences in challenging coloniality? How do they envision a re-imagined social work education? Due to personal and structural time constraints, I regret not being able to adequately address these important
questions within the scope of my research project. However, I invited MSW alumni and current MSW students to be part of the CAB, and their input is included in the designing, planning, and disseminating of the research findings.

**Delimitations**

The theoretical and methodological framework scope of this project is limited to MSW educators who are essentially teachers in the classroom. Originally, I had hoped to broaden the definition of who MSW educators are so that it would include field instructors, alumni, and current students. However, doing so began to complicate matters logistically speaking, and it also took away from being able to focus specifically on what social work educators are actually doing in the classroom.

Additional boundaries set for this project are to include primarily MSW educators who identify as representatives of communities and populations targeted by historical and current oppression. This was a conscious choice in an effort to be consistent with the theoretical analysis of this project, as well as to ensure the radical, revolutionary, activist views and approaches from people who are often relegated to the margins, excluded, or dismissed are acknowledged, honored, and embraced.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Findings, and Discussion. The Introduction chapter provides an overview of the research project. Specifically, the focus is on identifying the issues to be studied, providing a problem statement along with research questions, describing the purpose and significance for the project, followed by a brief discussion of the theoretical framework, methodology overview, and limitations and delimitations. Chapter two is a review of the
literature that helps provide a historical and contemporary context for the project; offers an analysis of the strengths and also gaps related to the research about the topic; and offers an argument to justify the research project. Chapter three describes the methodology to be used in the dissertation. This chapter begins with a discussion regarding the role of the researcher, followed by a restatement of the research questions, then an explanation of the research design, setting sample and data sources, instruments and procedures, data collection and analysis. Chapter four tells the story of the participants, identifying the main themes and findings learned throughout the data collection process. The themes and findings are related back to the research questions, strengths and gaps of the literature review. Chapter five is the concluding chapter that summarizes the entire project, discussing the implications for social work education and practice, as well as recommendations for future projects.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I hope to create an energy and rhythm of conversation with the people who read this work and with the ideas of scholars and artists who influence my thinking and learning. My intention is to demonstrate a relational ethic that knowledge is collectively constructed in relation to each other (Chilisa, 2012). I apply CRT, TribalCrit, and intersectionality throughout the literature review while maintaining the core component of portraiture methodology, which is to reflect “the complexity and aesthetic of human experience” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 5). Thus, I intentionally incorporate art and song lyrics as counterstories, in order to explore the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality and settler colonialism in MSW education. Finally, I engage the art and literature related to the decolonial turn (Maldonado-Torres, 2017) and epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011) in order to re-imagine MSW education. I end the chapter with a return to the importance of challenging the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality in MSW education.

Art, Coloniality, and Settler Colonialism: Contexts and Patterns in MSW Education

Art as Resistance to Coloniality

Positioning art as an introduction to a literature review may seem unconventional to some, especially in academic traditions steeped in coloniality where rules are constructed to allow only very specific forms of knowledge to be accepted as legitimate. However, my research project is an effort to disobey this colonial construction. Mignolo (2011) might describe my action as epistemic disobedience, since I am at attempting to provide a “counterpoint” to “modernity/coloniality” (p. 46). Complimenting this effort, I employ portraiture methodology as a way to resist the confines of white logic and coloniality. By “blending art and science” portraiture methodology emphasizes a style of writing that “is intentionally inclusive” so that a
wider audience is able to be reached (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016, p. 19). Thus, weaving and mixing knowledges and perspectives across disciplines, along with those painted on canvasses or walls, or composed by instruments or spoken word, are viewed as strategy to subvert coloniality. The hope is to fortify and create space for healing, through acknowledging the strength, courage, and hope that continues to thrive and persist. Finally, I hope to initiate critical reflection about the material and images being used. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), the aim is to generate a “language that is understandable, not exclusive and esoteric . . . a language that encourages identification, provokes debate, and invites reflection and action” (p. 9). Ultimately, I am attempting to follow the lead of the many artists, writers, activists, teachers, and social workers who have paved the way to disobey the academy.

I open this section with art of resistance (Figure 2.1). In 2018, the group known as NSRGNTS, who use art to create space “for the transmission of indigenous thought and philosophy” (Votan, n.d.), created “Indio Poderoso.”
From a TribalCrit lens, Brayboy (2005) explains how “interactions between the dominant U.S. society and American Indians has been to change (‘colonize’ or ‘civilize’) us to be more like those who hold power in the dominant society” (p. 430). Such interactions have led to an either total lack of awareness or active dysconsciousness toward Indigenous people. NSRGNTS artwork literally crosses out the colonial interactions and ideas which are manifested in the words “Indio Muerto” (“Dead Indian”). NSRGNTS replaces them with “Indio Poderoso” (“Powerful Indian”) symbolizing Indigenous strength and resilience in the face of hundreds of years of destructive, dehumanizing, and genocidal colonialism. Their work is an example of how art creates hopefulness, empowerment, and agency through counterstories. NSRGNTS are using the physical environment to create a dialogue for re-examining and unlearning settler colonial logics, in order to develop ways to be answerable to genocide and land theft.

In the section, I will define and provide examples of counterstories, as they are an essential element of challenging coloniality. Following this section, I will use various types of counterstories to critique the historical and current practices, processes, and effects of coloniality within MSW education.

**Counterstory.** As demonstrated with “*Indio Poderoso,*” and consistent with critical race theory (CRT), counterstorytelling and art help convey the strength, insistence, determination, and pride of those peoples and communities who speak back, disobey, and refuse the dominant cis/hetero/male/Eurocentric/Christian modernity paradigm. They can be used as “a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories” (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002,

… can open new windows into reality, showing us that there are possibilities for life other than the ones we live… Counterstories can quicken and engage conscience. Their graphic quality can stir imagination in ways in which more conventional discourse cannot. But stories and counterstories can serve an equally important destructive function. They can show that what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel. They can show us the way out of the trap of unjustified exclusion. They can help us understand when it is time to reallocate power. (p. 2414-1415)

Counterstories, thus, are a technology that can be used to empower while simultaneously lighting a path toward the formation of liberatory educational spaces. For this reason, counterstories like “Indio Poderoso” are vital to the survival and sovereignty of Indigenous communities.

**Examples of counterstories.** In her book *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) writes “The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism—the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and a policy of genocide and land theft” (p. 2). This counterstory directly challenges the national origin myth of the United States that holds we are a nation of immigrants. Dunbar-Ortiz (2006) explains this myth “serves to preserve the ‘official story’ of a mostly benign and benevolent USA” (para. 3). The idea of a nation of immigrants originated in the 1960s as a response by those in power to create an inclusive nationalist narrative that supported “multiculturalism, diversity, and affirmative action” as opposed to meeting the “demands for decolonization, justice, reparations, social equality, an end of imperialism”
(Dunbar-Ortiz, 2006, para. 1). This counterstory challenges settler fragility and social work emphasis on multiculturalism as opposed to decolonization.

Next, Pinay artist and community organizer Maryanna Hoggatt’s (2017) illustration (Figure 2.2) “Filipino History: American Imperialism” is an example of counterstory exposing the racist colonial project of the U.S. government. In her illustration, she writes the word “Savages” across the faces of the portraits of U.S. President McKinley and Republican Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana. These men believed in the inferiority of Filipino people, and thus they enacted violence through military occupation and forcing Westernized and Christianized schooling in order to “save” the Filipino. Hoggatt’s artwork proposes a counterstory that reveals the true savagery was carried out by the U.S. government.

**Figure 2.2 Filipino History: American Imperialism**

![Image of portraits with the word “Savages” written across them.]

The following sections will expand on the previous discussion (in Chapter 1) of coloniality within social work education. Specifically, I will be addressing the intersections of settler colonial and white logic within social work curriculum.
**Settler Colonial Logics within Social Work**

The mythology of the “dead Indian” has long been promulgated by public figures such as California Governor Peter Burnett in his 1851 State of the State Address who declared “That a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races until the Indian race becomes extinct must be expected” (Burnett, 1851). Similarly, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, who said in a lecture in New York in 1866, “I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are the dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every 10 are” (Hagedorn, 2008). Further, the founder of the Carlisle Indian Boarding School, Richard Pratt, in his 1892 speech at the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction, read from his report, exclaiming:

> A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man. (Pratt, 1892)

Finally, Canadian deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott, who in 1920 explained to the Special Parliamentary Committee of the House of Commons his plans to give Indian people citizenship using the following logic:

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone … 

> Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill. (Scott, 1920)
These four examples (and there are obviously many more) reflect the settler colonial logic of elimination of Indigenous people to justify genocide, land theft, and generations of dispassion and indifference regarding the trauma Indigenous people live with.

Social work education is not immune from applying the logic of elimination and upholding a carceral state. Social workers have played a shameful role in perpetuating settler logics by disproportionately removing Native and Black children from their homes exacerbating generational trauma. Dorothy Roberts (2002), in her book *Shattered Bonds*, provides a devastating analysis of the historical and present-day racial discrimination of the child welfare system toward Black families. Roberts (2002) provides an intersectional analysis that shows how structural racism directed at Black welfare recipients following the civil rights movement became more punitive.

At that same time, within the child welfare system, the response was to incentivize adoption and foster care (Roberts & Sangoi, 2018). In 1997, when U.S. foster care was composed of 40% Black children, the Adoption and Safe Families Act was passed in which states were further incentivized to reduce their foster care populations and push for adoption, as opposed to providing the financial assistance that so many families could have benefited from (Roberts & Sangoi, 2018). While this is just one example, Roberts (2002) centers testimonies of Black families detailing the harm they experienced within the child welfare system. Based on these counterstories, she argues that the child welfare system has caused:

> serious group-based harms by reinforcing disparaging stereotypes about Black family unfitness and need for white supervision, by destroying a sense of family autonomy and self-determination among many Black Americans, and by weakening Blacks’ collective ability to overcome institutionalized discrimination. (Roberts, 2002, p. ix)
Looking back at what Roberts (2002) offers here, I wonder what the impact would have been on my trajectory as a social work student if I had the critical analysis of the child welfare system? How would my interactions have differed with the Black family I discussed in Chapter 1? What sort of conversations could we have had together? Would it have allowed for a different kind of space to exist that might include advocacy and organizing?

With regard to Native children and the child welfare system, Hannel (2017) highlights the scope of the problem writing:

a 1974 study by the Association of American Indian Affairs was presented to Congress revealing upwards of 35 percent of all Indian children had been taken from their families ‘placed in adoptive families, foster care, or institutions’ at some point in their lifetime and “approximately 90 percent [were] placed in non-Indian homes.”

Similarly, Sinclair (2004) provides a historical analysis of how MSW education in Canada has “not been free from colonial influence” (p. 50); she points to social workers who were complicit with what is known as the “60’s Scoop” (p. 50). Sinclair (2004) explains that the mass removal of Aboriginal children followed the protests of Aboriginal people regarding the systematic violence of residential schools.

Indeed, early social work practices were complicit with government colonial actions. When Aboriginal people began to protest against the residential school system and the schools began to close down, the “child welfare era” ensued and is evidenced by the mass child welfare “scooping” of Aboriginal children, which culminated in transracial adoption and/or long-term foster care. Aboriginal people have decried these actions as genocidal. In this manner, the social work profession became a pawn to further enact state policy towards Native people (Hart, 1999; Bruyere, 1999; Maurice 2000). (p. 50). The following sections will further explore the literature
on coloniality and settler colonialism within MSW education, specifically focusing on white logic within research curriculum.

Coloniality and the Hubris of Zero Point

While there is vast scholarship on the process and effects of colonization (Fanon, 1963; Memmi, 1965; Constantino, 1970), Quijano (2000) coined the term of coloniality to detail and illuminate how the global modern-day world order has been influenced by 500 years of European colonial domination. Quijano (2007) points out that the countries today most affected by poverty, war, and exploitation are “the colonized populations” (p. 169). Quijano (2007) writes:

In the beginning colonialism was a product of a systematic repression, not only of the specific beliefs, ideas, images, symbols or knowledge that were not useful to global colonial domination, while at the same time the colonizers were expropriating from the colonized their knowledge, specially in mining, agriculture, engineering, as well as their products and work. The repression fell, above all, over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized objectivised expression, intellectual or visual. It was followed by the imposition of the use of the rulers’ own patterns of expression, and of their beliefs and images with reference to the supernatural. These beliefs and images served not only to impede the cultural production of the dominated, but also as a very efficient means of social and cultural control, when the immediate repression ceased to be constant and systematic. (p. 169)

Quijano’s analysis helps us understand just how pervasive and totalizing European colonialism was across the globe. The European colonial projects of domination not only killed, displaced,
and enslaved millions of people, taking land and exploiting natural resources but also controlled all “modes of knowing.” This brutal and violent system of domination and oppression allowed European colonial powers to retain “social and cultural control” up until current day.

Moreover, Quijano (2007) explains that European standards of knowledge were first positioned “out of reach” from the colonized; over time, colonized peoples were taught aspects of European ways of knowing as a strategy “to co-opt” cultural and social institutions of power (p. 169). Such a strategy meant that those who tried to emulate European culture may have some chance at accessing power. Quijano (2007) notes that this is what made European culture seem “seductive” (p. 169). In this way, “European culture became a universal cultural model” (Quijano, 2007, p. 169).

Building from Quijano’s work, Grosfoguel (2013) illustrates just how dominating Europeanisation of knowledge and culture have become by posing the following questions:

- How is it possible that the canon of thought in all the disciplines of the Social Sciences and Humanities in the Westernized university (Grosfoguel 2012) is based on the knowledge produced by a few men from five countries in Western Europe (Italy, France, England, Germany and the USA)? How is it possible that men from these five countries achieved such an epistemic privilege to the point that their knowledge today is considered superior over the knowledge of the rest of the world? How did they come to monopolize the authority of knowledge in the world? (p. 74)

Grosfoguel’s questions highlight the seductiveness of European thinkers and ideas from five countries, which are so deeply entrenched within Western-based academies that it almost hardly gets addressed.
Furthermore, Castro-Gomez (2005) refers to this process as the “hubris of zero point” (p.17). It “refers to the knowledge of the observer who cannot be observed” (Hernández-Wolfe, 2013, p. 25). Mignolo (2009) argues that the hubris of zero point makes visible the same power structures that create oppressive systems of racial, gender, class hierarchies, resulting in a sustaining practice of coloniality. Mignolo (2009) believes this is the reason scholars should de-link and de-colonize the academy through processes of epistemic disobedience.

**Coloniality in MSW Education: “Now You’re Under Control”**

Call-and-response is a widely used technique within various artforms (e.g., music, dance, theater, painting, sculpting) and community spaces (e.g., church, school, playground). Utilizing call-and-response is an attempt to create a rhythm and encourage an energy of participation, intimacy, and discussion between art, the research literature, myself, and the reader. I am also using this technique as part of an indigenizing practice that wishes to signal my respect and relationship with the reader and participants in this study. I want the readers and those who engage with this dissertation to know that while we may not have met, we are in relation to one another. The call-and-response is an attempt to create that relationship and honor the value in co-constructing knowledge collectively and collaboratively.

The call-and-response uses the lyrics from the protest song *Killing in the Name* by Rage Against the Machine (1992). Rage Against the Machine was one of the most revolutionary rock bands throughout the 1990s, and their music sought to challenge capitalism, white supremacy, and state-sanctioned violence. Their music was and continues to be highly influential, and helped create space for vital counternarratives that challenged the status quo. I have chosen to repeat the hook, “And now you do what they told ya, now you’re under control” with the intention of illuminating coloniality in MSW education. In between the hook are two examples of coloniality.
The first focuses on Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud’s underlying racism in their theories of human development, and the second spotlights Jane Addams’ sympathetic comments toward the lynching of Black people. While these examples of racism exhibited by three prominent figures within social work are troubling to say the least, the song lyrics are there as a counterpoint to call into question what is being taught, to challenge the white logic (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva, 2008) embedded within the social work, and to re-center hope in knowing there were always people in resistance to coloniality.

**Call-and-response.**

“And now you do what they told ya, now you're under control”

~Rage Against the Machine, “Killing in the Name,” (1992)

In 1899, Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen published their book, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, which according to McGregor (2011) “became a classic of Australian anthropology” (p. xvii). This tremendously popular book was widely read and studied by the “European intellectuals such as Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud” (McGregor, 2011, p. xviii). In fact, Lindqvist (2007) points out that both Durkheim and Freud were “The most famous interpreters of Spencer and Gillen’s data” (p. 48). The “data” or the “objects” of study in question, were the Aboriginal peoples of what is now known as Australia. Spencer and Gillen specifically observed the Arrerente people perform a seven-week ceremony, then documented their observations and interpretations in their book.

“And now you do what they told ya, now you're under control”

Spencer and Gillen’s views were “premised on the assumption that ‘the Australian aborigines are the most primitive or backward race’ on Earth” (McGregor, 2011, p. xvii); Spencer believed the Arrerente “were a race doomed to extinction” (Lindqvist, 2007, p. 42).
These “scientific” views were common during that time (McGregor, 2011). Durkheim and Freud held the same “scientific” views and built their theories of social, human, and sexual development on the “findings” from *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*. It goes without saying that Durkheim’s and Freud’s theories have had a major influence on the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology, and ultimately social work. Thus, not only were Durkheim’s and Freud’s theories rooted in settler colonial and white supremacist logics, but they were also based on “fundamental assumptions that have proved incorrect” (Lindqvist, 2007, p. 52).

“*And now you do what they told ya, now you’re under control*”

Jane Addams was one of the most influential people within the social work profession (Franklin, 1986); she founded the Hull House in Chicago providing services to low-income people and immigrants (Shields, 2017); and she was nominated 91 times for the Nobel Peace Prize between 1916-1931, earning the award in 1931 for her relentless peace work and anti-war activism (Shields, 2017). Within MSW education, she is often considered the starting point of the social work profession and thus her status is revered. And possibly for that reason, there is not much critical examination about her 1901 letter titled *Respect for Law* (Addams, 2018), in which she states her views on the lynching of African Americans in the South.

“*And now you do what they told ya, now you're under control*”

While Addams was opposed to lynching, her comments supported “the presumption that lynchings are the desperate effort of the Southern people to protect their women from black monsters” (Wells-Barnett, 1901, para. 4). Addams (1901) writes:

Let us then assume that the Southern citizens who take part in and abet the lynching of negroes honestly believe that that is the only successful method of dealing with a certain
class of crimes; that they have become convinced that the Southern negro in his present
undeveloped state must be frightened and subdued by terror; that, acting upon this theory,
they give each lynching full publicity and often gather together numerous spectators…
Let us give the Southern citizens the full benefit of this position, and assume that they
have set aside trial by jury and all processes of law because they have become convinced
that this brutal method of theirs is the most efficient method in dealing with a peculiar
class of crime committed by one race against another. (para 5–6).

“And now you do what they told ya, now you're under control”

Journalist and revolutionary civil rights activist Ida B. Wells had spent years compiling
and documenting hundreds of lynching cases in her book *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics
and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States, 1892-1894*. Wells and Addams were
friends, and thus Wells was outraged and shocked by her friend’s comments. Wells (Wells-
Barnett, 1901) laments, “It is strange that an intelligent, law-abiding, and fair-minded people
should so persistently shut their eyes to the facts in the discussion of what the civilized world
now concedes to be America’s national crime” (para. 4). Wells did not hesitate to question and
condemn Addams’ comments. Wells’ response was her article *Lynching and the Excuse For It*
(Wells-Barnett, 1901), in which she refers to Addams’ comments as an “unwarrantable
assumption” (Wells-Barnett, 1901, para. 4).

“And now you do what they told ya, now you're under control”

Wells believed and knew that Addams’ comments were harmful, noting that Addams’
comments were consistent with a majority of responses from White people when it came to
lynching. It seems clear that the responses Wells received were examples of “White Fragility”
(DiAngelo, 2011) rooted in white logic (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva, 2008). DiAngelo (2011)
describes White Fragility as “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves” (p. 57). And despite the overwhelming amount of troubling and horrific data that Wells collected, Addams, who was nominated 91 times for a Nobel Peace Prize, took the position to rationalize lynching. Possibly, Jane Addams was reflecting White Fragility.

“And now you do what they told ya, now you're under control”

**Subverting white logic.** Through the use of call-and-response and with the integration of song lyrics, images, and artwork, I embrace the collective voice of “We” which is part of a relational ethic of this project. In doing so, I am intending to subvert the traditional format of academic social sciences writing by breaking the illusion of objectivity. Objectivity within research is an illusion rooted in the Eurocentric/Western paradigm that centered itself as normative, natural, and enlightened through the violent process of colonialism (Quijano, 2007). Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008) argue that objectivity in the social sciences is an idea founded in “white logic” (p. 17). They define white logic as

a historical posture that grants eternal objectivity to the views of elite Whites and condemns the views of non-Whites to perpetual subjectivity; it is the anchor of the Western imagination, which grants centrality to the knowledge, history, science, and culture of elite White men and classifies ‘others’ as people without knowledge, history, or science, as people with folklore but not culture. (p 17)

White logic can be seen within traditional quantitative and qualitative research. Thus, White logic may lead some to be threatened by my refusal of Western knowledge as central or foundational. White logic may lead others to dismiss my project as flawed with too many personal views, and thus not legitimate. Girded by a feeling of superiority, White logic may
attempt to justify a moral basis of needing “to educate and ‘civilize’” my project (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008, p. 18).

Challenging the dominance of White logic is not an easy task. Even as I write this, I experience the pull toward conforming my style and voice to fit within the dominant White logic framework. The worry that my work may be de-legitimized, viewed as too radical and not taken as seriously, or that it might not be considered of utility is a lasting and pervasive effect of coloniality. However, I am fortunate to be guided and inspired by the many artists, activists, and scholars who have created the maps and pathways to challenge, resist, and disrupt coloniality.

**The Decolonial Turn: Possibilities of Decolonial Education in Social Work Programs**

“And now here you come, bill of sale in your hands
And surprise in your eyes that we’re lacking in thanks
For the blessings of civilization you’ve brought us,
The lessons you’ve taught us, the ruin you’ve wrought us --
Oh see what our trust in America’s brought us.”
~Buffy Sainte-Marie (1966)

These lyrics from Buffy Sainte-Marie’s song *My Country 'Tis Of Thy People You're Dying* (1966) reflect the feelings of anger, frustration, resentment, and deep skepticism brought on by coloniality. At the same time, these lyrics point to a raised consciousness, and a calling out for people to wake up to the reality of the lasting effects of colonialism. In this way, the song asks the listener to consider what Maldonado-Torres, (2017) refers to as the decolonial turn:

[The decolonial turn] consists of the shift from the acceptance of inferiority and the conditions of slavery to the assumption of the position of a questioner. It is a position that entails not only a skepticism of the a priori superiority of Europe, but also radical doubt about the lack of the full humanity of the colonized. As a result of this turn, the colonized subject emerges not only as a questioner but also as an embodied being who seeks to become an agent. (p. 118)
This is how coloniality works. It thrives when we fail to question the dominant paradigm, when we live in a dysconscious (King, 1991). What happens when social work educators are not challenging or questioning the racist foundations of Durkheim’s and Freud’s work? What happens when social work students are taught from a single axis analysis (Collins & Bilge, 2016) and not a more complicated and honest narrative of Jane Addams? Are we relinquishing our voices of dissent? Are we are positioning ourselves to remain under control of coloniality? Essentially, we do what we’re told. We do not question. We practice dysconsciousness and fail to provide the necessary critique that Ida B. Wells so brilliantly and courageously put forth. We are under control of coloniality; we do what we’re told.

The song *Killing in the Name* by Rage Against the Machine (1992) was a protest song about police brutality, specifically in response to the beating of Rodney King. *Killing in the Name* is an example of a decolonial turn. The song lyrics “And now you do what they told ya, now you're under control,” suggests a sense of obedience and submission to authority, a relinquishing of one’s rights, an acceptance of inferiority. The decolonial turn occurs at the end of the song with the refrain “Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me!” repeated 16 times. “Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me!” “Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me!” 16 times is also, ironically, the number of bullets Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke fired into the 17-year-old body of Laquan McDonald to kill him (Lansu, 2018). Unlike the not-guilty verdict in the King trial, Van Dyke was found guilty of second-degree murder (Babwin & Tarm, 2018).

“Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me!” is the fitting response to the original call “And now you do what they told ya, now you're under control.” It is a rejection of dysconsciousness, of 500 years of colonialism and coloniality. It is also a connection to radical Filipino scholars like E. San Juan whose writings challenged scholars to “critique neoliberal configurations of the
state” (Viola, 2009, p. 19) and Renato Constantino (1970), who wrote about and called for action again U.S. colonialism in the Philippines. According to Constantino (1970), “The most effective means of subjugating a people is to capture their minds. Military victory does not necessarily signify conquest. As long as feelings of resistance remain in the hearts of the vanquished, no conqueror is secure” (p. 2). Indeed, Rage Against the Machine make it clear that resistance remains in the heart, and thus coloniality can be challenged.

Decolonial Re-Imagining of Social Work Education: A Critical Multi-disciplinary-theoretical Connection

How are social work educators positioning themselves to build decolonial educational spaces? I take inspiration from la paperson’s (2017) argument that within systems of coloniality (e.g., social work education) are “decolonial riders” (p. xvii) with “decolonizing desires” (p. 71) who can assemble a decolonizing university. Indeed, my study hopes to learn from the “decolonial riders” who la paperson (2017) describes as being “ghosts in the machine” (p. xiv) who have agency to challenge, resist, and disrupt from within the system.

Within this next section, I will highlight examples of critical multi-disciplinary and theoretical connections that may help shift the dominant discourse in MSW education. There are numerous examples of critical and decolonizing pedagogical approaches that open up affirming, critical, trauma-informed, healing-centered counterspaces. Examples include Anti-War Pedagogy (Ali & Buenavista, 2018), Pedagogies of Resistance: The Pillars of Deimperialization (Tintiangco-Cubales, Curammeng, 2018), Barrio Pedagogy (Romero, Arce, Cammarota, 2009), Anticolonial methodologies (Calderón, 2014), and critical indigenous pedagogy (CIP) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) to name a few. Though it is out of the scope of this project to describe and
critique all of these examples, my hope is to spark interested so that readers who are interested can continue to learn and develop their ideas.

**Red Pedagogy.** One essential example that social work education could learn from is Sandy Grande’s (2015) seminal text *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*. Grande (2015) defines Red Pedagogy as “an analysis of the daily threats imposed by capitalist society and consumerist culture intent on appropriating Indigenous lands and resources” (p. 95). She argues that what separates Red pedagogy from other critical approaches is the insistence of:

- hope that believes in the strength and resiliency of indigenous peoples and communities,
- recognizing that their struggles are not about inclusion and enfranchisement to the ‘new world order’ but, rather, are part of the indigenous project of sovereignty and indigenization. It reminds us that indigenous peoples have always been peoples of resistance, standing in defiance of the vapid emptiness of the bourgeois life. (2015, p. 32).

Red Pedagogy challenges all critical and social justice pedagogy to account and be answerable to Indigenous sovereignty and knowledge. It also serves as to highlight the paradoxical nature of education as being a space of nurturing and violence at the same time.

**Abolition pedagogy.** A second critical example is abolition pedagogy. According to Escobar (2014) the state (e.g., government and institutional authority) will always take action to protect itself from perceived threats. Threats can be viewed as critical ethnic studies educators openly and actively questioning the status quo, organizing with students against the militarization and criminalization of students (Escobar, 2014). For instance, in 2017 CSUN students and faculty (mostly of color) organized and protested the presence of Customs and
Border Protection (CBP) at a university sponsored student job fair (Guzman-Lopez, 2017; Smith, 2017). The protestors rejected the view that our campus should invite an organization like CBP, which historically and currently has caused violence toward immigrants and refugees. Escobar suggests that in order to challenge and disrupt coloniality, educators could assume a pedagogical stance of abolition, which centers:

the way that the U.S. prison regime organizes education, including our own complicity.

More importantly, however, it means that we make it possible in our classrooms for students to envision the creation of a world that is not organized on the racialized dialectical relationship of freedom and unfreedom. (p. 245)

While social work has yet to widely embrace an abolition pedagogy, it may be an approach that could prepare social work students with the tools and skills to recognize, decode, deconstruct, and dismantle colonialist consciousness.

**Indigenous knowledge (IK).** A third example would be applying an indigenous knowledge (IK) framework. IK can serve as a guiding framework to preserve a relational connection with ancestors and relatives, educational community, and future generations of students. It should be understood that there is not one singular IK but rather countless and various expressions (Battiste, 2008; Walters, et al., 2018). Utilizing IK is an indigenizing process that must also include the simultaneous decolonizing process (Walters, et al., 2018). According to Walters, et al. (2018), “While indigenizing is building up from our Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and practices, decolonizing is simultaneously dismantling internalized colonization that permeates everyday living and infiltrates through ways and practices” (p. 3). As I move along this research project, I keep in mind three questions posed by Dr. Karina Walters (Choctaw) in her 2016 presentation titled *Transcending trauma and community health*. 
1. What kind of ancestor did my ancestors envision me to be?
2. What kind of ancestor do I want to be?
3. What kind of ancestor do I want or envision future generations to be? (p.28)

These questions reflect an IK framework that recognize the “connectedness of all creation across time and space, with relationships between past, present, and future entities” (Walters, et al., 2018, p. 3). Such an understanding aligns with a responsibility and “kinship with the other living creatures and life energies embodied in their land, and kinship with the spirit world” (Battiste, 2008, p. 500).

IK offers purpose and significance to this project, by extending the three questions posed by Dr. Walters to social work education, which can be instructive in a re-thinking about how to consider “relational connections” (Walters, et al., 2018, p. 3). For instance, what would social work education look like if it was framed in a way that considers a responsibility to previous, current, and future generations? What would it mean for educators designing courses to consider the imaginations of previous ancestors in developing curriculum while reflecting on the hopes for future generations? How would social work educators answer these questions in response to re-imaging social work education? By extending these questions into my research project, I hope it will elicit a critical dialogue, inquiry, and reflection about the direction of social work education.

Summary of the Literature and Problem

In summary, in Chapter two I attempted to review literature using images and song lyrics to subvert the White logic embedded within Western paradigm research projects. Additionally, I hoped to make the chapter accessible to communities outside of academia and social work, as an intentional effort to disseminate the work. Since coloniality and settler colonial logics of
elimination continue to affect MSW education, this project is intended to understand the experiences of MSW educators challenging coloniality. In Chapter three, I will outline the research methodology, as well as theoretical underpinnings for collecting and analyzing data.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study is to learn from and understand the experiences of MSW educators who actively challenge, resist, and disrupt the effects and processes of coloniality toward a re-imagining and re-designing of social work education. The goals of this study are to share space with educators informed by an ethic and understanding of relational interdependence, engage in a meaningful and respectful dialogue of inquiry, and to share ideas and strategies toward re-imagining social work education. Additionally, the hope is that by bringing together these educators, a supportive and resourceful collective may emerge to continue beyond this research project.

The research questions guiding this qualitative study are:

1. Who are the MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?
2. How do they challenge and disrupt the practices, processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?
3. What do they envision as a re-imagined social work education?

Research Traditions

I have selected to weave two research traditions—decolonial methodologies and portraiture methodology—to guide work in the field to achieve the stated purpose and goals of this study. In the next paragraphs, I will provide an overview and features of decolonizing methodologies and portraiture methodology, along with a rationale as to why these methodologies were selected, followed by a discussion of anticipated implications for the research methods being used.
Decolonial Methodologies

**Overview and features.** As discussed in the earlier chapters, coloniality normalizes and legitimizes Eurocentric/male/cis/hetero/Christian/upper-income/hearing/temporarily able-bodied/settler viewpoints. Prominent decolonial scholar Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) explains that “re-search is still steeped in the Euro-North America-centric worldview. Re-searching continues to give the ‘re-searcher’ the power to define. The ‘re-searched’ appear as ‘specimens’ rather than people” (para. 4). Here, Ndlovu-Gatsheni is drawing attention to the ways Western science has been responsible for exploiting, marginalizing, and harming Indigenous people worldwide. Chilisa (2012) calls for a decolonizing research that:

- involves ‘researching back’ to question how the disciplines—psychology, education, history, anthropology, sociology, or science—through an ideology of Othering have described and theorized about the colonized Other, and refused to let the colonized Other name from their frame of reference. (p. 14)

Fortunately, there is an ever-growing number of scholars who are engaging in vital decolonial work; their efforts are gifts to emerging researchers and serve as a hopeful antidote to coloniality.

One of those gifts is the landmark and groundbreaking text, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, in which Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou, Māori) provides a comprehensive analysis of the effects of colonialism and imperialism imposed upon indigenous peoples of the world. She provides an in-depth exploration and necessity for decolonizing methodologies. Smith (2012) describes in great detail what an indigenous research agenda looks like. An indigenous research agenda focuses primarily on self-determination of indigenous peoples, and “involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of the
mobilization as peoples” (Smith, 2012, p. 121). Essentially, decolonizing research allows indigenous peoples to reclaim and restore land, the power to define, self-determine, and heal.

Smith’s work is empowering, to say the least, and has influenced countless people to take action, to write or research back, and to develop new ways to imagine decolonizing methodologies. For this project I am using decolonial methodologies to provide the critical analysis and language needed to understand the legacy of coloniality and settler colonialism. Having this analysis and language allows me to establish relationships with MSW educators who are engaged in decolonial work.

**Implications of decolonizing methodologies for this study.** Decolonizing methodologies offer a pathway to engage with research methods in a fluid, non-linear, non-Western approach and to produce important counternarratives to coloniality. Decolonial methodologies encourage the subverting of the traditional “objective” interview process in order to gain a space for reciprocal and transformative exchange of learning. In this way, decolonizing methodologies have the potential to create literal changes to the well-being of Indigenous people, people of color, and other populations harmed by coloniality. For example, the MSW educators within this project are very likely to be activists. This approach presents an opportunity within the space of inquiry to build ideas, develop collaborations, and join in alliance or as accomplices in important community, policy, or clinical work directly impacting the above-mentioned groups.

**Portraiture Methodology**

**Overview and features.** Portraiture methodology was developed from the critical work of Dr. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) and described in her book, *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture*. However, Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot points out she did not “invent” portraiture as a methodology, but instead was influenced “by a long arc of work,
reaching back two centuries, that joined art and science” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 6). This acknowledgement and respect paid to previous generations is consistent with values of respect, humility, and recognition of historical interconnections. Portraiture methodology emerges from a place of resistance to the dominant positivist research and educational paradigms by blending art and science (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016).

One of the leading reasons that I have selected portraiture is because of the emphasis on challenging the dominant discourse through the use of art. Art can be take on many forms such as paintings, murals, poems, songs, sculptures, film, and so on. As seen in the literature review, I have incorporated various forms of art as legitimate and significant contributors of knowledge. Portraiture is also empowering to be creative in designing an aesthetic for this project which allowed me to engage with MSW educators who are likely to understand the transformative aspects of art as a tool for justice.

Furthermore, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2016) problematizes dominant social science research noting “this kind of inquiry often bleeds into a preoccupation with pathology, and often devolves into blaming the victim” (p. 20). Strictly focusing on pathology or what needs to be fixed, can lead to the creation of single stories (Adichie, 2009) about people, flattening their actual complex lived experience. Similarly, traditional models of education research can be pathology based and preserve coloniality (Patel, 2016). Patel (2016) explains how dominant models of education research often segments people and communities into narrowly defined sets of groups (e.g. underprivileged, at-risk), which then justifies recommendations and solutions that while helpful in the short-term, actually reinscribe the dominant paradigm. Conducting research that segments or fragments communities into individual markers to be “fixed,” obscures and protects the oppressive structural and institutional forces affecting those communities. Unfortunately, social
work continues to rely on this practice of structuring clinical and healing interventions around individualistic and pathology-based views (Hernández, Almeida, & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 2005; Aisenberg, 2008). However, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot (2016), portraiture researchers “document what’s strong and worthy, in great detail so that we might figure out ways of transporting those ‘goods,’ that goodness, to other settings and transforming them as well” (p. 20). Thus, portraiture methodology can serve to counter this pathology-based view, since it is an inquiry into “goodness”, strengths, and resilience of the people or community involved in the research (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016).

**Implications for this study.** Within the context of coloniality, social work educators who engage in resisting settler colonialism may be pathologized and de-legitimized (e.g., “too radical”, “unrealistic”) and experience victim-blaming (e.g., “you’re too sensitive”, “you’re kind of a complainer”). Thus, portraiture’s emphasis on documenting what is “strong and worthy” serves as a critical counterspace for MSW educators to openly share their views, ideas, and experiences.

Along with the search for goodness, portraiture methodology aims to keep in perspective the contextual setting (e.g. social, cultural, political, historical) of those participating within the research collaboration (Brooks, 2017). This feature of portraiture methodology can be described as “attempts to tell the stories of people who do not have ‘voice’ in the realm of academia” (Chapman, 2005, p. 28). In other words, it provides space and time within the research for participants to experience more control in narrating their experience.

**Research Setting and Context**

The research setting includes accredited MSW programs around the world.
Broad Context of MSW Programs in the U.S.

Brief overview of MSW program demographics. According to the 2016 annual survey conducted by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2017), the faculty demographics of MSW programs in the United States are shown in Table 3.0.

Table 3.0. Faculty Demographics of MSW Programs in the U.S

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time faculty</td>
<td>5,793</td>
<td>71% (Female)</td>
<td>25% (Age 45-54)</td>
<td>64% (White)</td>
<td>68% (Ph.D/DSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time faculty</td>
<td>7,710</td>
<td>75% (Female)</td>
<td>25% (Age 35-44)</td>
<td>61% (White)</td>
<td>14% (Ph.D/DSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13,503</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DSW= Doctorate of Social Work  
POC=People of Color

According to the same survey, student demographics of MSW programs in the U.S. are as indicated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Student Demographics of MSW Programs in the U.S

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time students</td>
<td>41,440</td>
<td>85% (Female)</td>
<td>40% (Age 25-34)</td>
<td>54% (White)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time students</td>
<td>23,046</td>
<td>83% (Female)</td>
<td>47% (Age 25-34)</td>
<td>48% (White)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64,486</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Tables 3.0 and 3.1 give a brief snapshot into MSW programs related to issues of racial and gender representation. Are students being exposed to faculty reflective of their lived racial, gender, class experiences and histories? Or for that matter, what are the challenges teachers of color face challenging coloniality given the majority of MSW colleagues and students are white female-identified? What are the strategies teachers of color use to challenge this effect of coloniality? Based on the demographics in the classroom and within their program how do faculty of color develop and adjust strategies and approaches? Additionally, what happens when
teachers attempt to challenge coloniality by exposing students to critical analysis from Black radical feminists, abolitionist scholars, anti-war activists, Queer Crit, or Mad Studies? Do these teachers receive support, praise, gratitude for challenging white logic and settle moves to innocence?

**Historical and contemporary patterns in MSW programs.** As previously discussed within the introduction and literature review chapters, while MSW programs have continued to evolve their standards and expectations to meet the ethical and social justice issues of the times (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011), MSW education has not adequately addressed the practices, process, and effects of coloniality. Tamburro (2013) points out that MSW educational curriculum standards have left out in-depth analysis of colonialism and Indigenous people. Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, and Hetherington (2013) extend this point in their research noting the effects of limited discussion of colonialism and Indigenous people lead to ongoing pervasive stereotyping and misunderstanding within MSW education. Tamburro (2013) and Gray, et al. (2013) agree that social work education spaces have the capacity to be transformed into sites where coloniality can be disrupted and resisted. Gray, et al. (2013) highlight examples of schools like California State University, Humboldt (CSUH) that explicitly state their mission is to decolonize and work with Indigenous people toward achieving sovereignty. Another example is the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work (MBTSSW) at the University of Hawai‘i where faculty, students, and community spent three years debating and discussing in order to create and adopt an indigenization policy (Morelli, Mataira, & Kaulukukui, 2013).

**Site Selection and Sampling Strategies**

Based on personal experience as an educator over the last ten years, I have learned that a common experience shared by teachers engaged in disrupting coloniality is that at times they feel
isolated and disconnected from their colleagues and students. Often, they may be the only one in their program attempting to disrupt oppressive paradigms of knowledge. Teachers have shared stories of being denied promotions, demoted from curriculum committees, blamed for causing discomfort due to addressing “sensitive” topics, dismissed as too radical or viewed as uncivil. When this type of stereotyping and single storying intersects with other identity markers, social locations, and place within the academic hierarchy, it can produce stressful, isolating, harmful situations, and material insecurity. Consequently, there exists a need to create a community through this research project, that intends to connect educators so as to share resources, ideas, and support. Thus, selecting one MSW program as a research site for the entire project, would most likely not allow for the building of such a community.

Therefore, I utilized a purposeful mixed sampling approach, which consisted of criterion, network, and chain sampling strategies to identify social work educators active in the various ways of challenging the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality. I relied on my personal network connections within the social work and education fields to refer me to social work educators who are or have been involved with the wide-ranging variations of decolonizing projects. After an educator has agreed to participate, their affiliated MSW program was considered a research site.

The issue of confidentiality. In such a project, there is a concern regarding how to handle confidentiality of the MSW program and participant. From a decolonial stance (Patel, 2016), the analysis begins by understanding the history of the process of consent and confidentiality. There is a long history of Western researchers making stereotyped judgments and false interpretations about Indigenous peoples, with apparently little to no regard for ensuring Indigenous participant consent or confidentiality (Chilisa, 2012). The effects of such blatant
disrespect are why Smith (2012) wrote “The word itself ‘research’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (p. 1). A decolonial methodology encourages researchers to practice within a “relational ethical framework” that views participants as “co-researchers,” and thus shifts away from participant anonymity in favor of co-researcher empowerment (Chilisa, 2012, p. 119). Such transparency allows for the originators of knowledge in the study to be credited. As Chilisa (2012) explains, “the information imparted, or story offered, would lose its power without knowledge of the teller, and thus, the reason why the researched do not want to be anonymous” (p. 119). Similarly, portraiture methodology challenges the dominant discourse to uphold and rigidly adhere to confidentiality. Hampsten (2015) writes “participant confidentiality is typically not employed in the method. Why? Each portrait is so rich in personal detail that maintaining confidentiality is impractical” (p. 469).

While the rationale for revealing participant or co-researcher information is sound, I realize there are many dynamics at play. For instance, many of the participants were aware of the relational ethical framework and views of rejecting confidentiality. All but three, supported the sharing their name. The reasons for keeping names confidential was related to the power imbalances and potential threats of retribution within their respective program. During interviews, we discussed the issues directly. We considered advantages and limitations of upholding confidentiality and upholding a relational ethical framework.

**Relational Accountability**

Relational accountability is a component of the relational ethical framework and according to Wilson (2013) it refers to, “a process of systematically bringing relationships into consciousness and becoming accountable with, for, and to them” (p. 314). It will be of great importance to maintain relationships founded in authenticity, reciprocity, and trust with people
and communities involved in this project (Wilson, 2013). From the time I began to reach out to potential participants and every interaction following, I kept in mind the multiple roles I am in, as educator, social worker, and now researcher. Each of these roles carries a differing degree of power and control. To maintain a practice of an indigenist value described by Burkhart (as cited in Wilson, 2013) as “‘We are, therefore I am’” (p. 315), I utilized a community advisory board (CAB) composed of community members, mentors, and (explained in further detail in following sections) which helped me stay engaged in a community space of accountability.

**Data Sources and Sample**

Portraiture allows for a critical and holistic approach as to who and what might be considered data sources, the approach used to collect data, and the data types to be collected. Chapman (2005) explains, “The portraiture method rejects flat, stereotypical explanations…and depicts the multiple layers of contexts represented by events and people” (p. 28). This idea suggests I need to keep an open-minded perspective to the range of data sources possible.

**Key Characteristics of MSW Educators**

For this study, the data sources included primarily MSW educators (active professors, full or part-time) and the places they work (e.g. university, classroom, field placements), the events (e.g., classes, professional conferences) they are part of, and the documents (e.g. syllabi, publications, course materials) they use and produce. I also used video- and audio-recorded interviews with MSW educators and then transcribed the audio interview data into text. When and where possible, I conducted visual observations of the workspaces (e.g., the places, events, documents previously mentioned) and then made notes in a journal to incorporate later. This yielded important contextual visual data that added to the portrait of each social work educator.
**Sampling Design**

In selecting the sampling design, I relied on a purposeful mixed sampling approach of criterion, network, and chain sampling strategies. Combining sampling strategies was an effective approach because it allowed me to utilize and leverage the existing network of relationships that I have been fortunate to have cultivated over the last decade of my teaching career. Also, a mixed sampling strategy leveraged my prior working relationship with potential participants and was consistent with both decolonial and portraiture methodology, due to the intimate and reflexive nature of the approach.

Portraiture methodology encourages “researchers to look continually for ‘the deviant voice’, those perceptions that depart from the norm” (Hackmann, 2002, p. 53). For this study, the deviant voices were the MSW educators challenging coloniality. The criterion I used to identify MSW educators included being a current full or part-time professor, with a MSW degree or higher, from a population that has been colonized, historically subjugated (e.g. Indigenous, person of color, LGBTQ, etc.), and the ability to demonstrate two key components: (a) in-depth knowledge regarding coloniality, settler colonialism, decolonization and/or other critical theoretical frameworks as evidenced by publication, presentations, community work, or other relevant work; and (b) active efforts to resist and disrupt the practice, processes, and/or effects of coloniality through a wide-range of activities including research approach/agenda, pedagogical stances, activism, organizing, and so forth. To confirm both key components of the criteria, I relied on referrals through my professional network and/or participant network/contacts, as well as a look at textual evidence such as research agenda, publications, professional presentations, course syllabi, and so forth.
To identify participants, I reached out to my personal network of colleagues who have mentored or supported me in developing my understanding and awareness of coloniality. I contacted them via email, phone, and/or in-person, always with an acknowledgement of their contributions to my personal and professional growth. The people within my network are known in the social work field as educators who have helped create critical counterspaces challenging hegemonic power structures; they are known for their reputation to empower, inspire, and speak truth to power. These characteristics can be seen in the way they collaborate with students, the critical and decolonizing research methodologies they use, and the articles they publish and present at conferences.

Reviewing my professional network, the educators represented a diverse group of identity markers, social locations, and approaches to addressing coloniality. Some educators very explicitly write about and center discussion on challenging coloniality. Still there are other educators who do not necessarily explicitly talk about coloniality but nonetheless are appropriate for the study. In discussions with these educators, they have indicated that while they have not used the word coloniality, it is clear their research agenda and pedagogical style addresses the processes and effects of coloniality.

Once participants were identified, I shared the purpose, goals, and research questions of my study, and engaged them in dialogue to elicit their thoughts, reflections, and feedback. This process was meant to be interactive, fluid, fun, and engaging. I explained my blending of decolonial methodologies and portraiture methodology in order to challenge the pathology and deficit-based views inherent in the traditional western models of research. I shared my plan of expectations for participant involvement and inquired to see if they were interested in participating. I made use of chain or snowball sampling which allowed my colleagues to
recommend and connect me to additional MSW educators within their network and who met the criteria.

**Ethical Issues**

I worked with human research participants on a systematic investigation and thus ethical issues such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, data access, storage, and management all pose risks to credibility and integrity of the study if not properly addressed. The first step I took was to ensure accountability by creating a thorough and detailed proposal for the CSUN Institutional Review Board (IRB). Within the IRB proposal, I explained when communicating with the colleagues in my network that I would first use informed consent protocols to ensure they had accurate and detailed information about the benefits and risks of participating in the study—including voluntary participation. I made use of my training as a social worker that taught me the skills of active and reflective listening, establishing trust and integrity through speaking honestly, authentically, and transparently. I made time to answer all questions, use open-ended questions to give participants opportunities to express their understanding of the expectations. I also made myself available to answer questions or receive feedback any time they needed to communicate with me. My informed consent protocols shared information for mental health resources (if needed), as well as how to file a grievance if they felt I had been unfair or discriminatory.

Using an approved IRB protocol, I let all participants know that participation is voluntary and that they reserved the right to stop participation at any time during the study. I included a section on the informed consent form that reviewed voluntary participation, as well as data storage, access, and management. As previously mentioned, both portraiture and decolonial methodologies challenge Western-based views of confidentiality and encourage relational
accountability. Thus, all participants had the opportunity throughout the interview process to discuss their viewpoints on confidentiality; further they also had the ability to decide if they consented to my use of their personally identifiable information in published reports. My role as researcher is to take great care of the personal stories and experiences of the participants, and I made every effort to ensure confidentiality and safety of their personal and private information. Following data collection, I removed “all direct identifiers, substitute codes for identifiers” and made sure all data were filed in locked and password protected computer and cloud drives (Durdella, 2018, pp. 210-211). Lastly, I kept regular contact with my chair and committee, community advisory board (CAB), along with peers to seek feedback about areas of privilege that may have affected my perspective and biases.

**Community Advisory Board (CAB)**

Community advisory boards (CAB) are widely used within social science research to assist researchers with “procedural” issues such as developing strategies for recruitment, accessing a specific community, and notifying participants about risks and benefits (Pinto, Spector, & Valera, 2011, p. 1006). Using a CAB can be critically important when working with Indigenous people, or other populations/communities who have experienced harm and violence from being researched on without accessible language, informed consent, or respect for cultural traditions (Fitzpatrick, Martiniuk’ D’Antoine, Oscar, Carter, & Elliott, 2016). Since the aim of my project is to challenge coloniality, and I worked with a CAB to assist with procedural issues, as well as “substantive” issues such as clarifying/adjusting/evaluating goals of the study, strategies and methods for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting stories/data, and developing a concrete arts-based representation to share with the wider community (Pinto, Spector, & Valera, 2011, p. 1006).
Once I secured IRB approval, I relied on my personal network of colleagues to contact a diverse group of community members including previous students, activists, community organizers, social workers, and teachers across disciplines. I put together a CAB consisting of six people. As I reached out to potential CAB members, I addressed issues of informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, using a plan similar to what I had previously outlined (see Appendix E). Based on varying schedules, I met with CAB members in-person or via Zoom, once-a-semester; I also maintained individual communication between CAB meetings about the status of the project. I gave a $50 gift card incentive to each CAB member as a gesture of appreciation. During meetings I provided food and drinks.

Answerability

In alignment with decolonial and portraiture methodologies, challenging coloniality requires the researcher to practice what Patel (2014) refers to as answerability, upholding responsibilities that emphasize a “stewardship of ideas and learning, not ownership” (p. 372). In other words, the entire process of gathering and analyzing data, as well as the dissemination of findings, must be focused on learning, advancing knowledge, and thus available and responsive to communities especially those most harshly affected by coloniality. To ensure this, I spent time in dialogue with the research participants and CAB members to seek feedback about how this project maintains answerability. A helpful framework to think through critical issues of answerability, is a set of eight questions proposed by Smith (2012):

1. Whose research is it?
2. Who owns it?
3. Whose interests does it serve?
4. Who will benefit from it?
5. Who has designed its questions and framed its scope?
6. Who will carry it out?
7. Who will write it up?
8. How will the results be disseminated? (p. 10)

According to Smith (2012), these questions provide an opportunity for researchers to develop clear well thought out agendas, while addressing issues of integrity. These questions served as a tool for helping the project remain answerable to the communities most impacted by coloniality within social work education.

Data Collection Instruments

Research Invitation and Consent Form

The research invitation (Appendix A) and informed consent form (Appendix B) are two key documents I used prior to meeting with participants and CAB members to inform them of the expectations for the study. The intent of these documents was to inform potential participants of the purpose and goals of the study, expectations, risks and benefits, and plan for how the information will be shared. I consulted with my dissertation committee to get feedback about the format and language to ensure the documents are accessible, clear, and easy to understand.

Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview Guide

The first instrument that I used was a semi-structured focus group interview guide (Appendix C). Durdella (2018) points out that while focus groups can yield a tremendous amount of data, they “require a special set of strategies and skills” (p. 233). Fortunately, as a teacher and social worker I have years of experience facilitating groups, and thus feel very comfortable moderating a focus group.
Connection to research purpose and methods. Focus groups can be spaces to bring together various perspectives and experiences in order to develop a better understanding of how educators are disrupting coloniality. Due to the fragmented and siloed nature of educational institutions (which is a residual effect of coloniality), educators may not have the time to connect and share experiences with other educators. Thus, the focus group space can also create opportunities for relevant and helpful information to be shared. Educators will likely be able to learn about effective or ineffective strategies and can use the space to build a wider network of social workers engaged in disrupting coloniality.

Development of semi-structured focus group guide. As previously mentioned, I spent time informally piloting questions with colleagues, students and alumni, CAB members, and research participants. While the questions developed for the focus group were similar in nature to the individual interviews, one key difference was that focus group interview questions were of a more general nature thereby allowing space for deeper exploration of themes and stories during the individual interview. For example, a focus group question would be to have participants think generally about their views on coloniality in MSW education; whereas in the individual interview I would ask educators to take me through the process of how they dealt with a specific experience challenging coloniality.

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

In addition to a semi-structured focus group interview guide, I used a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix D) for the individual interviews. Durdella (2018) defines semi-structured interviews as a style balancing “questions tied to a study’s research questions and broader research framework” (p. 220) with space for a natural flow, flexibility, and spontaneity
within a conversation. Further, semi-structured interview guides will make use of a variety of “questions, prompts, and topics” (Durdella, 2018, p. 220).

**Connection to research purpose and methods.** I am interested in understanding the experiences of MSW educators who are attempting to re-imagine social work by challenging the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality. Specifically, I am curious to learn about who they are, their backstory and timeline to the work they currently do. A semi-structured in-depth interview was an approach that allowed for the sort of engaged and rich dialogue to provide critical and insightful information. This approach was consistent with portraiture methodology which seeks to expand and deepen the conversation between the portraitist (e.g., researcher) and actor (e.g., participant) (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), portraitists are seeking to create dynamic, descriptive portraits by listening for a story as opposed to listening to a story. This means the portraitist helps identify and select the story, help shaping its coherence (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

**Development of the semi-structured interview guide.** To develop the questions in the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix D), I spent time informally piloting questions with colleagues, students, and alumni, as well as CAB members. Working collectively helped inspire multiple viewpoints, skill sets, and research experience which informed the scaffolding of questions, the pacing of the interview, the relevance of the questions, and the medium to use for encouraging creativity, trust, and, openness. Working collectively also allowed for an exchange of ideas, strategies, which can be integrated in real-time (prior to actual interviews). In this way, the research process was viewed as fluid, active, and relational. Finally, and importantly, this process helped me recognize the ways my power and privilege affect my positioning as a learner as opposed to knower.
Data Collection Procedures

Theory + Tradition + Methods Guide Fieldwork

What I hoped to achieve by applying a multi-theoretical framework with the research tradition and methods, was to understand who the MSW educators are, how they challenge coloniality, and what they have in mind to re-imagine MSW education. This project is rooted in values, ethics, and aesthetics informed by indigenous philosophies that center relationships through relational accountability (Wilson, 2013), critical race theory (CRT) and identification of counternarratives that challenge the dominant Eurocentric paradigm (Abrams & Moio, 2009), and an intersectional analysis that aims to make visible the operations of privilege and power (Symington, 2004; Raheim, 2004). Portraiture is a research tradition that compliments the critical theoretical and philosophical foundations utilized in this project. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explain that data or portraits “are constructed, shaped, and drawn through the development of relationships. All the processes of portraiture require that we build productive and benign relationships” (p. 135). Thus, I am brought these perspectives together with the goal of providing the language and framework to navigate the intimate nature of illumination (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) that occurred within semi-structured interviews.

Storytelling as Relational Accountability

Figure 3.1 “Our Genetic Memory” by Alex Ojeda

To begin this section of explaining my data analysis procedures, I am employing storytelling in order to stay consistent with decolonial and portraiture methodologies. Since the
story was told to me orally, you will notice I shift away from the academic style of writing, to a more conversational tone of writing. This shift in writing is part of my enacting accountability to the relational context shared between myself and the storyteller. I found Wilson’s (2008) informative discussion of how centering an Indigenous epistemology to be instructive and helpful; specifically, he explains how important it was to use multiple writing styles and fonts in order to honor the relationship he was attempting to cultivate with anonymous readers. Wilson (2008) writes that ideas develop through forming relationships, and thus “An idea cannot be taken out of this relational context and still maintain its shape” (p. 8). Therefore, using an academic tone or research jargon might alter the ideas from “their relational context” (Wilson, 2008, p. 8) and thus change the overall shape of the ideas.

The story focuses on the community mural titled “Our Genetic Memory” by Alex Ojeda (he/him/his) (A. Ojeda, personal communication, October 16, 2018), which is located in the city of Pacoima, California. Alex is an educator, artist, organizer, student and mitotiqui (“Aztec” dancer) who utilizes an Indigenous framework in his work with students and community. He has spent over a decade studying and researching Pre-Columbian cultures throughout Mexico and Central America, and shares his findings to his community in the San Fernando Valley. Having known and worked closely with Alex for several years, I reached out to him with a request to include the story of this mural within my dissertation. Alex agreed and shared the following story with me.

According to Alex, several years ago one of his neighbors approached him saying that he was so frustrated by the constant graffiti and tagging on the wall in front of his home. He told Alex that he wished something else could be painted on the wall, something that represented the strength, history, and resilience, and positivity of the community. Alex asked his neighbor if he
could paint the mural to which his neighbor agreed. Together they discussed possible ideas of what it could be. Inspired by his neighbor, as well as the surrounding community Alex went home and sketched the mural he would later call “Our Genetic Memory” (Figure 3.1). According to Alex, the images in the mural attempted to tell the story of cultural-historical pride and strength about the community in Pacoima by recalling vital ancestral knowledge. Alex told me he believes that despite efforts of colonization to erase Indigenous knowledge, the ancestral knowledge survives and serves as the foundation for Indigenous people to know they come from greatness. The mural would illustrate the relationships between the land, the cosmos, and one another. The image of a young person looking at an elder would represent the importance of remembering ancestry and bloodline. In this way, the community in Pacoima would be able to know the physical connection, or the genetic memory with their ancestors. In essence, the genetic memory conveys a deep sense of “We,” connection, and togetherness.

To start the project, Alex spent time clearing the debris from the area and cleaning the wall; he then sketched out the design. In order to achieve the sense of “We,” Alex put out a call to the community, inviting neighbors, friends, and relatives to join in and completely fill in the mural. During a period of three days, over 100 people of all ages came together to help complete the mural. Indeed, the action of painting the mural became a community event that also featured music, food, fun, and celebration. Alex explained it this way, “What we were doing was transforming the wall into community” (A. Ojeda, personal communication, October 16, 2018).

I found Alex’s quote so inspiring, as I think it sums up precisely my data collection procedures. Thus far in the project, I have gathered, analyzed, and summarized various perspectives, theories, and knowledges (e.g., literature review) to inform and create a sketch of ideas and questions (e.g., data collection instruments) to be used toward understanding how
teachers are challenging coloniality (e.g., research problem and question). I have put out a call to community to be part of this project (e.g., sampling strategies, participants, community advisory board), to help fill-in the mural with color (e.g., semi-structured interviews), with the hope of building community, connection, and a sense of “We” between participants. Finally, my aim was to complete the mural (e.g., dissertation) by transforming a wall into community (e.g., developing and sharing portraits of inspiring MSW educators, ideas on challenging coloniality and re-imagining MSW education).

**Procedural Steps and Timeline**

**Ongoing self-reflection.** The quality and centering of relationships is vital toward understanding and constructing knowledge. As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) point out that fundamental to the connection, “mutuality and validity, and to the development of knowledge” (p. 136) is my ability to be self-reflective. Maintaining an intersectional analysis helps me recognize how my social location and identity markers intersect and interact to create power differentials that have the potential to affect my relationship with the people in the study.

Thus, before I begin to engage with people, I used a journaling technique to identify areas of power and privilege in relation to the spaces where I am about to enter. For instance, some questions that guided my journaling are: what does it mean for a cisgender, heterosexual male of color to facilitate an interview that may have non-binary, transgender people? What assumptions am I bringing into the space? What assumptions might they have of me? What are the historical and contemporary contexts I should be aware, that might play out within the interviews? Obviously, I am not able to predict every issue or dilemma that might arise; and in fact, I do not want to structure the situation so rigidly that spontaneity and valuable learning mistakes are
hindered. Additionally, I checked-in and consulted with colleagues and my CAB via email, phone, Zoom, or in person regarding areas of privilege and power.

**Semi-Structured Focus Groups**

Originally I was hoping to conduct two semi-structured focus groups, two hours each composed of 4–5 MSW educators. In alignment with decolonizing methodologies that center the importance of relationships, using the focus groups would have allowed for educators to come together to share ideas, resources, and discuss strategies toward challenging coloniality within the classroom. A brief analysis of the data would have helped me identify recurrent themes, as well as specific knowledge or experiences to examine with in-depth individual interviews.

However, given the geographical locations and various schedules of the participants, I was only able to facilitate one focus group. The focus group consisted of two participants, and since both lived out of state, we held the group online via Zoom. We scheduled the group via email.

During the focus group, I ensured all members had signed the consent forms, agreed to participate, understood the process, and had an opportunity to offer their input about anything that might have been missing from the consent process. I gave them each a $50 Visa gift card as a way to express appreciation. Since we used Zoom, it allowed me to audio and video record the focus group. I also used a hand-held recording device to record the audio. Dual types of recording serve as a back-up in case of equipment failure. After the focus group ended, I saved the audio file and deleted the video file. Since I used audio recording, I obtained consent from participants as well as dialogued about the possibility of using the material toward dissemination. Lastly, I stored all data files in password protected folders in the CSUN My Box cloud and a password-protected external hard drive. I used a transcription service for all data files.
immediately following each focus group. Once data had been transcribed and information had been coded, I deleted the digital audio file.

One hope for this focus group, in addition to understanding the experiences of challenging coloniality, was to create a shared space for educators to establish useful networks that could exist after. During the group we briefly discussed opportunities and ways we could support one another within the work of resisting coloniality.

Since this was a semi-structured and timed group, I was mindful to keep the group focused on the topic; I used check-ins throughout to ensure the focus group was addressing the topics and to ensure people were feeling comfortable with the process. I asked people to describe stories of success, challenges, and ongoing dilemmas toward disrupting coloniality. I continued to use the portraiture interview tenets explained in the previous section, including paraphrasing and summarizing of key themes and narratives that emerged. Finally, at the end of the focus group I left time for a check-in, and made sure people had one more opportunity to share ideas and experiences.

**Individual Semi-Structured Interviews**

Since I was unable to facilitate additional focus groups, I relied on individual semi-structured interviews for the remainder of the participants. I was able to confirm with individual interviews with thirteen participants. I connected with the participants via telephone, email, text, or in-person to discuss the project and answer questions prior to setting up the interview. During these initial conversations, we identified the meeting location, time, and general expectations. Prior to the interviews, I made sure all participants signed the consent forms, agreed to participate, and understood the process. I also sought their input via email, phone, or in person, if they felt anything might be missing from the consent process.
The importance of the location for the interview is critical to decolonization of settler colonial logics (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Acknowledgment of Indigenous people and land is a “powerful way of showing respect and a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people’s history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth” (U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, 2018, para. 2). Thus, failing to affirm Indigenous connection to land and sovereignty is consistent with settler colonial logic of elimination; further it absolves settler conscience from having to reflect critically on Indigenous sovereignty (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013). At the beginning of each interview, I took a few moments to verbally acknowledge the local Indigenous people and their connection to land, and inquired if the research participants were engaged in any collaborative work.

Similarly, location and context are important within the portraiture methodology. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe context as “the framework, the reference point, the map, the ecological sphere” (p. 41); it is thus essential to understanding the human experience. Collaboratively, I discussed with participants what location and time would be best, most comfortable, convenient, and accessible. As stated, due to geographical distance and varying schedules, ten of the interviews occurred via Zoom and two occurred in-person. Each interview was approximately 90-minutes and occurred at various times throughout the Fall and Spring semester.

I offered a $50 Visa gift card to each participant as one way to express appreciation for their time; I also engaged in dialogue with people prior, during, and after the interview to see if there were more appropriate ways to acknowledge their effort and time. For Zoom interviews, I used audio and video recording, but following interviews I saved the audio file and deleted the
video file. Lastly, I followed the same guidelines for transcribing and storing data files as with the focus group.

During the interviews, I integrated the central tenets of portraiture methodology, which overlap with social work clinical practice. Portraiture requires the researcher to reflect on the complexity and boundaries of how voice or “the research instrument” plays out in the process. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) identify six aspects of voice as: witness (e.g., “discerning observer”), interpretation (e.g., how the researcher voices/interprets the data), preoccupation (e.g., the assumptions, background of the researcher), autobiography (e.g., “life story of the portraitist”), discerning other voices (e.g., “focus on the actors” voices), and dialogue (e.g., bring the voices of the portraitist and actor together) (pp. 85–104).

Throughout the interview I incorporated portraiture’s emphasis on symbols and metaphors since both can assist with storytelling, counternarratives, and recognizing intersectional dynamics. Portraiture is an arts-based inquiry, meaning one its key purposes “is to unveil oppression and transform unjust social practices” and “connect with the everyday lives of real people” (Finley, 2008, p. 75). Thus, I encouraged people to bring in art, poetry, music, or other symbols that resonate with them, or that offered them ways to share important and meaningful experiences. For instance, I asked “What is an object or token (it could be anything, like a song, poem, movie, artwork, book, etc.) that could represent or serve as a metaphor to describe your pedagogical approach?”

I used check-ins throughout the interviews to make sure people were comfortable, re-stating and summarizing responses for accuracy. Since the interview was semi-structured there were some interviews that exceeded the 90-minute time mark. I tried to be conscious of time and people’s schedules, and worked to keep the conversation focused. Toward the end of the
interview I summarized key themes that emerged and offered people opportunity to correct anything I may have misstated or misunderstood; they also had the opportunity to add any final comments or thoughts. Finally, in some cases, interview participants wanted to add something, so we scheduled brief 20–30 minute follow-up discussion by email and Zoom.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

**Portraiture and Intersectionality**

Portraiture methodology is a useful and relevant approach to data analysis because it gives guidelines to the portraitist/researcher as to the process of weaving the strands of data in an attempt “to tell the stories of people who do not have ‘voice’ in the realm of academia” (Chapman, 2005, p. 28). The portraiture viewpoint fits nicely with my research project as the participants are likely to be those who have experienced a marginalization or dismissal of their voice. The interview process may become a counterspace providing participants the opportunity to tell their stories as counternarrative (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

As part of a decolonial methodology, an intersectional lens was applied to analyze the data from a perspective that recognizes the multiplicity and simultaneity of identity (Holvino, 2010) within the context of oppression. Within the analytical process, I paid close attention to the ways structural power and social location intersect, in order to make sure the experiences of those on the margins may emerge. Blending multiple theories in this way was instructive and offered a critical lens with which to collect, analyze, and interpret the stories of the participants engaged in challenging, resisting, and disrupting coloniality. For example, applying a CRT and TribalCrit lens assisted in listening for the ways racism and coloniality affect participants’ experiences; these lenses also provided tools to decode context by applying the concept of
interest convergence. Similarly, intersectionality created space to listen for the experiences of those who are often invisible within social justice movements.

**Data Analysis Techniques and Process**

**Preliminary Data Analysis**

For this project, I used the three-phase data analysis process: preliminary, thematic, and interpretation (Durdella, 2018). To begin data analysis, I used a conscious and iterative process of examining the assumptions as informed by the review of the literature as well as my lived experience. I used journaling techniques to identify areas of power, privilege, as well as bias that could interfere with following stages of data analysis. Portraiture views journaling as an iterative process and suggests portraitists (e.g., researchers) make use of impressionistic record, which allows for immediate self-reflection, identification of emerging themes, interpretations, hypotheses, and other relevant observations (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). For example, in a process referred to portraiture as “voice as preoccupation” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 93), I tracked how my thinking and behavior fell into a dichotomous or binary frame that had the potential to limit my overall analysis of the data. To guard against this, I embraced the idea of paradox, which is central to portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), “one of the most powerful characteristics of portraiture is its ability to embrace contradictions, its ability to document the beautiful/ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships” (p. 9). Finally, I regularly sought feedback from my dissertation committee and CAB about to explore and think through assumptions and bias confirmation.
**Thematic Data Analysis**

The second step is thematic data analysis. I utilized a transcription service to transcribe all of the audio and video recorded material, and shared with participants to ensure quality and accuracy. The next step entailed examining the transcribed data in order to identify emerging themes (or codes) using a variety of techniques: ongoing use of impressionistic records and listening for metaphor and symbols (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997); looking for repetitive phrases, recurring patterns, redundancies & discrepancies related to themes within the research literature and research questions (Durdella, 2018); segmenting, chunking, and clustering text (Durdella, 2018). I consulted with the CAB, participants, dissertation committee members for additional perspective and feedback. Once completed, I moved to the final phase of interpretation.

**Interpretation**

In the final phase of data analysis, I interpreted the emergent themes with the assistance of ATLAS.ti software. The ATLAS.ti software allowed me to group together specific emergent themes in order to create a visual representation. From here I began to weave together the themes into a story. I am in the position of learner, and thus “listening for a story” as opposed to “listening to a story” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 10). This distinction was important because listening for a story allowed the analysis process to emerge naturally with all of its complexities and paradoxes intact. During the analysis and interpretation process I continued to consult and receive feedback with the previous mentioned people, the CAB, as well as re-reviewed the research literature and research questions to draw connections.
Researcher Roles

Accountability to Power

Since the purpose of this qualitative study is to learn about who the MSW educators are actively challenging coloniality toward a re-imagining MSW education, I must locate myself within the project by identifying my power, privilege, and multiple intersecting roles. As Raheim (2004) points out:

The relations and practices of power that influence our lives are often invisible to us. If we do not proactively look at how relations of power operate to create advantages for some and deny these advantages to others, it hinders our work…as community practitioners. (para. 1)

As the primary researcher responsible for organizing, planning, and facilitating the project, I hold the power to define and interpret experiences; I also hold power of to include or exclude voices and experiences from the project. With this power comes the responsibility to critically examine how it may affect or influence my relationship to and with the participants, as well as the community most harmed by coloniality within social work education.

Researcher Roles

Within this project, I am occupying multiple roles. I am an educator, social worker, researcher, colleague, mentor, and friend. These roles position me as an insider and outsider. I am considered an insider because I am an enrolled tribal member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz, an educator, and a social worker. However, my roles also position me as an outsider because I grew up in an urban setting and did not practice my tribe’s rituals, ceremony, or language, and my political views and analysis places me on the outside of dominant mainstream education and social work spaces. The overlapping of these roles and my identity markers, I
believe, made it easier to connect with participants who also identify as Indigenous, or people of color, or have experienced marginalization due to their pedagogical stance or activism. I believe it helped build trust and rapport especially since we shared similar politics around coloniality, MSW education, intersectionality, power and privilege. Ultimately, it helped us find kinship, truth, and understanding in our dialogue and storytelling.

Paradoxically, the roles I occupy could also leave me vulnerable to confirmation bias, thereby limiting the scope of the project. There was a possibility that during interviews our interactions would be limited to surface examination of the topics because we believe we “already know it to be true.” Additionally, I there was also the possibility that participants would feel less inclined to share with depth and nuance if they assumed I “get it.” In the CAB meetings, some of the CAB members are previous students, and thus the possibility existed that they interacted with me in a way that showed respect but could also be viewed as deference. In other words, they may have felt intimidated to share openly, or in ways that contradicted or challenged what they perceived to be my assumptions.

As previously stated, this project is informed by relational accountability, and therefore I worked to center my relationships with participants across each of my overlapping roles. For example, throughout all aspects of this project I remained mindful and realistic of the demands and expectations I placed on participants knowing how busy their lives and schedules were. I used an open, authentic, and sincere approach to the experiences, knowledge, and insight they shared with me. I made sure to compensate participants for their time spent with me. I also made myself available to meet via Zoom, email, or phone to ensure participants had a space to offer me feedback or call attention to my bias, power, and privilege. My intention throughout, was to convey transparency, openness, and humility.
Researcher Bias and Potential Effects

Having served as a social worker for 20 years, and an educator for 10 years, I have developed specific instincts that have proven insightful and useful. At times though, these instincts have been rooted in biased and unfair assumptions, which can narrow my lens for listening and understanding critically. I am cognizant I have developed single stories and as Adichie (2009) explains, “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (12:49). While there is truth to what I have experienced, I fully acknowledge my single stories about MSW education (and the profession), are incomplete stories and thus in some way an unfair appraisal and over-generalization. Therefore, I continued to confront and interrogate my single stories so as to reveal the multiple layers of complexity, strengths, and opportunities within MSW education.

Critically reflecting on the planning stages throughout my research, I am aware that my biases and single stories have played a role in shaping how I selected my topic (disrupting coloniality in MSW education), research site (MSW educational spaces), and research participants (MSW educators). While I have reviewed a significant amount of the research literature, I continued to be cognizant of how these biases and assumptions could affect the process. For instance, when considering sampling methods, I began formulating criteria from an either/or binary position that quickly limited the scope of who could be included in this research. Essentially, I was preparing to foreclose possibilities and opportunities on what challenging, resisting, and disrupting coloniality could look like in social work education.

Another example of how bias may have interfered is within the data collection, analysis, and interpretation phases. My assumptions may have shifted my attention to confirming what I
already believed to be “true,” leading to a re-creation and perpetuation of single stories that uphold binary thinking while minimizing the complexity of the participant. Confirmation bias may have affected my ability to interpret participant comments from a stance of curiosity and appreciation; additionally, biases could have influenced the manner in which I assign meaning to observational material. Any of these errors would jeopardize the trust and integrity which is so essential to the relationship between researcher and participant; further, these errors would erode confidence toward me within the research community. Therefore, throughout the data collection, analysis, and interpretation phases I communicated clearly and sought regular feedback about my biases and assumptions to keep me in a relational, accountable, answerable, and open stance of listening and understanding.

**Answerability and Countering/Safeguarding Against Bias Effects**

A primary concern within this project was how to stay accountable and answerable to my social location, power, and privilege, while countering and safeguarding against bias. Thus, I sought guidance from people critically thinking about how to achieve this. Patel’s (2016) important analysis of accountability within the context of coloniality greatly helped reframe the discussion to emphasize answerability. Patel (2016) explains:

> Because coloniality has been so pervasive, we can think about how our actions, our research agendas, the knowledge we contribute, can undo coloniality and create spaces for ways of being in relation that are not about individualism, ranking, and status. Answerability includes aspects of being responsible, accountable, and being part of an exchange. It is a concept that can help to maintain the coming-into-being with, being in conversation with. (p. 71)
I find Patel’s ideas significant in that they challenged me to re-think the traditional views I held of accountability, thereby beginning the process of countering the effects of my biases. Further, Patel provides a hopeful view that undoing coloniality is possible when education researchers, such as myself, begin to embrace a holistic, intersectional relationship with participants and the surrounding context of the research.

In order to build “[c]redibility, dependability, and transferability” (Durdella, 2018, p. 316) and account for my biases throughout, I employed a range of strategies. One strategy I used was weekly practice of reflexive thinking, writing, and journaling. Journaling allowed for critical self-reflection about areas where I struggle and need improvement, as well as areas of strength which I can continue to build upon. A second strategy I maintained is a process of checking-in with my dissertation committee, CAB, and participants. Face-to-face check-ins, or check-ins via email, phone call, Zoom, or text messaging, were also used and lead to lengthier discussions depending on the issues that arose throughout the project. I increased the use of check-ins during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation as this was an area where accountability to power and privilege was vital. An additional strategy I used to address biases and overlap of my roles was member checks. Member checks are defined as “systematically soliciting feedback about your data and conclusions from the people you are studying” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126). For instance, during the data collection and analysis to ensure accuracy and feedback, I offered participants opportunities to review transcripts as well as their specific portrait. I also shared with CAB members the transcript of our meetings, to ensure I was accurately reflecting their feedback and suggestions.
Chapter 4: Results

Overview and Introduction

“You have the responsibility of bringing us together somehow.”

~ Maria, Research Participant

The purpose of this chapter is to bring us all together. The “us” includes the 14 people who shared their knowledge, insights, and lived experiences to help me understand who they are, how they challenge coloniality within their classrooms, and how they envision a re-imagined social work education. I am also part of the “us” and will share my process of gathering the stories, along with my analysis and identification of emergent themes that I have shaped into a collective portrait. You, the reader, are part of “us,” and my responsibility to you is to create a space for you to connect to and relate with each participant and to provide critical narratives that challenge single stories and dominant ideologies. Community advisory board (CAB) members, you are part of “us,” and my responsibility is to weave your thoughtful guidance and feedback into the collective portrait. At the end of this chapter, hopefully I will have accomplished bringing us together to imagine, learn, share, and build with one another.

Aligned with the artistic aims of portraiture methodology, I have organized this chapter around sketches. Sketches are works in progress, unfinished products that serve as a starting point for an artist. The portraits that I am able to represent in this chapter are not done; they are works in progress that continue to be created. There will be themes that I missed, stories that I left out, experiences that I may have overlooked. In short, there will always be more to extrapolate and to learn from. Additionally, I am using sketches since they represent one moment in time. In this case, these sketches represent one moment of time where I had a conversation with someone which produced certain feelings, ideas, and stories. The sketches contained here
are snapshots of that moment, and thus they can be evolved, added to, and revised in future moments.

Chapter 4 in 2 Sketches

Sketch #1.

Journey in field work. In the first part of Sketch #1, I describe my journey and process of being in the field conducting research. I discuss strategies of searching for research participants, along with personal reflections and insights that developed in meeting with participants and CAB members. I share information about my relationship to each participant and CAB member, and provide an accountability plan to mitigate bias, power, and privilege issues. I added this section prior to Sketch #2 because I felt it was important to illustrate the power and meaningfulness in relational practices of research, and to be transparent so as to build my relationship to you, reader.

Steps and stages of data analysis. The second part of the Sketch #1 is a description of the process and how I applied decolonizing and portraiture methodology, while integrating an intersectional lens to gathering and analyzing stories, illuminating patterns, and identifying themes to be able to weave into a coherent portrait.

Sketch #2. Sketch #2 is imagined as a collective portrait woven from the emergent themes, which will form the basis for an overall cohesive narrative of patterned themes connected directly to the research questions. Through my lead work as the artist, this collective portrait is a creation of the collaborative efforts of folks connected to this project and links us in imaginative and creative ways to narrate a story.

Finally, I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to all the people who opened up and shared their stories and experiences with me. The journey to understand the experiences of
MSW educators as they challenge the many manifestations of coloniality and work to re-imagine social work education, has been a life-changing experience for me. Shu’ ’aa-shi nu’-la (thanking, I am to you all). Shu’ ’aa-shi nu’-la for warmly welcoming me into your homes and offices; for your generous support and kindness. Shu’ ’aa-shi nu’-la for gifting me with your wisdom and creativity; for your ongoing encouragement; for your faith, trust, and respect.

**Caution.** The representations and emergent themes, the selection of quotes that I thought were relevant, and weaving them into a collective story, are based on my interpretations of the experiences. I have been trusted to represent each person with dignity and respect, while also reflecting their complexity and humanity. My intention is not to create a single, dominant narrative that creates overgeneralizations or stereotypes; instead, my intention is to reflect with honesty and sincerity with the search for goodness, the counternarratives, and multiple possibilities for the decolonial turn.

The search for goodness is a lens of analysis within portraiture methodology, as well as the strengths-based lens within social work education. I think of it as a way of being that brings to the forefront the strengths, acts of resilience and resistance of people and communities who have been solely defined by their trauma. Searching for goodness in social work education is about highlighting the hope, opportunity, community care, and relationship building that occurs everywhere in the social work program. Further, it is an intentional effort of de-centering from “damage-centered research” that ultimately pathologizes by making oppression the singular defining story of a community (Tuck, 2009, p. 409). Tuck (2009) defines it as “research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation” (p. 409).
From the outset of my project, I have centered the search for goodness by applying portraiture, Indigenous methodologies, decolonizing methodologies, including the development of a community advisory board (CAB). This approach has helped me to be intentional about respecting relationships and honoring the complexities of peoples’ experiences. I have been able to pause and reflect on how the work in this project elicits hope, opportunity, community and relationship building. What I have learned, and continue to be reminded, is that placing my energy and focus to understand wisdom and how to sustain hope yields profound answers that come to define what power means. Later in this chapter, I will provide a contextual definition of power, but for now I will say that what I learned from all of the people involved in this study, is that power is us, together, collectively. It is my honor and privilege to share my lessons and learnings in the following pages about the passionate, caring, and creative educators, whose imaginations inspire us.

**Sketch #1: Journey in Field Work (Part 1)**

**Searching**

My journey to understanding the experiences of MSW educators who are actively challenging colonially began with colleagues and friends jokingly remarking, “Good luck finding participants.” Overwhelmingly, I was told that while my research topic and questions sounded interesting, it was not going to be easy to find people who met the participant criteria to be included in the study. Undoubtedly there is truth to what they were saying, yet this is also a single-story about social work educators. In fact, my experience as a teacher and my involvement in radical, activist communities and conferences, gave me confidence that I would be able to find people to participate.
In my search I relied mainly on my personal networks, CAB, and other professional communities to help me identify participants. I contacted friends and colleagues via text, email, and phone asking them who they would recommend. Specifically, I looked for people who held an in-depth knowledge of coloniality and related topics; I looked for those who are considered leading scholars or practitioners in the field; and for educators who actively engage in efforts to resist and disrupt coloniality through a wide-range of activities including activism, organizing, research strategies, and critical pedagogical practices. I also received recommendations from friends and colleagues about potential participants. I searched numerous faculty bios and curricula vitae (CVs) in MSW Departments both nationally and internationally; I conducted general internet searches, made use of university libraries, professional social work databases (National Association of Social Work, Council on Social Work Education), for related articles with key terms such as coloniality, settler colonialism, decolonization, neoliberalism, white supremacy, and so on. Because coloniality is not exclusive to the U.S., I decided to consider people outside of the U.S. Following this search, I compiled a list of close to 50 people. I then excluded people who no longer taught or I could not confirm if they were teachers, had very limited teaching experience, and/or I could not locate any contact information. My list narrowed to 30 people who matched my criteria for inclusion in the study. I sent email invitations to 22 of the people from this list; some never responded, while others responded but could not take on the time commitment. In all, I was able to confirm interview dates and conducted interviews with 14 MSW educators.

**Personal Illuminating Moment**

As I mentioned previously, conducting these interviews has had a powerful impact on my growth and development as an educator and researcher. In consultation with my dissertation
chair and committee members, and members of the CAB, I have shared a sense of feeling deep gratitude and appreciation for all of the knowledge and insight gifted to me. From those discussions I experienced a moment of illumination. I began to think of this group of MSW educators, the members of the CAB, and the members of my dissertation committee, as what Thich Nhat Hanh (2017) refers to a “council of sages” —a group of people selected for their “capacity to listen deeply with compassion” (p. 82) who can offer wisdom, support, and insight. Not only did each person hold specialized knowledge and experiences of challenging coloniality, but all of them offered me compassion, modeling deep listening to all of my many questions, responses, and requests. As a beginning researcher, I sometimes navigated the interview space awkwardly, and yet their practicing of relationality provided me with comfort and nurturing guidance; they helped restore my confidence and gave me the reassurance to continue on the path. All along the way, they have been my council of sages, and now I have the honor of joining the process of sharing their wisdom.

**Relationality**

In alignment with applying the importance of relationships central to decolonizing and portraiture methodologies, it is important to state my relationship with the participants of this study. Doing so is part of the responsibility that I have to the participants, and to you, the reader, to cultivate a relationship of trust and integrity. Being transparent about my relationships with the participants is also a question of accountability and might be best addressed by using their names as opposed to pseudonyms (Wilson, 2008). Here, I am influenced and inspired by Wilson’s (2008) critical question, “how can I be held accountable to the relationships I have with these people if I don’t name them?” (p. 63). Thus, I follow Wilson’s lead and use the real names of participants who gave me permission and use pseudonyms for those participants who chose
not to have their real names used. Certainly, there are many valid reasons (e.g., fears of retribution, consequences affecting job security) why using a pseudonym would be a better option. At some point in each interview, I explained Wilson’s rationale, noting the various circumstances that might make it difficult or safe to use their real name. Overall, eleven of the participants gave me permission. I will use an asterisk (*) to denote when I use a pseudonym.

**Council of Sages: Research Participants**

The participants whom I consider my council of sages are organized into two groups. The first group are mentors and friends, people I have known in various capacities as colleagues, co-presenters on panels, and whose advice and guidance has been invaluable in my life. The second group of participants are new relationships and colleagues, people whose work has inspired, challenged, and helped me grow.

In particular I want to note that I met six of the participants at an annual conference known as the Liberation-Based Healing Conference (LBHC). The LBHC has been one of the most significant experiences for me in that it has helped expand my network of connections, and offered the opportunity to develop sustaining and meaningful relationships with like-minded social workers, teachers, community organizers, artists, and activists. I am deeply indebted to the organizers of the LBHC for their years of community building and healing work.

**Mentors and Friends**

- **Rafael Angulo (he/him/his)**, professor at the University of Southern California Dworak-Peck School of Social Work (USC) in Los Angeles. I have known him for over 15 years.

- **Dr. Alma M. O. Trinidad (she/her/hers, they/them/their)**, Associate Professor at Portland State University. I have known her for over eight years.
• **Dr. Michael Yellow Bird (he/him/his),** Dean of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. I have known him for over eight years.

• **Dr. Moshoula (she/her/hers),** Associate Professor at Western Coastal University. I have known her for over seven years.

• **Dr. Sarah Mountz (she/her/hers),** Assistant Professor in the School of Social Welfare at University at Albany. I have known her for over six years.

• **Dr. Willie Tolliver (he/him/his),** Associate Professor at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College-The City University of New York (CUNY). I have known him for over five years.

• **Dr. Kris Clarke (she/her/hers),** Associate Professor at the University of Helsinki. I have known her for over five years.

• **Dr. Vona (she/her/hers),** Assistant Professor, at Southside Grand University. I have known her for over five years.

• **Dr. Alicia (she/her/hers),** Associate Professor at Midwest Mountains College. I have known her for over three years.

New Relationships and Colleagues

• **Dr. Maria Ferrara (she/her/hers),** Associate Professor at DePaul University.

• **Dr. Ann (she/her/hers),** lecturer at the University of Mid-Southern.

• **Dr. Andrea Tamburro (she/her/hers),** Associate Professor at Indiana University of South Bend.

• **Dr. Aissetu Barry Ibrahima (she/her/hers),** Assistant Professor at Northeastern Illinois University.
Dr. Ramona Beltrán (she/her/hers), Associate Professor at University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work

Shift from Semi-Structured Focus Groups to Semi-Structured Individual Interviews

The process of gathering stories and experiences began with an email invitation to each potential participant stating the purpose and goals of my project. I also sent them the consent form prior to the interview, so that they would have an opportunity to review. As I began to receive emails of people agreeing to be participate, scheduling challenges quickly became apparent; for example, since participants lived and worked across the U.S. and in other countries, there were many challenges related to time zones and general availability. While I had planned to start my data collection with semi-structured focus groups interviews, scheduling proved too big of an obstacle; I consulted with my dissertation chair, and we agreed to shift to individual interviews primarily. In one case only was I able to facilitate a two-person focus group (Dr. Willie Tolliver and Dr. Alicia), but the remainder shifted to semi-structured individual interviews. Fortunately, the interview guides that I had created were adaptable, and I was able to simply combine the focus group interview guide with the individual interview guide, creating a modified semi-structured interview guide checklist (Appendix F). Reflecting further, the flexibility to shift from group to individual interview along with the adaptability of the interview guides, speaks to the fluidity inherent in portraiture, decolonizing, and arts-based methodologies. Fluidity means being able to be responsive to the needs of the situation and research processes, which is a testament to the innovators of these approaches. Additionally, fluidity and responsiveness in research are just as essential as pedagogical strategies especially in challenging the strict and rigid contours of western pedagogy.
Semi-Structured Individual Interviews

The Set-Up

I completed 14, 90-minute semi-structured individual interviews from November 2019 through March 2020. Three occurred in-person while the others occurred via Zoom or Skype. Two of the in-person interviews occurred in the university offices of the participant (Alma and Rafael), and one occurred in the participant’s home (Vona). The Zoom/Skype interviews occurred either in participants’ homes or offices. A few days prior to the interview, I made sure to send a reminder email with the meeting information along with the consent form if I had not received it back. On the day of the interview, I generally sent a reminder and final confirmation just to ensure there were no additional questions or concerns.

Gathering Stories

At the outset of facilitating the interviews, I defaulted to my training as a social worker and mental health clinician, which provided me a structure and model for conducting clinical interviews. I quickly realized, however, the limitations I was imposing upon myself and the participant. For example, in my experience as a mental health clinician the power dynamics of clinician vs. client imposed a distancing and boundary that often felt out of alignment with relationship building. Additionally, the time constraints imposed on gathering assessment information often interfered with the more important aspects of establishing a trusting, respectful relationship. While I could borrow aspects of my training, I also made an intentional and active shift to apply an intersectional and collectivist relational style. I made the priority connection, collective, sharing, and mutual, with the hope that something deeper and more meaningful would emerge from that type of interaction. When I felt worried that I might not get all the answers I needed, or when I pushed to get the participant to answer every research, I actively practiced
pausing, breathing, catching myself, and letting go of that feeling. The priority is the moment with this person; the priority is the relationship with this person; the goal is to build, connect, trust, and enjoy. Truthfully, this approach was very fulfilling and rewarding.

With this perspective in mind, I greeted each person warmly, expressing my appreciation for their time and energy supporting my research. As an opening ritual, I acknowledged the Indigenous land we are on, specifically acknowledging the Tataviam Tribal territories within the San Fernando Valley where I live. I described to each person that I have been in contact with Tataviam administrative leadership to explain my project and to search for ways that this project may be beneficial to Tataviam tribal members. Further, in an effort to build trust within the relationship, I shared my family background, along with the work I do at CSUN, and the reasons for focusing on coloniality in social work education.

Part of building trust and connection also required transparency and clarity. During each interview, I reviewed the consent form at the beginning, answered any questions, and got permission to use real names or pseudonyms as well as to include their art/objects. I offered background context to explain the rationale and purpose of the questions being asked. Another technique was to use a timeline metaphor so that participants could hopefully see the direction and progression of questions. Participants stated they appreciated the questions, the flow of the interview, and the ability and space to reflect on these important issues.

There were instances where our conversations led us to developing anti-racist and anti-colonial projects as in this exchange with Rafael,

*Rafael (research participant): I've been thinking recently about creating a documentary for social work students and you would help me.*

*José (interviewer): I would love to.*
Rafael: I'm just throwing it out right now. Where we would create 40, 45-minute documentary on, we can call it whatever it is that we want, but based on this liberation psychology perspective and we go around the country interviewing scholars and experts, but interviewing those who are on the front line using this so that we can have a tool that would go out to all schools of social work.

There was a discussion with Kris about a study abroad project in Finland titled “Confronting Global Challenges: Climate Change, Sustainability & Urban Development”, that I was able to share with students and colleagues. Several had signed up to participate, but had to postpone their trip due to travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In my discussion with Andrea, she connected me to her friends and network of Native American social workers, including professional organizations and committees. She offered me guidance, support, and encouragement as to how to get involved and connected. Finally, one last example was my meeting with Ramona who invited me to be part of writing a proposal for a panel presentation on arts-based research methodologies. These are just a few examples, and they demonstrate that the interview process was much more than gathering information. It was about building community and opportunity; more than that, my council of sages were actively opening up pathways and opportunities for me to grow as researcher, scholar, and person. I am deeply grateful. I will end by sharing the following excerpt from Ramona, whose meaningful and positive feedback reinforces the importance of establishing trusting relationships, connecting through expressions of vulnerability and relevant self-disclosure:

… it felt like such a privilege for me to have the opportunity to have a conversation with you…Thank you for asking such good questions and allowing me to sort of process through these things with another person. I feel like they take on a new meaning once you
have a relationship with the storytelling. It changes and it becomes more clear. I just really am grateful to you for that and for the medicine that you bring to this.

I'm excited for what you're doing and I hope I can support you.

Generosity

Each time I met with someone, I had the experience of being treated like an invited and honored guest. Everyone genuinely welcomed me into their spaces, immediately offering supportive statements, appreciation, and offering to connect me or link me up to additional resources (e.g., professional organizations, listservs, conferences, book titles). In some cases I had the privilege of meeting their children, family members, and pets. In other instances, I was offered food and tea, or given a tour of the classrooms and offices. Some of the participants I have known for many years, and yet meeting with them in these circumstances allowed for a more intimate conversation. With those who I was meeting the first time, we were able to establish a connection usually within the first few moments of meeting one another. Such warm and generous welcomes and gestures communicated their deep understanding of the importance of relational work. As someone who is new to conducting research and is often worried about “how to do” research, their actions put me at ease and gave me confidence to move forward.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I created brief memos and used journaling to examine reactions and feelings that came up before and after interview sessions; in this way, I was able to identify single story narratives I had constructed, as well as areas where I had made false assumptions. I consulted regularly with my dissertation committee and CAB members when I had questions about researcher bias. Without sharing any information about the research participants, I did consult with colleagues who hold alternative viewpoints. I found the practice of consulting many groups of people, a helpful one, as it offered me a wider range of opinions.
and analysis, provided me with experiential knowledge about researcher bias, and helped challenge the assumptions of my theoretical frameworks. Lastly, I shared all transcripts with research participants, seeking their feedback, revision, and edits. I maintained an open line of communication with them to seek out any additional feedback or suggestions about the overall process.

Accountability Plan

In order to stay accountable to the areas of power, privilege, and bias that I hold, I created an accountability plan utilizing three strategies.

Accountability Strategy One: Transparency. The first strategy was to be upfront and transparent with every participant in explaining the ways in which I hold power and privilege, and to try and be clear about some of biases, as well as areas where I lacked information; I also made time during interviews for participants to offer feedback and/or call attention to anything they felt I had missed. My attempt was to express humility and critical awareness with the hope that could help establish trust.

Accountability Strategy Two: Memos. A second strategy was the use of an “impressionistic record” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 188) or memo; I took notes throughout the interview and condensed them into memos. The impressionistic records were helpful in reflecting on areas impressions of issues including pacing of the interview, effective/ineffective questions, themes and general observations related to participant’s responses, and my overall feelings about my ability to facilitate the interview. They allowed me to process and think through my reactions and ideas about the interview process. When I moved to data analysis, I relied on the impressionistic records to help me remember each interview;
specifically the memos gave me a way to compare and contrast my earlier reactions, observations and possible themes, with the patterns emerging during the actual analysis.

**Accountability Strategy Three: Community Consultation.** A third strategy was the use of consultation with the CAB. This group is composed of MSW level social work practitioners in various work settings. Similar to the search for research participants, I relied mostly on contacting people with my personal professional and community-based network. I invited six people who represent a diverse range of experiences, knowledge, social locations, and identity markers. CAB members identify as Indigenous, Latinx, Filipino, and African American; hearing; heterosexual; transgender; between the ages of late 20s to mid-50s; parents, married, and single; first-generation scholars; immigrant, and from working-class families. As with the research participants, I consulted with CAB members to find out how they would like to identified, and here is how they responded.

**Council of Sages: Community Advisory Board (CAB).**

**Paulina Celaya,** MSW, she/her they/them, first-generation Mexican-American, working in community mental health using liberation practices.

**Christian Citlali,** MSW, he/him/his. I am the proud son of immigrant parents, first-generation college graduate, queer and unapologetic, indigenous, brown, and Trans. My work is centered around using a critical race theory lens and the application of decolonization. I am committed to examining and challenging the disparities in health and mental health services for marginalized communities, in particular communities of color and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

**Christina R. Harrison,** MSW, she/they, first-generation Pilipinx/Jamaican/Irish American, pansexual, cisgender womxn, focused on and impassioned with practices which
dismantle systems of oppression at a(n) systems/institutional level, via fostering change through
dialogue and increased accessibility to learning, education, and resources.

**Sarah Ojeda Kimbrough**, ASW, They/she/he, Filipinx colonized/Irish colonizer. Decolonizing social work practices and education.

**Yaotl Mazahua**, colonially known as Rene Orozco, MSW, ACSW, Human being-Mazahua-Raramuri reconstructing, recovering/healing, surviving ways of being after historical trauma, envisioning and manifesting that another world is possible.

**Antonio Rodriguez**, MSW, LCSW, Clinical Therapist, he/him/his, Mexican, committed to critically dissecting approaches for healing and actively being in the service of others to build community.

Having had the opportunity to know each CAB member prior to this research project, I can attest to the efforts they put in the classroom and in the community to consistently reflect an analysis around coloniality, intersectionality, CRT, and other critical frameworks. Further, they all share a history of community organizing and applying decolonizing methodologies in research and/or the workplace. Needless to say, I feel beyond fortunate and grateful to work with such an incredible group of people.

After having completed a few individual interviews, I was able to convene a time to meet with the CAB. Prior to meeting, I sent CAB members a brief overview of the study, research methodologies, research questions, interview guide questions, and research consent form information for them to review. I also shared with them expectations and roles, as well as a tentative agenda for the meeting. When we met, I brought lunch for everyone along with $50 gift cards as a way to show appreciation. The meeting occurred on a Saturday in November 2019, lasted two hours, and was audio recorded with their permission. The format was loosely
structured, involving introductions, reviewing purpose, and establishing connections with one another. During the meeting, I made sure to take notes that were later turned into impressionistic records. Similarly to the individual interviews, I acknowledged the Indigenous land we are on, along with my beginning efforts to connect with Tataviam tribal members. I facilitated a discussion about the research project overall, solicited feedback about the interview guide, as well as ways to make the project relevant to communities beyond the walls of academia. I also asked for feedback about areas of my power and privilege, and how those might impact the study.

CAB members offered detailed, reflective, thoughtful, and constructive feedback about the project. They appreciated the opportunity to be involved in a research project as community representatives, and felt that this was a strategy to disrupt the western models of research. They liked the interview guide questions, as well as the information in the consent form. However, the bulk of their feedback focused my role, making information relevant and accessible, and strategizing for disseminating the findings. For instance, they encouraged me to examine my role in the academy and how that may create distance from the actual lived experiences of those working in community-based organizations. I found this specific feedback highly useful, as it has prompted me to stay connected to multiple community projects. In particular, for the last six years I have facilitated a monthly social justice-based dialogue space for MSW alumni and community members to address issues they face with non-profit and other community organizations. The space has become a critical learning space for me and helps keep me connected to the working experiences of social work community practitioners. The CAB also offered ideas for future research that specifically included case managers, front-line social workers working directly in the community. Other key insights they offered:
• experiment with writing style to make it more conversational, which I have tried to do in various ways through call-and-response, poetry, and integration of art images.

• invite Tataviam tribal members to future CABs and open discussion about ways they could be involved and/or directly benefit. I have discussed my project with some Tataviam tribal members, and I plan on creating a meeting time to discuss with them ideas for how this project could be of use to them in supporting their efforts and project.

• finding ways to make the material accessible to front line social workers and students. I will be inviting social workers in the community and students to my dissertation defense; further, I have conducted workshops and trainings to community-based organizations as a way to disseminate the information, as well as seek additional feedback.

• using social media strategies to elicit real-time feedback from community. I am planning to collaborate with students to help develop relevant social media strategies to disseminate information in this project and to invite further community-based feedback.

We closed the meeting with a plan for me to continue updating on progress, and arranging for a second meeting in 2020. Overall, CAB support and guidance throughout has truly been a gift; not only did it help me to stay accountable to power, privilege, and community, but it sparked ideas for future projects and creatively disseminating the findings.
Sketch #1: Steps and Stages of Data Analysis (Part 2)

Early Analytical Work and Themes that Emerged Before Formal Data Analysis

As previously stated, the impressionistic records were an important and effective tool to help me illuminate potential themes to answer to the research questions. While Sketch #3 will provide a fuller analysis and description of the themes, I am sharing select notes (Figure 4.1) that I made in the impressionistic records about my initial analysis of emerging patterns. My intention is to be transparent with my process as a portraitist, in hopes of building my relationship with you, the reader. I have included dates, impressions (e.g., general observations, themes, feelings), and questions to build on. I have also included my edits and revisions of the impressionistic records, denoted by the strikethrough mark. Ultimately, these notes informed early segmenting and coding in a more formal or exclusive data analysis process, offering me insight into code development and application to segmented or chunked text.

Figure 4.1. Selection of Notes from Impressionistic Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Impressions</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/25/19</td>
<td>Many of the key figures (parents, teachers, etc.) influenced their journey to activism and social work.</td>
<td>Maybe this has to do with the importance of collectivism, and/or related to principles of interdependence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/30/19</td>
<td>It seems like several participants had early experiences with activism. Almost all of them (at one time or another) were considered to be troublemakers, outsiders, rebels.</td>
<td>I wonder if I would find more instances if I expanded my thinking on what constitutes activism? I wonder how this narrative is connected to trauma? I wonder how these narratives have influenced their current work relationships, job abilities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Note</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/19</td>
<td>Humor! Yes! Finding ways to laugh together, are not only important strategies to deal with pushback but the effects of emotional labor.</td>
<td>Can humor be part of the pedagogies of hope? Is someone writing about this? Should I? Is this about relationality?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/19</td>
<td>There are slightly varying definitions of coloniality, but from my perspective, the differences are negligible. Actually, maybe the differences mean something. Keep exploring this.</td>
<td>How important is it to even use the word coloniality if people are clearly doing the work to de-center and disrupt systems of domination? Am I falling into an elitist model of practice by using hard to understand terms? Or maybe that is the point...to make this language meaningful to a wider range of people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25/20</td>
<td>Again and again, it seems so clear...collectivity, relational work are essential!</td>
<td>I should use more follow-up questions to understand the more nuanced dimensions of relationality when in the classroom you have to navigate opposition, binary thinking, and minimization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/20/20</td>
<td>I am so moved by their deep, unrelenting commitment and passion for change and liberation. I hope I can do justice to sharing what I’ve learned from them.</td>
<td>Possibly the stories I’m gathering here will give me insight on how to do this? Maybe that’s the potential of using art!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Listening and Learning from the Council of Sages**

While the process of searching for patterns and themes was occurring simultaneously alongside conducting the interviews, I began the more formalized process of systematically reviewing the transcribed interviews after I completed the final interview. I used the qualitative
data analysis software program ATLAS.ti to help organize the recorded and transcribed interview data into codes. My analysis applied an intersectional lens and occurred in three stages, which began with descriptive codes, moved to pattern codes, and concluded by with the identification of emerging themes.

**Stage 1.** Stage one starts with creating descriptive and interpretive codes, which I previously described above with my use of impressionistic records.

**Stage 2.** Stage two builds from the codes developed in stage one, with an additional emphasis on looking for “pattern codes,” which are recurring statements, terms, or phrases that seemed to create a common or similar experience (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 190). Pattern coding was a very useful approach as it allowed me to synthesize lots of material into focused patterns. Examples of pattern codes included “critical consciousness,” “power,” “community,” “immigration,” “activism,” “rhythm,” and so on.

**Applying an intersectional lens to data analysis.** Enhancing the data analysis process to be aligned with decolonizing and other critical theoretical methodologies, I applied an intersectional lens. Doing so provided the critical contextual analysis in searching for the descripting, interpretive, and pattern codes; additionally, it helped me develop a better sense of the structural elements of layered oppression within participant comments. For example, in this exchange with Ann, who identifies as an indigenous Mapuche woman, we discuss the issues of addressing whiteness in the classroom and the resulting differential consequences:

José (interviewer): here you are in a place that's mostly white, and yet no one has ever talked about what it means to be white… I've seen that with my students as they start to learn more about how to critically interrogate and reflect on what it means to be a white
person. It just opens them up to all this new information and perspectives they never had
to consider before.

Ann (research participant): Yes, it was really difficult to do that work in the beginning, to
introduce those concepts to the classroom. I faced a lot of backlash from students about
that. I was told that I was enacting reverse racism, and my student evaluations went right
down and it had a big impact on my career progression because I was getting really poor
feedback from students...

An intersectional analysis allowed me to think about the multiple oppressions of racism and
sexism that Ann has experienced in her life as a Mapuche woman, and how racism and sexism
intersect to produce negative evaluations that had harmful consequences for her career.

Although I was doing something very similar to Ann by raising awareness on whiteness,
I did not face the same consequences. It is true that I have been accused of enacting reverse
racism, and I have also received harsh and negative student evaluations; the major difference is
that while I experience racism, I do not experience sexism. This important distinction illustrates
the advantages and privileges I hold as a cisgender male in academia; it is possible that may be a
reason why my career progression was not impacted as it was for Ann. Further, where was the
support from Ann’s colleagues, who could understand the intersectional racial and gender
dynamics being played out in her evaluation? Initially this passage was part of a pattern code
called “backlash”, as several other participants described similar experiences as to what Ann
described.

Stage 3. The third stage of coding entailed the construction of emerging themes, which
Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest occurs through five steps: pattern coding, search
for metaphors, cultural and institutional themes, triangulating, and theme construction. I found
the five-step process to be iterative and recursive, even as it follows sequentially from one step to the next.

**The first step.** As described, this first step is essentially the first two stages of data analysis involving identifying the descriptive, interpretive, and pattern codes.

**The second step.** The second step involves the portraitist looking for metaphors or expressions described by participants to reveal their realities. In the example with Ann, she uses the word “backlash” which signifies an intense and possibly violent response, usually to something political in nature. Thus, for Ann, “backlash” immediately revealed the level of danger she is in when openly challenging whiteness and racism.

**The third step.** The third step is for the portraitist to look for themes in rituals at the cultural and institutional level; Ann is clearly explaining the institutional ritual of harshly dealing with teachers who openly challenge whiteness.

**The fourth step.** In the fourth step, Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest triangulating the participant experience with data. I do not have to look very far for data to triangulate Ann’s experience as there is a significant amount of literature addressing the kind of institutional violence that Ann described. Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, Gonzalez, and Harris (2012) wrote the seminal text *Presumed Incompetent*, which contains numerous accounts of similar institutional violence or “backlash”.

**The fifth step.** Finally, in the fifth step the portraitist can construct the theme. In Ann’s case, institutional racism and sexism function to maintain white supremacy and patriarchal domination within the academy. Institutional racism and sexism emerge as sub-themes, while the unifying and overarching emergent theme can be described as mechanisms of coloniality (see Figure 4.2).
**Figure 4.2. Constructing the Theme in a Three-Stage/Five-Step Analytical Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent theme</th>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>Participant Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Mechanisms of coloniality</em></td>
<td><em>Institutional racism and sexism</em></td>
<td>Ann: <em>Yes, it was really difficult to do that work in the beginning, to introduce those concepts to the classroom. I faced a lot of backlash from students about that. I was told that I was enacting reverse racism, and my student evaluations went right down and it had a big impact on my career progression because I was getting really poor feedback from students...</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying the portraiture approach to data analysis allows for a rigorous and thorough exploration of the stories. Using intersectionality, as well being informed by other critical theories, has provided me with the language and frameworks to look more critically and carefully at each participant’s story within the context of coloniality. During this process of analysis, and I began to consider what metaphor I could use to weave the themes in order to answer the research questions? How could I describe the this collective in a cohesive way that could honor their stories? Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) note that weaving a story into a portrait requires an “overarching story,” scaffolded by the emergent themes, a form that reflects movement, and finally cohesion (p. 247).

**An Overarching Story of Power Emerges**

The conception for the overarching story emerged as I re-explored each interview in the analysis stage. The stories detailed the experiences of living in and surviving coloniality. Their stories reflected the:

- effects of historical and intergenerational trauma due to settler colonialism, imperialism, slavery, and war;
• survival and resistance to historical and daily effects of patriarchy, misogyny, homophobia, and heterosexism;
• educational institutions that practiced cultural erasure and forced assimilation;
• economic theories of capitalism and neoliberalism that structured their lives as Indigenous peoples, as people of color, as immigrants, as single parents, as queer people;
• collective movements and individual actions to reclaim, restore, and revive cultural traditions, rituals and ceremonies, histories, languages, foods, and even their own names;
• strength, courage, humility, healing, and transformation.

While revisiting the transcripts, I made a concerted effort to pay close attention to the way I was feeling, jotting down reactions using informal memos. Looking through the memos, I realized my reactions during data analysis were very similar to the reactions I experienced while dialoguing with each person. What continually came to mind were the feelings of power, powerfulness, and empowerment. Additionally, I began to conceptualize power in relation to the natural elements of fire, land, wind, water, and spirituality, as those elements have represented connection, healing, and transformation to me. My identification and analysis of the codes—descriptive, interpretative, pattern—and emerging themes, reveal that the through-line connecting everything is power. In figure 4.3, I illustrate examples of the process documenting my reactions post interview, during data analysis, and thus the corresponding natural elements of power.
Figure 4.3 Visual Table of Formulating Overarching Story of Power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Memos/Journal Notes Of My Reactions Immediately Following Interview</th>
<th>Memos/Journal Notes Of My Reactions During Data Analysis, Reviewing Transcripts</th>
<th>Elements of Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“feeling fired up, ready to take action”</td>
<td>“feeling empowered, energized”</td>
<td>Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“we are grounded, the relationship is solid, meaningful to me”</td>
<td>“I’m comforted, appreciative, filled with gratitude, they have always been there supporting me”</td>
<td>Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“conversations followed where the wind blew, but that was okay, it was the rhythm of the song/conversation we played”</td>
<td>“we shifted away from the prescribed path of the interview guide (luckily these are “semi”-structured interviews)”</td>
<td>Wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Wow! Up and down, difficult/painful content, but still, we easily we fall back into rhythm with joking and laughing”</td>
<td>“I remember waves of anger and frustration, but there is a certain rhythm we have developed”</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“they put me at ease, their presence was calming, soothing”</td>
<td>“we have a shared sense of connection, purpose”</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a note, amongst Indigenous peoples, there are many meanings and interpretations of fire, land, wind, water, and spirituality. I am not intending to give any account or analysis of those variations as I do not want to appropriate their related connection to rituals, ceremonies, or prayers. Instead, I am using ideas related to my personal experiences and interpretations. To further illustrate my reflections on natural elements of power, I have created Figure 4.4 which describes the elements of land, wind, fire, water, and spirituality, as components of power.
The message from John Trudell: We are power. I want to take a moment to define power to provide clarity for the remaining sections of this project. According to American Indian poet, activist, and artist John Trudell (1980a), we need to be mindful of how and who we assign power, because some of what we consider power is really an illusion of power. He explains (1980a):

our oppressor deals in illusions. They tell us that it is power, but it is not power. They may have all the guns, and they may have all the racist laws and judges, and they may control all the money, but that is not power. These are only imitations of power, and they are only power because in our minds we allow it to be power. But it’s all an imitation. Racism and violence, racism and guns, economics-the brutality of the American
Corporate State way of life is nothing more than violence and oppression and it doesn’t have anything to do with power. It is brutality. It’s a lack of a sane balance. Thus, for Trudell, coloniality is an illusion of power, it is violence imitating power, and it has effectively conditioned us to believe that it is real power.

As Trudell counters, power is about living in balance with earth, and with one another; power is upholding that balance with the spiritual connection to the earth. In another of Trudell’s (1980b) speeches, titled *We Are Power*, he elaborates and illustrates what natural power is and how it is the antidote to coloniality. He says (1980b):

> Power. They can't stop the wind and they can't stop the rain. They can't stop the earthquake and the volcano and the tornado. They can't stop power. We are a spiritual connection to the earth. As individuals we have power and, collectively, we have the same power as the earthquake, the tornado, and the hurricanes. We have that potential. We have that connection.

Trudell’s important thinking and re-defining of how we understand power is liberating and transformative for me. Further, his definition of power describes what I have been experiencing as I listened to the council of sages.

The participants are individual and collective, their stories and experiences, activism, and pedagogy, are spiritual and physical; their efforts to challenge coloniality are intentional, strategic, bold, and radical. They recognize the illusions of power; they seek balance. They are power. They enact a relational stance and practice, rooted in an interconnectedness with the earth. They are power. They are the elements of natural power. They are the fire that cannot be ignored. They are the winds of influence, potential and futurity. They are the land which is constant, tested, and rooted in their resolve. They are spirituality, purpose and connection, they
seek balance with the earth, with one another, with us. They are the water that sustains and nourishes, re-imagining into infinite shapes. They are power.

**Emergent Themes to Scaffold the Story of Power**

Having developed the overarching story of power and interconnected natural elements, I will share the more specific emergent themes that are used as scaffolding. The participants have individually provided stories, which I have analyzed and have become themes that can be woven into a collective portrait of power. I have shared each participant’s portrait with them to check for accuracy of events as well as meaning, and elicit any additional feedback about the themes.

**Figure 4.5. Visual Table of Elements of Natural Power and Related Emergent Themes**

Figure 4.5 provides a visual table of how the story of power is defined by the natural elements, and how the emergent themes revealed in the data analysis can be viewed as examples.

Having explained the process and steps of carrying out decolonial and portraiture methodologies, and having developed the scaffolding of emergent themes to construct a collective portrait of
power, I move to Sketch #2 which is a sharing of stories that center participant experiences of power, healing, and transformation.

**Sketch #2: Stories of Power, Healing, and Transformation**

Listening to participants share their personal and educational experiences, the key people and communities that guided them along the way, and the way these things came together to shape their work, revealed strength, courage, and determination. Participants shared their stories of how they challenged coloniality in the classroom, identifying successes and struggles, as well as the emotional toll it takes to do this work. Lastly, they expressed their thoughts about shifting away from traditional pedagogy, and then re-imagined what social work education could be. Their stories are stories of power, of insistence, persistence, influence, transformation, connection and balance. I made choices assigning research participants to specific themes/natural elements based on which themes were most prominent in their stories. However, it should be noted that every participant shared stories with aspects of each theme, which I believe represents fluidity, intersection, and complexity. In this final section of Chapter 4, I attempt to bring “us” all together by weaving the themes and textual evidence into a collective portrait of power composed of five stories:

**Fire/Insist.** This first story emphasizes the experiences of historical and present-day resistance to coloniality and demands for dignity and respect. The participant stories highlighted are the portraits of Michael, Alma, and Rafael.

**Land/Persist.** The second story illustrates the roots of persistence, the efforts to move forward despite coloniality, while restoring, renewing, and recovering what is needed for healing and empowerment. The participant stories highlighted are portraits of Maria, Vona, and Alicia.
Wind/Influence. The third story identifies the multiple strategies used to disrupt the colonial consciousness within the classroom, while planting seeds for future growth. The participant stories highlighted are portraits of Willie, Aissetu, Andrea.

Water/Transform. The fourth story highlights examples of pedagogical strategies that aim to transform the classroom into a space of liberation, healing, and community. The participant stories highlighted are portraits of Ramona, Sarah, and Moshoula.

Spirituality/Connection. The fifth story describes the radical imaginations aimed at cultivating community and connection within social work education. The participant stories highlighted are portraits of Kris and Ann.

Fire/Insistence: Stories of Survivance

I begin the story of power by discussing Fire/Insistence. In my life, fire has represented something that cannot and must not be ignored; it matters not the size of the flame, but rather simply that it exists. Fire demands attention, respect, and care. It insists that you be present, in the moment, and it insists on offering warmth, light, and comfort. The sub-themes are how historical trauma and assimilation served as the personal and educational experiences that shaped who Michael, Alma, and Rafael have become. Each participant shared their personal and educational experiences, creating a timeline effect illustrating where they began and what led them to where they are today. Their responses included descriptive accounts of pain, suffering, violence, and trauma. They described the key people in their lives who insisted for them to keep going, to push further, and to radically shift the current colonial paradigms. Through it all, there was a fire that could not be ignored, an insistence that these stories be cared for, be told, remembered, and learned from.
Remember Mother Corn: Dig for that Knowledge

Michael (he/him/his) is an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes (The Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara). His tribal homelands are in North Dakota. Michael is the author and co-author of several well-known texts and numerous articles. In particular, *Decolonizing Social Work* (Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013) has been an essential book helping me to raise my critical consciousness, while offering me a language and framework to develop my thinking about education and social work. Having known Michael for several years through mainly conference spaces, specifically the Liberation Based Healing Conference (LBHC), I looked forward to having this more intimate opportunity to learn more about him and the influences that have shaped his career.

From the outset of the meeting, Michael shared with me that work he does today have been mainly influenced by being raised in North Dakota on an Indian reservation. He noted that his people have generally lived near or alongside bodies of water and are riparian people with very complex organizational, social, philosophical, and religious systems. Their religious, political, and social identity was connected to being horticulture people; they hunted, gathered, relied on the harvest of beans, corn, and squash (The Three Sisters). He noted, “Christians have Jesus, we have Mother Corn.” Michael noted that in his formative years he lived among relatives who understood and practiced traditional ways of their peoples. He stated:

The relationships that we have in our community are complex, supportive, and you could rely upon them to help you stay well and healthy. We were immersed in language and ceremony and social activities much of the time. We were also free as children and I remember running across the prairies for what seemed like forever without shirts, moving along with our headbands, running with all the guys. We would just be running, moving,
taking time to sit and visit, but always taking in the different landscapes, changes in the weather, the temperature; sometimes riding horses, we were free. Living in balance with the land and animals, being able to speak your people’s language, listening to and share traditional stories, and having intact and enacted collectivist rituals and traditions that served as the sustaining and nourishing forces in his early life.

However, during the late 1940s and mid-1950s his tribe was forced off their traditional lands, away from the rivers that were such a critical component to their identity, and pushed onto the drier, arid plains of North Dakota. The forced removal was part of a long and violent history of settler colonial projects that stole and dispossessed land from millions of Indigenous peoples. With the genocide of settler colonialism came numerous acts of violence that had profound and lasting effects on Indigenous peoples. Michael offered various examples to illustrate the brutality of settler colonialism. He explained how Christian ideology was used as a tool of colonization to destroy key cultural practices. For instance, Christianity was used to demonize his people’s beliefs in the spirituality of Mother Corn and other female deities; for holding those beliefs he was labeled a pagan and devil worshiper. Michael noted,

I grew up with that experience of hearing that our spiritual beliefs were wrong and primitive. And, wow, that kind of situation brings forth the shame, the blame and feeling that being native is not a good thing. It was a really bad thing to be native. It shifted a lot of us towards a lot of self-doubt… but we didn't have a choice really to think otherwise. The Catholic priest used to come to the community during the summer and he would pick us up, and without our parents' permission, take us to the other side of our reservation, which was about 100 miles away. After we had already been abducted, the priest would inform our parents, sometime he let them know before he took us…From that point on, I
went to a Catholic high school and learned more about how deviant we were and how wrong our ways were.

Growing up in this context, Michael was experiencing first-hand the devastating and tragic outcomes of colonization. In the following passage he details the extent of the violence.

Although there were strengths and some of our traditions still remained, the big disruptions in our culture caused a lot of community breakdown. A lot of young people like myself ended up leaving the community, going to boarding schools and then not returning to home pick up some of these things that were vitally important…until much later in our lives.

…Our social relationships and connections between one another were disrupted to the point that my uncles, who should have been my male role models, teachers, and support system, all were ending becoming disconnected to the culture, the rituals, the ceremonies, the songs, the dances, all the sacred things. The way they coped with it was through alcohol. A lot of alcohol. There was a lot of acting out behavior and alcohol use. Then we begin to see a huge decline of well-being of happening in the community. I saw it happening all around me. Growing up, I saw a lot of death. I saw a lot of premature death. I saw a lot of violence and all these kinds of things. The things that people said didn’t happen when we lived in the villages along the river before it was flooded out by the federal government and the Army Corps of engineers. So, after we were moved out our cultural and social ways begin to unravel and we were in this new location seeing what was happening, trying to figure out why it was happening and trying to determine who we were and what was our new identity.
Michael reported that he performed well as a student, and had family members who had excelled academically, which shaped his focus enough to eventually prompt him to pursue a social work degree. However much like his earlier education, social work education lacked any discussion of colonialism. Fortunately, he met several highly influential Native American professors in the social work field who played a critical role in empowering and inspiring him to go further with his education. These key figures were important in helping Michael navigate predominantly white educational institutions and pushed him further by insisting that he get a Ph.D. Any doubts Michael had about not being able to do that, were addressed by one of his most influential professors. Michael recalled the conversation this way:

He said to me, “I'm going to tell you something important that you have to remember. You are going to go back home and maybe be one of the first people in your tribe to have a MSW and people are going to look up to you for answers. It’s important that you always remember.”...I remember his exact words. He said, “Remember where you came from. Remember your people. Remember your chiefs and your spiritual leaders, and all the lessons they gave you. That's what it's going to be about right now.” We were standing there and he just really went on to tell me, “Don't forget where you came from. There are traditional cultural things that our people know that are going to uplift us from where we are. They've been through this before. They've been through hard things before, and we know the way out.” He's telling me all these things. Then he said, “You got this training now. You can't go home and open up a program and hang a couple of eagle feathers on it, and call it an indigenous (American Indian) program. If that's all you do, all we have another mainstream white man program, and it won't do you a damn bit of good. You have to go and you have to dig. Dig for that knowledge, that wisdom. Put it in
there. That's what's going to bring us back.” That's what he told me. Of my whole graduate education of my MSW, that’s the thing I can remember most clearly.

In that conversation, Michael’s professors are the fire that cannot and must not be ignored; they are insistent upon the responsibility he has to his community. For Michael, they were the catalysts that helped propel him into a career that has spanned thirty years of digging for knowledge and decolonizing social work.

Finally, guided and inspired by the fire of his mentors, family, and ancestors, Michael has devoted his academic career to sharing perspectives about “the deadly effects of colonialism on people and the planet” and how this has led to an ever-widening gap between rich and poor people. Along with this, Michael has crafted a pedagogical approach that has at its core, healing and transformation. He shared the image below, The Medicine Wheel: A Holistic Approach to Neurodecolonization, Mindfulness, and Community Health.
The Medicine Wheel aims to enact and practice the balancing of emotions, mind, body, and spirit through a process of neurodecolonization, mindfulness, and community health. Michael has written extensively on developing his ideas of neurodecolonization as a form of healing and transformation. According to Michael (Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013),

Neurodecolonization involves combining mindfulness approaches with traditional and contemporary secular and sacred contemplative practices to replace negative patterns of thought, emotion and behavior with healthy, productive ones…neurodecolonization activities are aimed at deactivating old, ineffective brain networks that support destructive thoughts, emotions, memories and behaviours, particularly, past and contemporary oppressions associated with colonialism. (p. 298)
Through a holistic pedagogy, Michael’s work attempts to focus on creating balance of emotion, mind, body, and spirit. Just as fire demands attention, respect, and care, Michael’s teaching insists upon mindfulness, warmth, light, and comfort to heal the wounds of colonialism.

**E hō mai, Invitations, Ipaay mo kadakami, Wisdom (Give forth, Invitations, Grant it to us, Wisdom)**

Alma (she/her/hers, they/them/theirs) identifies as Filipina, born and raised on the island of Moloka‘i in Hawaii, “first-gen social work professional.” She is an Associate Professor in her 11th year at Portland State University School of Social Work. I have known Alma for several years and consider her a friend and mentor. I met her through attending and co-presenting at the LBHC, which is also where I first became aware of her work on critical Indigenous pedagogy, Pinayization and Aloha-ization (Trinidad, 2014). Alma’s work strongly resonated with me, especially as someone who identifies as Filipino, since it was the first time I had ever been exposed to critical Filipino social work scholars. With the impact that Alma has had in helping me develop my critical consciousness, I was completely honored that she agreed to be part of my research project.

**Simultaneous Journeys: Paths to Shaking Things Up.** Alma shared that her path to social work was one of simultaneous journeys, in which there were key influential events or factors occurring at the same time. For instance, Alma noted she has always been guided by the desire to address “oppressive forces and the erasure of our community and erasure of our ways of knowing.” These ideas were formed early on while Alma was just a teen growing up witnessing lots of activism in Moloka‘i. She described Moloka‘i as a “predominantly indigenous Native Hawaiian community…identified…for its activism and Hawaiian sovereignty as well as its stance in preserving the Native Hawaiian culture…”. 
Alma referenced the closing of a pineapple plant, where her father worked, as a significant event that broadened her awareness of social injustice of race and class oppression:

*just observing…unemployment…the tension around multinational corporations as they exploit our community members, and then the…irresponsibility of land use, were things that bothered me a lot as a youth.*

Paralleling her growing social and political consciousness however was Alma’s confronting of what it meant to be “a child of a settler immigrant family.” She pointed out how complex this made things in trying to reconcile what it meant to be opposed to exploitation but simultaneously being a settler on unceded territories.

By the time Alma got to college, she knew she wanted to help her community deal with the oppressive forces. Her political and social critical consciousness continued to develop. She became involved in student government and began reading the work of critical scholars like Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask. She got involved in student activism around issues such as increases in tuition and defending ethnic studies. During this time, she began taking Ilocano language courses, which seemed like an important part of reclaiming language and cultural history. However, simultaneous to this journey was a growing sense of shame about being Filipina in Hawai‘i. Alma describes her experience this way:

*I went through this whole parallel journey of being ashamed of my culture but simultaneously observing that many other ethnic groups in Hawai‘i were being stereotyped. That would be native Hawaiians, Filipino, all the other Southeast Asian and the refugee immigrant were all…ostracized.*

Sorting through this mix of feelings was challenging and left Alma feeling “agitated” about how to think about it.
During this time of her life, she was working at a homeless shelter/youth program, and a foster youth program doing transitional work. These were experiences that would later serve examples of the social work practices and processes of coloniality because they lacked any conversations of cultural relevance to Filipinos and Native Hawaiians. Alma noted:

At that time, I didn’t think of it as being whitewashed. But it was…like where's the culture, where's our values, Filipino values, Native Hawaiian values…? At that time, I didn't really poke around, but it was one of those things like, okay, that's how social worker is...They're doing individual therapy. Group therapy. Engaging with the police department, encouraging the first-time offenders to do…like a Scared Straight tactic. But yet no conversations around culture.

While the work she was doing left her feeling curious about learning more, she was also confused, experiencing feelings of irritation and agitation generated by her student activism. In one space she was an activist, challenging and speaking out; and in another space she was applying oppressive social work practice models on mostly “brown Pacific Islander” communities.

What helped align her experiences was a research project she was part of during her undergraduate years. The project was a Hawaiian-centered school-based substance abuse prevention program, that intentionally “covered values like laulima (cooperation), kōkua (helpfulness).” All of these experiences, along with key mentorship and work experiences continued to build Alma’s critical consciousness while simultaneously supporting her personal journey of “rediscovery” of her community and family history.

After completing her MSW and Ph.D, Alma began teaching in social work education. Alma has taken the position to work toward challenging the dominant norms. As a testimony of
her efforts, one of her students gave her a card that had a photo of Frederick Douglass on the outside and the words “Thank you for shaking things up.” In this example, the student recognizes the fire that cannot be ignored, due to Alma’s insisting on enacting her vision of “an indigenized, decolonized social work curriculum and education.”

I Sing an Oli: Invitations to Gather Wisdom. In order to enact her vision of “an indigenized, decolonized social work curriculum and education,” Alma typically begins her classes by singing an Oli (a Hawaiian chant). She shared the Oli with me. Figure 4.7a is in Hawaiian:

Figure 4.7a Oli (Hawaiian chant)

The second Figure 4.7b is in Ilocano:

Figure 4.7a Oli (Hawaiian chant)
For Alma, singing the Oli is a call, an invitation to students to come together, collectively, to build knowledge.

…we would sing this Oli in a time when you gather the minds… like a journey… that you're all coming together for the long haul. In this case, it's often sang when you're doing the gathering of wisdom.

Alma is inviting students to gather, to challenge the dominant norms set out by coloniality, to critically reflect on the multiple ways of knowing. She has students reflect on their families and communities, and asks: How would you invite those knowledges into this space? This profound question is part of the “shaking up” that Alma uses as a teacher. Additionally, she shares her personal experiences and stories as way to model the strength and importance of vulnerability, while humanizing the relationship. It is also an example of accountability that Alma has demonstrated through her open and honest acknowledgement of the tensions she has experienced. Alma is insistent upon viewing the role of educators as having to be accountable
beyond the walls of academia; educators need to be responsible to the community. Further, while institutes of higher education can be places of healing, simultaneously they can be places of harm. For this reason, Alma carries the fires of insistence, noting that institutes of higher education cannot be the sole place for revolution and liberation:

… revolution is not going to happen within these walls… I think it needs to go beyond these walls, the healing and then transformation needs to be in multiple spaces, families, couples, communities.

**Fuck Ralph: The Beginnings of a Liberation Theology Informed Social Work Practice**

Rafael (he/him/his) identifies as a person of Mexican ancestry, and shares the same name as his father. He is in his 19th year as a clinical professor at the USC School of Social Work. I have known Rafael for over 15 years. During those years, Rafael has been an instrumental mentor to me, someone I would identify as a key figure shaping my career into where I am at today. With great warmth and comfort, we have held many a conversation over tamales y café about liberatory practices in and out of the classroom. His insistence on relationality, always taking time to support, offer resource, or write letters of recommendation on my behalf have been invaluable to me as an emerging teacher and now researcher. Having the opportunity to interview Rafael was both a great honor and learning opportunity.

At one point in his life, Rafael had thoughts of becoming a priest. He attended a Catholic seminary run by a missionary order of priests known as Vincentians who embraced liberation theology. Rafael described the clergy as teaching a stance of humility, while acknowledging and seeking forgiveness for the colonial violence of genocide and slavery of California Indians through the creation of the mission system. For Rafael, being introduced to liberation theology, with its Marxist analysis and emphasis on liberation, “made all the sense of the world to me, in
terms of looking at Christ as what we call preferential option for the poor.” The perspective offered him a framework to develop a critical consciousness about oppression, colonialism, capitalism, and racism. It also helped him to “conceptualize the gospel” in a way that centered justice, which was important because “there was a long history of the Catholic Church lining up with right-wing governments and not saying anything about it.” Rafael stood in solidarity with Jesuit priests in El Salvador who denounced the Reagan administrations murder and imperialism. The political murders of Jesuit priests, such as Archbishop Oscar Romero, further strengthened Rafael’s conviction and awe for people who died for their beliefs about liberating poor people.

He continued to be inspired by communities in El Salvador who were in the midst of a war, bravely enacting and applying liberation theology through mutual aid efforts and union organizing. Rafael immersed himself in readings of key liberation theologians—Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff, Matthew Fox—while observing how these communities were capable of conducting sophisticated and comprehensive social analyses of power structures. Rafael explained the significance of what happened when communities who had been oppressed and targeted for violence began to raise their critical consciousness. He said:

They were also learning how to begin to conduct preliminary social analysis in terms of how long has this historically been happening? Who are the major power structures that are in place? Who benefits the most from this particular policy? This level of… critical consciousness was beginning to develop in them and boom. They recognize that, "Wait a minute, we can't be living like this anymore." That began to spread and very much it was scary for those who are in power. They felt very much threatened by it.

The insistence to be seen and to hold institutions accountable, especially from members within a shared organization, is illustrative of Fire’s demands to be taken seriously, to be respected.
Rafael stated that liberation theology has continued to be a major conceptual framework that guides his practice as a social work educator.

One other personal experience shaping his life begins with honoring the struggles of his parents and ancestors. His mother is from Mazatlán, Sinaloa and his father is from the state of Durango. His parents separately crossed the border from Mexico to the United States in the mid-60s and then met each other for the first time when they arrived in Los Angeles. He shared that his mother crossed “in a car without papeles” and “my father passed through the rio.” His parents were factory workers, and while they had economic struggles, they also had resources due to an emerging community of immigrants “from East LA to the San Gabriel Valley.” Rafael stated his family history, where they come from, how they came here, and what they have accomplished matters. In this next passage, he describes his feelings about the dreams and vision his parents had:

There's a saying in the Hebrew scriptures, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." I think there's something really powerful about that quote, that they had a vision and that the vision may have been moving from one area of Mexico to another area of Mexico and finding a sense of land and agriculture. I just think that what our ancestors have is a sense of vision. I have two children, I have this vision of where I see them going. My parents had a vision as well that in the other country that they would have better opportunities in terms of economically… That to me is what stands out. They had a vision. Maybe they didn't know exactly what it was going to be, but they had a vision and they followed it.

Rafael shared a particularly powerful story about how as a teen in the seminary, his vision of his identity had been shaped by assimilationist ideologies. Assimilating required the distancing of
his cultura and family history, erasure of his language, and shedding his name. To this point, he described:

… everybody called me Ralph and I accepted that… because I was attempting to assimilate, most of the seminarians were predominantly white. There were some Latinos and some Asians, but I just sort of accepted the word Ralph. Then you go to undergraduate school and you take your Chicano studies class you go, “FUCK RALPH--MY NAME IS RAFAEL, chinga de madre!” It's like there's these subtle manifestations of how colonialism wants to create WHITE out of you. As opposed to honoring your name, your ancestors. I quickly recognized with that, like, “Wait a minute, somebody is trying to pull something over me and my name is Rafael, the name of my father.”

In this powerful example, Rafael disrupts coloniality and reclaims his name with insistence, with Fire. As his critical consciousness developed with the assistance of Chicano/a Studies courses, his vision shifted to one of insistence, of Fire, of liberation.

A Visual, Liberation-Based Social Work. Rafael is a liberation-based filmmaker, with hopes for a re-imagined social work that he described this way: “I would love to see the development of a visual social work practice of how we use film.” Bringing a liberation psychology lens to his filmmaking and his work with students, is a tool of insistence to disrupting the essentializing and single-story narratives of coloniality. For Rafael, coloniality:

is the unconscious use of concepts, images, means…upon a system or upon a discipline that we just accept, especially the White European understanding of psychology, sociology, anthropology, whatever ology you want to go through.

Thus, Rafael uses liberation psychology as the framing for his social work practice and teaching. It has helped him develop a social analysis of how westernized psychology theories and practice
models have been used as a process to erase critical historical context, thereby reinforcing coloniality.

As an example, he discussed Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), a widely used evidence-based treatment intervention for depression and anxiety (among many other things). Rafael explained that CBT is fundamentally rooted in an individual psychotherapeutic philosophy, from a Western dominated viewpoint. While Rafael acknowledges that CBT can be useful in helping people learn to re-frame their negative thinking, he also believes it is an inadequate model since it fails to consider social mediators and the context of historical and contemporary oppression which is often the root cause of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. Adding to this process of coloniality is the fact that CBT is very well funded and “driven into agencies” so that “Every student gets trained in CBT.” Essentially this means that an individualistic worldview approach to mental health treatment becomes normalized and taken for granted.

Rafael challenges coloniality be embracing a liberation psychology view that offers a social analysis to understand the multiplicity of dynamics affecting communities; further, liberation psychology aims to bring people together into group settings for healing work. Offering more context, Rafael shared the image of a raised fist in the middle of film strip (Figure 4.8). The image sparks in him a spirit of anti-oppressive practice, one that is rooted in liberation psychology and radical filmmaking. He teaches a course on documentary
filmmaking and over 15 years, has collaborated with students to create at least 100 documentaries. The films address a range of critical social justice issues. In his classes, Rafael is insistent that documentary filmmakers are not neutral on political and social issues. Instead he tries to help his students develop a more radical filmmaking stance informed by liberation psychology, to truly align themselves with those communities who have been disenfranchised and marginalized. He shared examples of radical filmmaking:

Chicanos in the ‘60s utilizing filmmaking and the queer community in the 1980s beginning to utilize it, especially the documentary like Silverlake Diary. You have these two individuals both suffering from HIV-AIDS and telling their own story in front of the camera, but each telling each other stories.
He believes radical filmmaking has the opportunity to bring communities together, shifting away from the individualized mental health treatment modalities.

Further, radical filmmaking helps raise critical consciousness and can be a force for liberation.

Filmmaking I think has become really a powerful tool of bringing… people together. You have a filmmaker who brought Palestinians and Israelis to an Island off Canada, and they began to tell stories and the Israelis were acting as Palestinians and the Palestinians were acting as Israelis. They wore everything so that they can feel each other's pain like ‘What is this like?’ There were fights, arguments and stuff like that. They began to really look at the issue regarding power.

Rafael has created a visual social work through his insistence on a radical, liberation psychology-based filmmaking. Just as he re-claimed his name, he has helped a generation of students pay attention and take seriously the demands, the fire, of the people. His example may give us a pathway to creating a more interdisciplinary, radical, and visual social work.

**Land/Persist: Stories of Friendship and Community Building**

The next group of stories are Land/Persist. Land is constant, it is the foundation for all things. The land is our roots, where we originate from, and where will return. Land is defiant in its persistence to thrive despite human attempts to control and dominate it. The stories in these portraits illustrate the roots of persistence, which serve as the foundation for healing and empowerment. Specifically, the stories of Land/Persist address the sub-themes of the key roles that friends and colleagues, activists and organizers, and communities of mothers have played as the foundations for Maria, Vona, and Alicia, respectively on their journey to becoming social work educators.
Roots of Persistence: Pakikiisa

Maria (she/her/hers) identifies as Filipina American. Maria is an Associate Professor at DePaul University in the Department of Social Work in her 12th year. The interview was the first time we would meet one another. I learned about Maria’s scholarship and became familiar with her deeply insightful and poignant article titled “Decolonizing Pinay Motherhood” (Ferrera & Hensler, 2019). I was eager and honored to interview Maria, and to learn more from her.

Pakikiisa. Right from the beginning of the interview, Maria was practicing pakikiisa, a term I was unfamiliar with until I had read her article on Pinay Motherhood. The article is organized around a dialogue she had with a friend/research partner, about Pinay motherhood, with the intention of illustrating relationality, “collectivism and kapwa” (Ferrara & Hensler, 2019, p. 145). Maria and her colleague discussed the vital significance of “pakikiisa” which means “making space for unity and mutual respect—within the isolating culture of whiteness that permeates” (Ferrara & Hensler, 2019, p. 145). Within just a few minutes into the conversation Maria had identified professional organizations and network opportunities, along with conferences I might be interested in attending. Maria stated:

I’m excited to read your work because I don't know very many social work scholars in this area…When I heard about your work and your project I really wanted to connect with you...

Beginning the interview with pakikiisa immediately made me feel a connection with Maria and her network. While I believe enacting pakikiisa reflected Maria’s commitment to challenging coloniality, it also let me know she most likely had experiences navigating the often isolating and individualist academic culture.
Persisting with Friends and Colleagues. Indeed, Maria shared that in her graduate education, issues of Indigenous practices or dialogues on decolonizing methodologies never occurred. The lack of critical content and representation limited the exposure to examining the multiple ways of knowing. This caused a serious conflict with Maria’s worldview, as she stated, “I don't see the world as having…these truths that don't budge…there's so many realities and there's so many ways we construct our realities for different reasons.” Entering a Ph.D. program, Maria continued to experience isolation, and lack of support in navigating predominantly white spaces. She described the emotional and traumatic process of completing her Ph.D. program as “getting through…without feeling completely wounded and unworthy.”

However, the roots of persistence emerged in the development of friendship and solidarity with her co-author Cecily on the “Decolonizing Pinay Motherhood” article. In this next passage, Maria describes how meeting Cecily at a critical ethnic studies conference, helped cultivate an incredibly meaningful and affirming process of working together. Maria had just finished presenting her dissertation research, and Cecily approached her saying how much she resonated with Maria’s work:

We befriended each other very quickly and we just talked about our community and our scars, psychological scars, and how she was in a doctoral program and just was already experiencing a lot of oppressive dynamics...

Their connection and understanding was further deepened, as they worked on a project together that affirmed their identities as Filipina mothers in academia who were also actively trying to decolonize:

The process of saying we should do something together and it should be a dialogue was
really powerful to me. The fact that it's on paper, our dialogue was on paper and it was a very honest conversation that we laughed and we cried, because I had found someone who knew what it meant to be a mother in academia, but also a Filipina mother who is in the process of trying to decolonize and trying it. We're both struggling at this time to figure out how do we navigate academia and survive and sustain ourselves.

To have that mirrored through the style of that experience…it was just so powerful to me.

The relationship with Cecily and the impact of the work they produced is a story of Land, in that they were able to establish the foundation, getting to the origins of the pain, and thus find strategies such as pakikiisa to persist toward healing and empowerment.

**Deconstructing Colonialism.** Maria believes that learning how to be a social worker means learning how to have difficult conversations and critical dialogues on issues such as colonialism and power. For Maria, her definition of colonialism includes the historical projects of over 300 years of Spanish and U.S. colonialism and imperialism. Maria expanded her thoughts stating that the physical violence of colonialism causes psychological violence, leading to internalized oppression and inferiority, and that colonialism is manifested as white supremacy. Having conversations with students about these topics is difficult to do.

One of the strategies she uses, is to bring in political cartoons and have dialogues with students to explore the meaning and deconstruct the ideas presented. One of the cartoons she uses is titled “The White Man’s Burden” and illustrates the U.S. colonial violence enacted onto Filipinos. Maria shared the image (Figure 4.9) and explained it this way:

**Figure 4.9 The White Man’s Burden**
It's the image of a US military soldier carrying away this ‘native’ who's almost naked… You can see the US school in the background and this is based on the Spanish American War, and taking the Philippines, and mark the idea of benevolent assimilation and the little brown brothers. They're barbaric, that they need to be civilized, that's the whole idea.

I just show this image and I ask students, ‘What do you see?’... I still struggle with this, to teach that to American students. ‘This is part of your ancestry that you waged war on my country.’ I couldn't say it like that. ’You killed and raped on these villages, but we don't hear about it and we live here.’

**An Intentional Shift and Co-Constructed Poem.** As I listened to Maria share this example of how she deconstructs colonialism with her students, I felt the power of her words, the persistence in her voice, that said we need to openly address the violence that United States did to the Philippines. Thus inspired, I break from the traditional western format of reporting data,
and instead attempt to illustrate the relational nature of our dialogue by situating myself within this portrait. My hope is that this intentional shift is consistent with decolonizing methodologies (Chilisa, 2012) and the principles of interconnectedness within Indigenous Knowledges (IK). I was never an objective observer, but rather a fully engaged researcher and listener who was deeply moved and inspired. In an attempt to synthesize my feelings, reactions, and interpretations of Maria’s story, I have co-constructed a poem based on the above passage and image of “The White Man’s Burden”; I say co-constructed because I have re-mixed and blended Maria’s words and images into a poem that tries to reflect the feeling of our interaction.

What Do You See?

that's the whole idea/
the little Brown brothers/barbaric/Native/almost naked/need to be civilized/
US military soldier carrying away/almost naked/barbaric/need to be civilized/Native/
that’s the whole idea/
  you can see/barbaric/US military/
  you can see/US school in the background/
  you can see/taking the Philippines/the little Brown brothers/
  you can see/barbaric/US school/US military/benevolent assimilation/
that’s the whole idea/

I ask students, What do you see?/
do you see/
  need to be civilized?/
do you see/
  part of your ancestry?/
do you see/
  barbaric?/
  waged war?/
do you see/
  US school killed/Brown brothers?/
  US military soldier killed/Native?/
  US/school/military/raped on these villages?/
OR do you see/
  benevolent assimilation?/
  on my country/on my/Brown brothers?/
is this/what/you/see?/

that’s the whole idea/
that’s the whole idea/
I ask students/
what/war/do you see?

**Roots of Persistence: Collectivity in the Land of Forgetting**

*Vona (she/her/hers) identifies as a second-generation Korean American woman. She is an Assistant Professor at Southside Grand University in her sixth year. I have known Vona for several years mostly through connections of mutual friends and conferences we have attended. Vona has a prolific history of community organizing, especially in the “field of domestic violence and sexual violence, particularly working with Asian immigrant women and families.” She is co-founder of one the most well-known and radical organizations toward ending violence against women of color. The opportunity to interview and learn from her wealth of knowledge and experience was truly inspiring.

Vona invited me into her home to conduct the interview, and upon my arrival, she immediately gave me a warm welcome, followed by offering food and tea. I had also brought her a small gift of fruit and tea, along with the gift card (as research compensation), as one way to share my appreciation for her time and support. Beginning the interview with ritual expressions of gratitude and appreciation, grounded us in our mutual belief of respect for the relational dynamics that serve as the foundation of our work. Further, our start to the interview foregrounded themes of Land/Persist through stories of refugees and immigrants fleeing violence, feeling lost in a new country, while searching for belonging, community, and meaning.

Vona explained that prior to her parents immigrating to the United States, her father was a refugee from North Korea, and her mother was escaping domestic violence. Vona stated, “They came from a situation of war,” which meant they carried with them experiences of pain.
and trauma. Arriving in a new country came with challenges, however since her father came to
the United States as a student, his position helped create community. Vona explained:

My parents came as immigrants when they were in their 20s. They struggled with trying
to understand where they had landed. At that time, the Korean community was pretty
small. They landed in Seattle. I was born there. They had a small community of friends
that were, I think primarily students.

While having community was critically important, there were still the feelings of loss that
affected her search for community and home:

I was always trying to find community and home in a family that was really pushed out,
as many of us, and then we get pushed out and we land in the United States which is the
land of forgetting.

The “land of forgetting” proved to be a significant contextual and cultural barrier that caused
confusion and uncertainty about how to deal with the trauma of war and violence. She explained:

Not every family, but my family's experience, I think, was one of forgetting; forgetting
the trauma, feeling that loss but not knowing what to do about it, being in a country
where we don’t talk about these kinds of things.

For Vona, the answers and maybe the healing, emerged with the search for community,
belonging, and meaning. She described her journey toward developing community ties especially
within Asian American groups in her mid-20s:

As I got into my earlier mid-20s is when I found a more Asian American like-minded
people where I could make sense of who I was. We could create meaning and community
here in the United States, and try to do something meaningful.
The sense of hope and empowerment was fueled by a sense of purpose to create change. Though she continued to feel disconnected and “estranged” from the community she grew up in, she was drawn to the inspiring work of feminists of color communities. Building connections and relationships within these communities sharpened her intersectional analysis of how racism, sexism, and classism produced differentialized experiences for Asian American women.

She began doing work at a sexual assault center, specifically working with Southeast Asian women; this position gave her the opportunity to do community education in various Asian American communities (e.g., Cambodian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean). During this time, she and her colleagues began to organize for more domestic violence shelters, as well as services for undocumented Latino community members experiencing violence. Vona mentioned that she wished she had a mentor to guide her in figuring out how to advocate and organize. She expressed:

honestly, I remember distinctly feeling like I didn't have mentors at the time, and wishing I did and this feeling like I was just going to have to find a way and find like-minded people so we would mentor each other in some ways, we just encourage each other.

Each person had a different kind of strength and skill.

What she described is that she formed a collective, a community of like-minded people that could serve as the foundation for energy, determination, and empowerment. The roots of persistence were embodied in collectivistic drive to follow their passions for justice and liberation.

**Roots of Persistence: Communities of Mothers Welcoming Us to Learn Differently**

Alicia (she/her/hers) identifies as coming from a mixed background. Her father is White and her mother is mixed Native American and Latina background. She is an Associate Professor
at Midwest Mountains College in her 12th year. I met Alicia at a conference a few years ago, and had the opportunity to see her co-present alongside Indigenous youth co-researchers discussing their work with youth participatory action research (YPAR). Their presentation inspired me to learn more about YPAR as well as other Indigenous methodologies that I might be able to use. Alicia has published numerous articles focusing on Native American education, wellness, media, and youth involvement and advocacy. Her scholarship and community organizing are excellent examples of innovative and creative approaches to decolonizing social work education. It was an honor to have the opportunity to interview Alicia and gain more insight about her work.

In discussing the personal and educational experiences shaping who she is today, our conversation wound along the path leading toward an examination of theoretical traditions that have become the foundation of social work education. We discussed ideas for de-centering Western perspectives. Alicia added a critical component of bringing Indigenous traditions and community members into classroom spaces. She noted:

I've been much more active in bringing indigenous pedagogical traditions into our coursework and our experiences for students in reaching out to community and asking community to co-facilitate teaching with me and bringing them into classroom when we can and going outside of classroom whenever we can…I insist on making space for those in my teaching…there's a lot of elders that would say that place, in so many ways, teaches, and that we can learn through intuition and…we can learn through dream, and we can learn in many different ways, so I try to integrate that.

Alicia’s comments about bringing Indigenous ways of knowing and co-facilitating with community members provides a critical resource to students. It teaches students to literally understand about the land they are on, the sacred sites and spaces, and to challenge the accepted
perspectives about what education is. The example demonstrates the ideas of Land/Persist, in that the roots of persistence, of understanding our origins, can be found in the relationships and knowledge of community members and elders.

Connected to Alicia’s interest in radical approaches to teaching is her earlier life experiences with education, which she described as “a complicated history.” The complications had to do with several factors. She explained:

I wasn’t the best student. I didn’t learn in a traditional way. I came from a poor family. I had high mobility, had a radical activist two-spirit mom who really rejected mainstream curriculum in so many ways… It was more of a place where I found myself in trouble and being pushed out.

By the time she got to high school, school was no longer a place she felt welcome and so she “ended up dropping out and became a teen mom.” This seemed to be a critical moment along her journey as to whether she would return to a place that had not made her feel welcomed, or would stay away from school.

After her son was born, Alicia did return to an “alternative school for pregnant, parenting teens.” This school ended up becoming her re-entry back into the system of education. Key to her feeling welcomed was the support she received from other mothers. Alicia described:

I received a ton of education in community education setting, like moms—Their community activist circles and events that I attended just tagging along, or things that popped up in the community, at the community center. I think I learned in those ways and learned really differently in those spaces.

Alicia’s story illustrates the lasting and profound impact the community of mothers modeled for her to persist. It was community, and specifically a community of mothers, who were the
constant supports, who stood defiant of unwelcoming educational settings, and who paved the “way back into the education system” for Alicia. It was a community of mothers who became the welcoming foundation, the roots of persistence that gave her the space to “learn differently.” These lessons are now being directly applied to Alicia’s community advocacy and work with Indigenous youth, as well as the radical approaches she uses to involve community and elders as part of the learning space.

**Wind/Influence: Stories of Recovering, Redefining, and Reclaiming**

The accumulated learning of earlier life experiences shifts the story of power toward a focus on present-day actions of participants in their role as social work educators. Their narratives are conceptualized as Wind/Influence. Wind is the force that carries messages from place to place, spreading seeds of ideas across borders and walls. Wind is a light breeze, a sudden burst, and a tornado. It brings its influence, blowing in all directions, an indicator of times changing. The stories of Wind/Influence describe the multiple pedagogical strategies used to disrupt practices, processes, and effects of coloniality. The participants’ stories woven into this section are Willie, Aissetu, and Andrea. While there was a vast array of strategies, I am highlighting the sub-themes that emerged most often, which included recovering and intergenerational connectivity, developing a critical consciousness by questioning dominant narratives and redefining social work education from Indigenous perspectives, centering knowledge from communities who have been historically minoritized, and planting seeds of wisdom from elders and community members.

**Intergenerational Winds: The Quilts of Recovering and Liberation**

Willie (he/him/his) identifies as African American. He is in his 28th year as professor for the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. I have had the honor of knowing Willie
since 2015, when we met at the Liberation Based Healing Conference (LBHC). Since that time, I have co-presented on panels with Willie, and have shared many discussions about pedagogical strategies to disrupt coloniality. He has had a major influence on my teaching, and has been a wonderful mentor to me. Willie is always willing to share resources and was one of the first people I contacted about being part of my research project. I felt very honored to have the opportunity to learn from him in this space.

I Have Learned to Fight for Liberation. Willie grew up in the Jim Crow south which he said is “truthfully apartheid.” He elaborated on his upbringing in which every interaction with his surrounding environment taught him the codes of racial apartheid:

My mother gave birth to me on the colored side of the hospital. I went home to live in a colored community. That's what we were called. On my birth certificate, my race is listed as “colored”, not Negro or Black. I attended a Catholic school for colored children, the nuns were Sisters of the Holy Family out of New Orleans, Louisiana. In that context, there was just no way that I could be an informed human being, and not be aware of the apartheid that was shaping the lives of people who looked like me, and the lives of people who identified as white.

His school experiences occurred during the Civil Rights Movement, which meant that for most of his life he attended segregated schools. The first time he took a class with a white person was as a senior in high school, following the 1954 Brown vs. Board decision. Along with these critical school experiences, Willie’s parents, who were devout Christians, played a critical role of instilling values of justice and responsibility to be involved in making changes. Willie remarked that his parents emphasized, “That I needed to use what I have learned to fight for liberation.”
Willie stated that in high school he was an advocate, but when he got to college toward the close of the 60s, he was ready to expand his learning into more radical spaces. He discussed being taught and influenced by a professor who was a member of the Students for Democratic Society (SDS), and how this professor exposed him to more critical philosophies and readings including the works of Franz Fanon. Willie’s description about this time of his life reflects the influence of the winds of previous generations efforts to create change and liberation; the intergenerational winds had planted the seeds and they were now in full bloom. He explained that he would not be ignored and insisted upon action, as summarized by his comment, “I left there with a big gigantic Afro and ready to take on the world.”

**Decoloniality: Education for the People.** While Willie highlighted many other critical experiences that have influenced and shaped his commitment to liberation and challenging coloniality, I think the following excerpt serves as a powerful example of the Wind/Influence within Willie’s narrative in shaping who he is today. I asked Willie what he thought his ancestors would have envisioned for him to be? What kind of hopes or wishes and dreams did he think they had for him? Willie shared that he thought they would be:

- very pleased that I went to be educated in and learned the ways of the white man. I think they would be very disappointed that I didn't bring that education back to places, like the spaces where my family lived and farmed.

After explaining this, and reflecting a call-back to his parents’ statement about responsibility to take the lessons learned and fight for liberation, Willie expressed, “I'm feeling a real duty now to return to the community.”

Willie’s critical self-reflexivity and accountability illustrates the influence of intergenerational winds carrying their message of connectivity in order to repair generations of
trauma. Willie’s words about duty, are part of his insistence to use his capital and status as a professor to break down the walls of colonality embedded in academia and bring education back to the people. As Willie stated, “I don't want to lift up Western ways.” For Willie, that means carrying the traditions of the winds, and intentionally centering theoretical foundations from Black and Indigenous people in a global context; creating opportunities for organizing and resource sharing within community spaces; connecting students and community members through projects such as housing, incarceration, fighting gentrification, and so on. Education can not only be reserved for those who can afford to attend the university, but rather “It should be with the people.” The community should have a say in developing and designing curriculum and educational policies.

**Intergenerational Connectivity: The Art of Recovering.** A major influence on Willie has been the relationship between his ancestors, family, current and future students, and community. For Willie, the winds of intergenerational relationships extend across time from past, to present, and to future; maintaining and honoring the connectivity is a strategy against coloniality, and a strategy for recovering. As an example, Willie shared, that in 2019 he attended a family reunion with parts of his family that he had not known before. Willie contextualized the separation and distance with his family as a lasting effect of coloniality and historical trauma of slavery and lynchings. He explained:

That's one of the real wounds that I carry as a descendant of paternal grandparents who were born slaves… One of the things that happened to people like me is that I was cut off from the people who really are my immediate connections to people like my grandparents, my paternal grandparents who I never met. My dad and his sisters and brothers were so damaged by what happened to them being born to these former slaves,
I’m guessing they were embarrassed. They never told us about their past. We learned these things after they died. They were embarrassed. They went off. They kept it inside of themselves. There was a kind of dullness to them that probably would have been diagnosed as depression, totally disconnected from the historical context. But they saw lynchings! One of our cousins was lynched, a guy named Willie.

The lasting effects of historical trauma are seen clearly in the passage, resulting in a disconnection from family and from being able to talk about the pain from living through such violence. However, the family reunion might have also been the winds of intergenerational memories, stories, and traditions, carrying with them a spirit of unity, hope, and recovering. Willie shared that this experience revealed further information and evidence to him about the importance of recovering across generations.

To further describe the significance intergenerational connectivity and recovering, Willie shared images of quilts made by his mother Eone Ewards Tolliver. The first image (Figure 4.10a) is a red patch from a quilt that shows a detailed and intricate hand stitching that was used to secure the patch within the quilt. The second (Figure 4.10b) and third images (Figure 4.10c) are of a quilt that Willie’s mother made. He shared that his mother could complete a quilt in a month’s time, and that she would give them away as gifts:

My mom made them as gifts for her children, family, and friends… She did not sell them.

There was no waste. Even an old bedspread could be incorporated into a quilt.
Figure 4.10a Red Patch of Quilt

Figure 4.10b Quilt
Willie shared that the process of making the quilt was special and important because it was a collective effort with his family, often occurring while they sat around a dining table. He mentioned the quilts were made of many parts, and that often his family would recover and weave in patches of fabric from other blankets. What Willie loved about the quilts was their weight, their heaviness. He recalled that as a child he loved the feeling of sleeping under the quilt.

“\textit{I remember them being so heavy and so warm. I did not want to leave the warmth…}”

For Willie, the quilt represents winds and influence of intergenerational connectivity and recovering, both of which are essential to the project of decolonizing. The fabric and recovered patches are the intergenerational stories, memories, fragments, and knowledge that he stitches into his work with students and community members. The stitching process itself intends to
bring community together with the purpose of creating a quilt of felt experiences, love and comfort. Willie added that the durability and heaviness of quilts, is about resistance, resilience, and protection in the context of coloniality. Lastly, Willie shared his thoughts about how recovering is a vital part of the intergenerational connectivity that extends far beyond into the future.

Quilts can be recovered when needed. Recovering allows another generation to incorporate that which has served well for years inside, while layering onto this knowing new patches, new patterns, and new ways of being.

Indeed, the quilt is power, it provides the warmth and care from previous generations, guiding and influencing us to recover when we are exhausted, drained, and hurt. We can recover the memories and stories once thought to be erased or forgotten, and create new patterns, layered with the recovered, stitch them into new quilts. Like the wind, we carry the seeds of liberation from plant to plant, generation to generation; nurturing imaginations for new ways of being.

**Blowing Away Colonial Narratives: The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Redefining Our Knowledge**

Aissetu (she/her/hers) identifies as Ethiopian, originally from Ethiopia. She has been an Assistant Professor at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) for the last three years. This interview would be the first time meeting Aissetu. I came across Aissetu’s scholarship in my searches for social work educators writing about decolonization. Her co-authored article titled, “Social work in Africa: Decolonizing methodologies and approaches” (Ibrahima & Mattaini, 2019) emphasized the long history of colonial violence onto the Indigenous peoples throughout Africa, and called for social work as a profession to challenge its Western-centric approaches. Her scholarship has focused on maternal health, Indigenous policy development, and asset-based...
community development (ABCD) programs. Thus, I felt quite honored and humbled when Aissetu accepted my invitation to be part of my research project.

As the interview began, I reviewed the structure of the interview and discussed my use of decolonizing methodologies and portraiture methodology. Aissetu shared that in her dissertation she used an Indigenous methodology known as visual dialogue (Sheehan, 2011). She elaborated:

It's really interesting how art can be mixed with all the narratives and it has been the most powerful thing I've ever used in terms of getting all nuanced information and really the connection…

…my dissertation was on maternal health, so it's about redefining motherhood and things like that. How people use some kind of representations to define certain things, it was really powerful.

Starting in this way and within just a few minutes of the conversation, Aissetu had helped redefine and expand my knowledge about Indigenous methodologies, while simultaneously sharing a critical resource relevant to my work.

**Questioning the unquestioned.** Aissetu earned her MSW in Ethiopia, and came to the United States to earn her Ph.D. As a teacher at NEIU, Aissetu has taught 14 classes across the curriculum including classes on policy, human behavior and social environment (HBSE), and research to name a few. As our conversation continued, we began to examine some of the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality. One particular practice of coloniality is the process of becoming a competent social worker through the repetitive actions of building cultural competency skills. Aissetu remarked:

I don't like expert social workers because it's misguided. You cannot be an expert of somebody else's life...
I teach a class called Cultural Competence. The first thing I said was like, ‘I hate this title!’ I’m sorry. We have to change it. There's no such a thing called cultural competence. Her critique of this practice and process to maintain coloniality is part of a larger strategy toward helping students develop a critical consciousness by questioning the unquestioned dominant narratives.

Aissetu shared an experience of her own critical conscious raising, that occurred in Ethiopia. While earning her MSW, she was excited to learn about interventions and strategies that at the time seemed very promising, and which gave her the feeling that they could be put into use to help her communities. However, soon after earning her MSW she began to work in the community, applying these interventions. She stated:

There are so many things that I learned, that I had to unlearn when I go out in the field. I joined community-based work, working on HIV, AIDS, reproductive health, motherhood. We tried counseling. We were like, “Okay, we're doing CBT” [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy]. You give this to your client’s all those reflective pieces so that they can do the assignments and write. And then you think back, and these people don't even know how to write… A lot of people don't read and write. Now, I'm having issues with calling those people illiterate… going out and practice was an eye-opening thing for me.

For Aissetu, it became clear that the practice skills she had developed in her MSW program, were part of colonial process of privileging and assigning legitimacy to all knowledge produced from the United States. The effect of these practices and processes was that it caused her to pathologize her clients (e.g., they don’t read or write, they are illiterate, they are deficient), by holding her clients to standard defined by a Western context. This analysis and awareness
combined to solidify for Aissetu, the strategy of critically questioning the dominant practices and processes of Western research and education. She said:

I'm not saying that we cannot use any of it, but we have to be very careful. Especially, if you're thinking of, “Oh, I'm going to be using evidence-based practice.” What evidence? Where did this research come from? Can I really replicate it?

**Journeys out coloniality: Learning to redefine.** Aissetu was very clear that the MSW program was actually a very positive experience for her, and helped her to get to the place she’s at today. However, it also contributed to the maintenance of coloniality and thus the potential to reinforce racist colonial narratives about Ethiopian and African people. To give a better understanding of just how problematic it is to continue upholding a Western view as the superior view, Aissetu provided a very descriptive definition of what colonialism is from her perspective as an African. She offered,

Colonialism as an African, the number one thing that comes into my mind is aggression. Military conquer everything and then it's like the British colony, the French colony, the Italian colony take everything in terms of materials, resources and everything. Then they strip off people's dignity and identity. What happened was that everything whiter become better in Africa…Your hair become a point of, “Oh, your kinky hair, it's not nice.” Your name was changed to John and James but you're an African person. Your gods have been changed. The most African traditional beliefs, just like Native Americans, it was Mother Earth. The concept of God was like Mother Earth. It has completely changed it to Father God. With that, a lot of gender dynamics, a lot has changed. The whole system of chief and chieftaincy evolved. Money become very important. The sense of community was
lost and nuclear family becomes a thing. I am modern, and people start building fences that are bigger than their houses.

As she began her Ph.D program in the United States, she became increasingly aware of how inaccurate the views she had held. Media messages in Ethiopia gave her the impression that “America is so rich, everything that is happening in America is perfect.” She was quickly disabused of these narratives, which caused her to question her motives to earn a Ph.D. and consider returning to Ethiopia. Fortunately, her dissertation chair and professor exposed her to critical literature such as *Decolonizing Methodologies* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), among other critical texts. These texts are the wind that influenced her thinking and identity toward further expanding her critical consciousness; further, these winds signaled the time for changes, helping her think about what it would mean to redefine social work education especially from Indigenous perspectives. Aissetu explained,

> Social work should look very different in different places depending on the cultural context, socioeconomic condition because if we are serving people, we need to know what value we'll add.

**The Ubuntu philosophy.** With winds and influence of critical mentors and scholars, Aissetu began to develop her efforts to bring Indigenous methodologies, such as visual dialogue, into her work. She co-authored the previously mentioned Ibrahima and Mattaini (2019) article, which offers numerous suggestions and strategies for redefining and decolonizing social work in Africa. Core to Aissetu’s pedagogy and redefinition of a decolonial social work, is the foundation of the Ubuntu philosophy. Aissetu share the following image of Ubuntu with the translation “I Am Because We Are”:
For Aissetu, Ubuntu philosophy is not only central to her teaching but her way of living and relating to others. It is her life philosophy. It is the winds of Indigenous and ancestral knowledge. And she explained that now, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, Ubuntu is even more relevant: “The universe is teaching us all a lesson. No one is healthy or safe or peaceful, unless everyone is healthy and safe and peaceful.”

She carries the influence of past and present generations of families and ancestors into the classroom, as way to signify the power of connection and relation. Further, in recognizing the shared interconnectedness, she is shifting away from the coloniality of individualism, hyper competition, and power-over models of teaching. In this way, Aissetu redefines teachers as
learners, students as teachers, a truly reciprocal process of learning and sharing. She described it this way:

I always enter the classroom with the conviction that everyone in that class is an active participant. As bell hooks argues that education ‘connects the will to know with the will to become and learning is a place where paradise can be created.’ Thus I strongly believe that in a classroom, I am not just the instructor. We are all learners!!! I can't tell you how much my students teach me over the years! Acknowledging their journey in life and experiences as an important lesson that is part of the curriculum enriches the classroom and enhances experiential learning.

Further, within the classroom, Aissetu makes an explicit effort to both apply critical analysis to question the dominant narratives, and then collaboratively work with students to consider alternatives to redefine social work education. These are strategies of Wind/Influence, in that they carry messages of critique and questioning, to influence current and future generations of social workers as well as communities being served. The strategies of centering Ubuntu philosophy, are the winds of change, indicating the time is now to blow away the colonial narratives, so that Indigenous perspectives and re-definitions can be applied.

**Wind Carriers: Passing on Our Ways of Knowing and Planting Seeds of Hope**

Andrea (she/her/hers) identifies as an enrolled member of the Shawnee Piqua Tribe. She is an Associate Professor at Indiana University of South Bend in her 13th years. This interview was the first time I would be meeting with Andrea. Andrea’s article “Including decolonization in social work education and practice” (Tamburro, 2013) has been a key source of knowledge in my life, validating my experiences as a student in a MSW program that lacked any meaningful acknowledgment and analysis of Native American communities. Her work has planted seeds of
hope and resistance to me and to my students who have read her article every semester. I was deeply grateful and appreciative when Andrea accepted my invitation to be part of my project.

In starting the interview, I offered thanks and appreciation to Andrea for her article on decolonizing social work. Andrea shared that I might also be interested in reading her dissertation in which she conducted an exhaustive literature review about Native issues being addressed with social work education in Canada, analyzing some 1,400 documents which revealed major gaps in social work curriculum regarding Native issues and communities. During a brief break in the interview, I looked up Andrea’s dissertation and learned that she had created an Aboriginal Assessment Process for Social Work Curriculum (AAP-SWC) Framework in which programs could use as a self-assessment process to “ensure that effective North American and community-based Aboriginal knowledge, skills, and values are incorporated in Social work curriculum” (Tamburro & Nilson, 2010, p. iii). I also learned that she had utilized the Self-Assessment Tool for Programs (SATP), which “aims to support the awareness of Indigenous peoples, issues, and the competencies needed to build capacities within Indigenous communities for self-determination and self-governance” (Tamburro & Nilson, 2010, p. iii). Similar to previous interviews, it took just a few minutes of opening conversation for seeds to be planted and resources to be shared. Further, Andrea’s invitation to look into her dissertation was the wind, carrying the messages of memory about the many people who have come before, who have created pathways for research projects like mine to even exist.

Indeed, the more we spoke, the clearer it became that Andrea links her role of educator as wind/influence, continuing the traditions of her ancestors in spreading knowledge. Andrea remarked:
in our traditions it's the home where children are educated, passing on the stories, passing on the ways of knowing, passing on the information. In a sense, becoming an educator is taking on that role…

Her desire to pass along ways of knowing, at least in some ways, is related to the damage that was done to her family by colonialism; thus, part of honoring her ancestors is by restoring the traditions and stories of her people. Andrea shared that:

a lot of my family, rather than be removed, decided to give up their Indian citizenship and become U.S. citizens for a variety of reasons. I think though that they would have hoped that the information, the traditions, the ways of thinking about things, the world views, all of those things I think they would have hoped that I pass those on. My goal then is to do that.

She discussed that as a young person, she did not learn any history of Native peoples. She pointed out:

we really didn't talk about it. It wasn't something we could talk about or share. There was still a lot of negative messages…people in their community had very negative names for them and it was just something you didn't talk about it.

Developing a critical consciousness about Native history, as well as her own people’s history, occurred when she became an adult and she started “prying information…from… family.”

Meeting and marrying her husband, who is Abenaki, also helped connect her to more ancestral knowledge and understanding of her history. Additionally, she told a story about a critical moment she had as a doctoral student trying to decide what she would focus on:

when we moved to Canada, my husband was hired to “Aboriginalize” or “indigenize” the social work curriculum there. I felt like it would be good to know what that meant. What
do you mean by that? That was where I started with my doctoral work is, “What does it mean to indigenize social work curriculum?”

Cultivating her consciousness and identity also appears to be key factor in Andrea’s work to be a wind carrier of knowledge about Native communities.

In some ways, she is pushing back on the erasure of Native peoples. Andrea noted that her thoughts and definition of colonialism as:

the attempt to disappear people, you change the place names…It's cultural genocide, to make us go away, to pretend we're not here, we don't exist, all Indians are gone, and dead…it's that conscious and unconscious attempt to erase indigenous people, and the influence that we have, and the perspectives that we have. I don't mean to be offensive, but some of the Christian points of view about indigenous people being savages, or pagans, or devil worshippers--Because that's really a lot of the foundation of the residential schools, is working on "kill the man, save the Indian." Part of that was save their soul.

Andrea made clear that sharing information about Native people needs to be strength-based. She mentioned, “Often, when we talk about indigenous people, there is a deficit model to it.” She referred to how social work practice operates from a holistic view, which allows for a more complex and detailed approach to sharing stories about Native communities. She stated:

social work is very holistic. When you look at the holism that we help our students grow in and see all the parts and the moving parts, and how you can adjust those moving parts, that's very indigenous. That holistic worldview, is just, you can't get any more indigenous than that.
Another aspect of passing along knowledge, has to do with bringing people together. Andrea clarified:

My goal is to try to bring people together, to help them see the commonality, to help them see that we're more alike than different. We may approach things a little differently or a lot differently, but we're more alike than different.

Andrea tries to avoid “proselytizing” as that tends to shut conversations down. Instead she uses strategies designed to “make things real” for students, which include inviting elders from the community who can speak about their lived experiences, taking students to reservations or Pow Wows, bringing in artifacts, utilizing multimedia, facilitating lectures on tribal sovereignty, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), and so on. Andrea pointed out that a multi-strategy approach allows students to ask questions and challenge long held stereotypes about Indigenous people. She stated:

People don't know if they're even allowed to go onto the reservations because… don't know very much… Some of them don't know if it's legal for them to go on to reservation land, for example. We talk about parts of the reservation that are open to the public and parts that are not… I encourage them, “Go. If you've never been, even just go to the casino, or powwow, or even just those kind of things that are very public and very generic in a way.” It makes it a lot easier.

The idea for Andrea, as she stated, is to challenge coloniality, by finding ways to bring together. She said, “I'm planting seeds.” The wind carriers, like Andrea, bring the seeds of reclaiming, restoration, and justice. They plant seeds as a strategy to pass along the traditions, stories, and rituals. Andrea illustrates that having influence can take many forms, just like the wind. Sometimes influence is light breeze (e.g., videos, lectures on tribal sovereignty), other times is a
sudden burst (e.g., going to a reservation), and still other times it is a tornado (e.g., students meeting a Native elder who “was forced to go to residential school at the Kamloops Indian Band” who shared his lived experiences in class). Andrea is planting the seeds of knowledge of previous generations with current generations, with an optimism and hopefulness for future generations.

**Water/Transform: Stories of Authenticity, Intersectionality, and Indigenizing**

The work of disrupting coloniality is demanding and taxing on both the teacher and student, and requires the ability to be flexible, adapting, resourceful, and skillful. The next stories of power are conceptualized as Water/Transform. Water can transform to take on many forms, and can adapt to any shape and space. Water is cleansing and purifying, sustaining and nourishing us when we are in most need of relief. The participants’ stories highlighted are from Sarah, Moshoula, and Ramona, specifically because their knowledge illustrates important strategies in challenging coloniality toward transforming learning into spaces of healing and liberation. The strategies identified are practicing authenticity, vulnerability and intergenerational support/solidarity; the use of art and multilayer storytelling to resist coloniality and embrace healing spaces; and de-centering coloniality while Indigenizing the learning space.

**Stripped as You Are: The Hummingbird Warrior, The Hummingbird Healer**

Sarah (she/her/hers) identifies as “a queer cisgender, temporarily able-bodied, white woman with citizenship status and privilege and with educational and social class privilege.” She is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Welfare at University at Albany, in her third year. I have known Sarah her for over six years as a colleague in the CSUN MSW Department, as a friend, and mentor. Sarah’s scholarship and activism focuses on communities and issues such as LGBTQ youth who have experiences with the child welfare system, incarceration, and
homelessness. She has extensive knowledge on the use of participatory action research (PAR). Her influence on my career has been profound and transformative, and I have always felt a kinship and alignment with her strong commitment to social justice and radical transformation of social work education. We have had the opportunity to co-teach a course on anti-oppressive social work practice, and have worked on multiple anti-oppressive projects in the academy and in the community. To have the opportunity to interview Sarah, was truly a gift and I felt honored to learn more about her journey as well as efforts to challenge coloniality.

During each interview, I asked participants to share an object or piece of art that might represent their pedagogy. Sarah shared two objects. The first was a poem by Adrienne Rich (1991) titled “XIII (Dedications)”. Sarah described the poem as, “how you just keep coming back to the work even when the world breaks your heart and you just keep standing up and you keep showing up.” She read part of the poem, but specifically highlighted the final line:

I know you are reading this poem because there is nothing else left to read

there where you have landed, stripped as you are.

For Sarah, the line, “there where you have landed, stripped as you are” described the feeling she has sometimes as a teacher. She described with deep sense of conviction in her voice,

That's how I feel sometimes...Raw, stripped, down on my knees, but we still have to keep doing it. Also calling on the things that generations before us have lived through and survived and experienced…not forgetting the resilience that we've inherited from that…we can't stop fighting even though we feel stripped.

The second image was her hummingbird tattoo. According to Sarah, across many cultures, the hummingbird has been viewed as a warrior and healer. In this next passage she
shares how the hummingbird and Adrienne Rich’s poem shape her feeling of teaching, especially right now in the current political climate. She shared:

The hummingbird is a warrior and a healer but they're also very small. Some people would think of them as a little bit fragile but they have these tremendous healing capabilities. I guess I think of that, both the warrior of feeling stripped where you are, maybe experiencing yourself as weak even in that moment, but still showing up for the fight and also wanting to bring healing in that space, in that moment, in that time to the people that I'm creating a learning community with. No matter what else is going on in the institutional environment, in the world, out on the street like, “Okay, in this moment we're going to create a healing space.”

Sarah’s description of both the poem and hummingbird is a story of water taking on many forms to transform oppressive educational environments into healing learning spaces. Her commitment to showing up for others, staying in the fight, even when feeling depleted, is a story of power. It is a story of passion and intergenerational solidarity to be there for the LGBTQ youth and systems-involved youth, she serves. It is a story about the ability to be find balance between being vulnerable and being a warrior. It is a story of healing.

Stripped as you are: Authenticity and vulnerability. In our conversation, Sarah shared some of her thoughts about opportunities for educators to challenge coloniality. This passage illustrates the level of commitment and expectation Sarah holds for herself as an educator. She offered her analysis:

Educators have the opportunity to help students unpack the ways in which we have been socialized into a normalization of coloniality (through public education, but also through the ways in which coloniality has been built into the very structures of our society and
infiltrates our relationships), so that it’s (coloniality’s) manifestations appear to be the natural order of things…

Unpacking the socialization processes that normalize coloniality is daunting work to be sure, especially because as Sarah mentioned this type of work goes “against the grain.” Thus, she has had to learn how to use authenticity and vulnerability strategically, to:

- challenge students to think about the ways in which we have been socialized, and
- socialize the next generation (though our parenting practices, work with youth, etc.) into occupying differential roles in society based upon our social location…

For instance, Sarah models accountability to her white students, by discussing her journey of critical consciousness to understand her white identity and privilege. She detailed an example of how she does this:

I talk about how white parents and parents of color have differential parenting strategies for talking to their children about the role of the police, and how to respond to interactions with the police, i.e., white parents of white children often don’t have conversations about this at all, and enjoy the privilege of assuming that police are benign sources of protection, whereas Black parents, for example, have “the talk” with their children about how to come across as non-threatening in encounters with the police.

**Warriors: Intergenerational support/solidarity.** Going against the tide of status quo produces many challenges as well as threats to physical and emotional safety. Sarah noted that:

Educational practices that threaten the hierarchy built into the university structures, which have been strengthened by escalating neoliberal investments, face particular resistance and backlash...
Sarah shared a particularly powerful experience from her youth, in which she went “against the grain.” As a queer youth activist, Sarah organized with peers to create a GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) at her high school. Their efforts were aimed at addressing systemic inequities while creating supportive and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ youth. However, in doing so she faced violent threats. She said, “When we started to organize and publicize the meeting we got physically threatened by other students.” Creating a GSA was interpreted as threatening to an educational system centered around cis-heteropatriarchal norms and values.

Fortunately, there were allies who had heard about the threats of violence, and organized to help and support Sarah and her peers. In the next passage, she shares the story of how the support manifested, which also reflects a level of accountability across generations.

We were down the street from Vassar College. There were some folks who were becoming teachers and so were student teachers in our high school who went to Vassar who identified as queer, and they caught wind of this and they developed this informal partnership where they invited us to their campus, to their safer spaces to get started and organize and start our meetings. Then they started coming to our high school and meeting with us there.

This experience helped her realize the importance of having intergenerational guidance and support. Sarah shared that in that moment she needed elders to help her navigate the process while also providing space and resources. Having those student teachers as guides, helped her feel empowered, allowing her to have agency. Intergenerational support also seemed to become the blueprint and key strategy she would use often working with LGBTQ youth and systems involved youth.
Healers: Transforming spaces. Throughout the conversation, Sarah regularly paused to take time and acknowledge the people that have influenced her and helped her get to the place she is in today. She expressed gratitude to numerous mentors, teachers, and friends, as well as appreciation for opportunities that have helped her grow. All of these people and opportunities have strengthened her commitment to “doing work with all queer and trans youth” while persistently trying to understand the answers to critical questions like: “How are we structuring our social services in ways that might be injurious to queer and trans young people?”

Part of the answer to this question, seems to be Sarah’s hope for social work to embrace a more radical vision of justice and liberation. She believes that a starting point might be to acknowledge the ways social work has caused harm and further marginalized communities of color, queer and trans communities, and so on. She explains:

Social work has been complicit in the expansion of the carceral state, through the ways we have sought to respond to gender based violence by leveraging the power of the state, or the overrepresentation of communities of color in the child welfare system that is at least partly grounded in worker implicit bias.

As mentioned, Sarah uses Participatory Action Research (PAR), which offers an opportunity to apply the ethics of intergenerational support and solidarity, and builds in accountability measures to redistribute power back to participants. She further points out that PAR “centers community knowledge and knowledge production.” It seems that PAR may be a space for both the warrior and healer, a space for transformation. Sarah’s insights and vision for a radical social work, represents the Water/Transform conceptualization of power. She is advocating for us to be vulnerable and authentic, stripped as we are, ready to show up, replenish, nourish, and sustain.
Works in Progress: Multilayered, Juxtaposed, Collective Healing Spaces

Moshoula (she/her/hers) comes from a Greek immigrant family, and identifies as bi-lingual and bi-cultural holding Greek citizenship and U.S. citizenship. She identifies as sexually fluid as well as queer, temporarily able-bodied, a woman, and a first-generation college student. She is in her 11th year as Associate Professor at California State University, Northridge. I have known Moshoula for over ten years, and I consider her a friend and mentor. Our paths have intersected many times, and we have collaborated on various projects aimed at subverting dominant ideologies and raising critical consciousness in higher education. Moshoula’s scholarship and activism focuses on work with communities who identify as immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ youth, and individuals in sex trades. Additionally, she has extensive knowledge and experience applying arts-based research methodologies, and I have been fortunate to be the recipient of her guidance as an emerging researcher. Having the opportunity to interview Moshoula has been a privilege and honor.

I begin this portrait with a collage (Figure 4.12) that Moshoula created specifically for my dissertation. The title of the collage is “Juxtaposing our stories and creating collective memories.”
Moshoula provided the following description of her collage:

Informed by the power of story-telling, this collage tells many stories…it represents my journey as an educator, activist and artist…the multi-layered aspects of my lived experiences, my struggles, my resiliency, my values, and my visions for change. I think that de-colonizing social work education requires collective efforts and creativity…an openness to being vulnerable, honest, authentic, and relational. This collage represents
our shared resilience and resistance to dominant forms of knowledge creation in unison...through our visions and voices, we can challenge and resist Eurocentric notions of truth, whiteness and dominant forms of knowledge creation and representation...

through our personal narratives we can use story-telling in the classroom and beyond, to illuminate our diverse lived experiences and our histories. Disrupting coloniality in the social work classroom requires an investment in our collective healing and deep engagement in and with one another, our communities and our environment. The process of collage making represents the ways in which I teach, using multi-layered approaches, art and creativity through the layering of memories and experiences, while placing our ideas, thoughts, and aspirations in conversation with one another. I aspire to ground each classroom space in love and compassion.

Moshoula stated that the collage was a “work in progress,” which inspires us to remain open to revision, feedback, and growth. Further, as a “work in progress,” we are reminded that our ideas about creating changes are constantly evolving. The ideas emerging from Moshoula’s “work in progress” are a collection of commitments for transforming the classroom space to one that celebrates multi-layered storytelling, resists coloniality in all its manifestations, and embraces a healing spirit of love and compassion.

**Multi-Layered Storytelling.** Moshoula explained that multi-layered storytelling can transform binary thinking into a narrative of depth and complexity; further it has the potential to unlock creativity and collectivity. Her use of this approach may have originated from the collectivist culture she grew up in. Moshoula shared how her family immigrated from Greece, though she also described it as fleeing a strict dictatorship (Junta), which caused severe poverty
and limited opportunity for her parents. She explains how as an immigrant family, they were part of a collective community that offered support to other Greek immigrants who had also fled:

My parents growing up, I remember always having various people from the community stay in our house. Many immigrants from Greece would come to the country and then they would live with us for a certain period of time. Sometimes it was for a couple of nights, sometimes it was for two months, sometimes there were people who were working with my father and then they would bring their families and so there was a lot of storytelling and I remember growing up with a lot of people in the house and a lot of storytelling and a lot of talking about one another as well.

The sharing of stories seemed particularly critical to establishing trust, connection, and support with one another.

Moshoula said that growing up in her house, in any given night, she could hear stories about people’s journeys, interactions with police, or they could be intense stories that made people feel uncomfortable, or they could be gossip. Sometimes stories would be based on a reading of the coffee grounds after you finished your coffee:

predominantly the women in the culture turn the coffee cup around then they let the grinds settle. Then they read each other's cup and they'll say, “I see this in your future. I see a road and this is the path.” I do remember very vivid stories about people. “I see a cross and that really relates to this and this and this.”

Essentially storytelling was multi-layered, carrying dynamics related to the different personalities in the space, the use of symbolism, humor, sharing of survival strategies as immigrants, and so on. Whether the stories carried significant meaning or were simply part of just being together, the effect was one of bringing people together in community.
Moshoula applies these lessons from her family directly into her teaching, in an attempt to disrupt the single-story narratives and individualistic culture that often permeates in educational institutions. She says:

I definitely reimagine social work education as a very creative endeavor, a very collaborative endeavor… one that various players have to be at the table to reimagine together. I see that as something that is constructed by, not just a few of us who are privileged and elite or have the opportunity to be in a certain space, that hold power, but in a way that it's that shared space is really co-constructed with certain key players.

**Resisting coloniality.** When asked to discuss some of the practices, processes and effects of coloniality in social work education, Moshoula responded that her immediate thoughts had to do with top-down relationships that hold a negative and cynical view of students. She described the effects as creating a detachment or distancing from developing authentic relationships with students. She explained that an effect of coloniality is “seeing the students as profit rather than as agents of change and as healers to our communities.” Moshoula observed that such a view is dehumanizing and lacking compassion. She pointed out a process of gatekeeping “of who should be in the profession and who should be serving whom.” Gatekeeping is carried out through the practice of using punitive measures that “reward certain types of knowing and certain types of knowledge while pushing other types of knowledge and knowing to the sidelines.”

The forces that define students solely as consumers to be nothing more than recipients of knowledge transfer, or that position students as merely generating profit for the university, are forces that Moshoula seeks to resist. One strategy she uses is intentionally and explicitly valuing multiple ways of knowing, which creates a humanizing effect in which a student is able to be authentic to their ways of knowing:
One of the things that I always incorporate in my teaching are valuing different ways of knowing and different ways of sharing what we know, that are not always based on “evidence-based” facts or what's written in a book or what's written in an article, but also allowing for our lived experiences to be a way of knowing. I always try to create opportunities for students to share what they know or what they've learned in different ways and through different modes and mediums, and not always through writing or through presenting.

Along these lines, Moshoula creates space for students to talk-back to her in the form of giving feedback about assignments.

One of the things that I’ve started to do recently is, if students don’t understand something that I'm bringing up in the classroom or introducing as part of the topic, giving students the opportunity to engage with the topic or with the subject matter multiple times. Letting students have a conversation with me about why they did a certain assignment in the way that they did. Then having that opportunity to take into account my feedback and me having the opportunity to talk to them… Then giving them the opportunity to take into account how I was viewing the assignment and take into account how they were viewing the assignment, and recreating that assignment and having me have the opportunity to review it.

Creating such an open and free dialogue about assignments, offers the opportunity to subvert traditional power hierarchies that position teacher over student.

Moshoula resists the detachment and distancing constructed by dominant systems, when she empowers students to engage in a critical reflexive exchange where their ideas and input are taken seriously; where students opinions and perspectives matter. In this way, Moshoula is
embodying the “works in progress” view, modeling for her students that she is a continuous learner whose perspectives can evolve. The approach is Water/Transform since its aims are adapting, remaining flexible even in situations that may produce uncertainties about how to navigate. That is an example of power because the underlying foundation is one where students are viewed as having agency and creativity to transform the class from a group of individuals to a collective community supporting one another.

**Embracing healing, love, and compassion.** In thinking about transforming education toward embracing a healing, loving, and compassionate stance in the classroom, Moshoula noted this is challenging to accomplish due to the existing structures promoting a sense of “detachment.” She went on to elaborate:

We try to be as objective as possible and aren’t in tune with emotions and intuition. We don’t want to be vulnerable in education, or truthful. We want to maintain a status quo. We continue to create a curriculum based on things that have been created by white settler colonial males that are problematic in the way that they view the world and impose their knowledge. I think…this very rigid way of teaching and knowing…doesn’t allow us…to grow spiritually and evolve as teachers and learners, it’s limiting.

To expand the range of alternatives, Moshoula suggested embracing multiple modalities of teaching. Utilizing art is one of the key modalities she uses as a subversive act to counter the effects of coloniality. She described how creating collage helps bring in connection and emotion: the way I do collage is I will paint a canvas and I really try to be very in tune to my feelings and emotions. The color that I use to create the foundation is really grounded in the color that matches my emotion. Then my collage process is also taking images that
others have created and juxtaposing those various images, in a sense, various different voices to create something new…

There's also an additional layer of what I've created that's kind of in conversation with the other piece of art that other people have created… I see my teaching I would say as also a form of collage, because it's also multi-layered. Oftentimes, I try to be very conscious of whose collage is at the forefront and whose is not and how much space does a certain image or a voice have, and what does it look like… in juxtaposition.

The process she describes is related to Water/Transform in that her teaching can take many shapes, flowing and moving freely in collective relationship with students. The energy created by honoring multiple ways of knowing and storytelling, seems nourishing and sustaining, and carries a potential to be a transformative experience.

Lios Enchim Aniavu, Cualli Tlaneci, Buenos Dias, We Will Not Need The Manual: We Are All Connected

Ramona (she/her/hers) identifies as Xicana Indigena of Yaqui descent; her family is Yaqui and Mexica on her mother's side, originally from Northern Mexico, and Anglo-European descent on her father's side. She is in her 8th year of teaching and an Associate Professor at the University of Central Hills. This interview was our first meeting with one another, and I was very honored to get to interview Ramona. Various colleagues and friends recommended I reach out to her, as they held high respect for her scholarship and community work. Ramona’s work focuses on issues affecting Indigenous, native, and Latino/a peoples, community organizing and community development. Interviewing her for this project was a true honor, and I felt privileged to be able to learn from her vast knowledge and experiences both inside and outside the classroom.
I begin this portrait with a poem Ramona shared with me, titled “Teaching Philosophy (or First Day of Class).”

Lios enchim aniavu  
Cualli tlanci  
Buenos dias  
Good morning, class

Please, do not take out your books.  
Put down your pen and paper.  
Come out from behind your rows and desks.  
We will need access to your ombligo  
your belly  
the place  
where your umbilical cord  
once connected you  
to your mother  
to the stars  
to all of creation.

Did you know it still does?

We will begin  
with a dedication in haikus.

What do you think about love?  
As an ethic?  
As a philosophical principle  
from which our social work practice  
might emanate?  
Are you able to transcend  
candy hearts  
and roller coasters  
to consider love  
as a process  
that lights the fire  
for equality  
transformation  
and honoring  
as others  
lift themselves to freedom?

We will not need the manual  
evidence-based practice  
from practice-based evidence  
motivational interviewing  
ambivalence  
cognitive behavioral therapy  
dissonance.

So, how does that make you feel?

No, this class is a dance.  
We learn by joining the circle  
even when we don’t know the steps.  
You should expect  
to slip  
to fall  
to bump into each other.  
That’s how you learn, after all.

Close your eyes, please class.  
We will be taking a guided meditation  
a journey  
where time and space  
is measured  
by footsteps  
heartbeats  
breaths  
and memory  
not calculated by  
credit hours  
dollar signs  
price per unit  
or final grades.

We are all connected  
by process not product.

Your final project  
is to  
Walk In Beauty
Ramona explained her poem described her “approach to decolonize pedagogy in social work.” My intention of beginning this portrait with her poem is to follow the model of ideas and themes that emerged in our conversation: Indigenize, de-center coloniality, and stay connected with community. Additionally, I use lines from her poem to organize each sub-theme. The themes of Indigenizing, de-centering, respecting community connections do not occur independent of another. Rather, the actions of Indigenizing, de-centering, respecting community operate simultaneously, flowing together, purifying and cleansing the spaces they cover. In this way, moving as one, they can create as Ramona said, “many, many opportunities...Infinite, infinite possibilities.”

Lios enchim aniavu, cualli tlaneci, buenos dias, good morning, class: Indigenizing. To begin her poem, Ramona greets the reader in 4 languages: Yaqui, Nahuatl, Spanish, and English. The order of the words seems intentional and I think important. It brings the focus to Indigenous people, specifically Yaqui and Mexica. Greeting one another in our tribal language is significant for me and Ramona, in that were are both attempting to learn the languages that had been violently stripped away from our relatives. Reclaiming and practicing our languages, which were once outlawed and forbidden to be spoken, is a political act and personal journey of Indigenization. I would like to express my appreciation, shu’ ’aa-shi nin-la (thanking, I am to you) to Ramona for welcoming me into a space where we could quickly connect and find kinship through a very positive process of speaking our languages. Further, as teachers in academia, using our tribal languages is a form of Indigenization since it literally speaks back to the constructs of coloniality. Another form of Indigenizing is a respectful practice of honoring the land and Native peoples of the territories where we are currently located. As part of introducing herself, Ramona shared her connection to the land in the following way:
I was taught to acknowledge all of my ancestors... In that spirit, I also want to acknowledge the original people of the land that I'm standing on right now, which is the Cheyenne & Arapaho people, as well as the Utes, Apache, and I also want to honor any of the original indigenous people who have called this place their home and currently call this place their home.

For Ramona, this entire approach offers an opportunity build relationship and connection. She shares that following her introduction and acknowledgment of “the original peoples of the land”:

I return over and over again to modeling to my students what it looks like to be transparent, to be vulnerable, and to really critically excavate how colonialism has impacted, not only indigenous communities, but all communities.

The opportunity thus is not only part of Ramona’s personal journey, but extends out to all students to engage in critical reflection and vulnerability about the ways colonialism has impacted and implicated us all.

Ramona shared another strategy to Indigenize social work education which is to create courses that center Indigenous perspectives:

I…teach a class called InDIGI qualitative Research Methods, which is a mix between indigenous critical and feminist theory with self-reflective methodologies and arts-based methods. I love it.

I’ve actually proposed, and I think I’m going to be able to teach a class on love, which I'm super stoked about, and then one on indigenous and ecofeminism.

Building courses from Indigenous perspectives also generates passion and positive energy that attracts people to the material to learn about innovation and creativity of Indigenous people. In
doing so, she is shifting “away from the suffering narrative around oppression,” or “damage centered” narratives of Indigenous people (Tuck, 2009, p. 409).

**We will not need the manual: De-centering.** Ramona’s efforts to de-center from coloniality, may be related, in part to early childhood experiences of how her mother taught her about oppression and de-centered dominant narratives. Ramona shared that violence in a California community directly impacted her family, causing them to uproot and move to Oregon, with hopes of safer living conditions. While some things improved, Ramona pointed out that racial and class oppression continued to manifest, resulting in an otherization process. She experienced a sense of not belonging, which she described as manifesting in feelings of embarrassment and shame. Ramona recounted:

> I knew from the beginning of being there, really, that we were not white and that we were poor. People weren't violent or aggressive about us being there, but they were very clear that they knew we were not from there.

However, Ramona’s mother played a significant role in modeling de-centering by sharing stories of her own oppression, while instilling a deep sense of empathy “and an understanding of what is unjust.” As an example, Ramona shared that when she was just six or seven, her mother showed them:

documentaries on Malcom X and the civil rights movement and Gandhi for example…

She also, at the same time, didn't try to make the world sugarcoated for us; let us know that these were things that were real and that were happening when she was a kid. We always had this…consciousness that wasn't conscious yet. I think because she wasn't formally educated, it was the way that she educated us in her way.
These lessons had a profound impact on Ramona, culminating in one particular experience when Ramona was older.

While attending a social work conference in Atlanta, Ramona went to visit the Martin Luther King Memorial and saw the wagon that carried Martin Luther King’s funeral casket. Ramona shared:

I had this really profound moment of connection to my mother being there and looking at that wagon firsthand. It was this really transcendental moment. I actually called her crying and it was like I understood what she wanted for me then as she showed me these documentaries…That moment of seeing that carriage and calling my mom and understanding her in a way that was like--I just felt this profound gratitude that she had shared all of those stories with me, her own stories and the stories of oppression of other people, even the violent oppression, because it was this absolute intimate moment also of healing.

The experience of profound gratitude generated a space for healing for Ramona, and illustrates that healing can occur in many ways and does not have to be something found in a manual.

Returning to her poem, Ramona offers a critique about evidence-based practice manuals that have rigidly centered an exclusively Western-based scientific approach to healing. Any other forms of healing that are not able to meet the standards dictated by Western scientific methods, are de-legitized. Ramona seems to view evidence-based practice manuals as part of institutionalized practices that reinforce coloniality:

What I realized was that there was just nothing that really actually spoke to the depth and breadth of culture in the treatments that we were using or in the evidence-based practices that we were using like multi-systemic therapy or structural strategic family therapy. I
know that those are supposedly evidence-based for Latino and diverse communities, but in my practice of them, I didn’t feel like they actually spoke to— I felt like they were culturally additive and still based on white people in their development versus being culturally-centered.

For groups of people who have been denied access to their traditional healing rituals, Ramona reclaims those practices with the line “we will not need the manuals.” De-centering from the manuals can be viewed as Water/Transform, as it creates and opens up nourishing pathways for a wider range of healing options to be applied.

**We are all connected by process not product: Respecting community connection.**

Finally, as the poem concludes, Ramona shares that process is what connects us, not product. She notes that the focus on product is an idea rooted in capitalism and neoliberalism, which actually further distances us from one another. She pointed out:

I feel like all capitalist exchanges are just in that momentary transaction mode where there is absolutely no relationship that extends beyond the transaction. All I can think about in my mind is the sound of a cash register, like an old tech cash register. It's like, “I've paid you my money, it's my thing now. I don't need to even think about it anymore.”

However, focusing on the process is relational, thus, operating in the world from this perspective reveals the myriad ways we are all interconnected:

Whereas if you actually are doing it in a relational way, you understand that whatever piece you may have bought has a history, has a relationship, has a spirit that's connected to the maker. The craft, the materials are connected to the source. It's just a whole different way of being.
Ramona recognizes the challenges to enacting an interconnected way of being, and the threats to aligning values with action. She observes that to be engaged in challenging colonially, and decolonizing has to be more than just knowing the language or the words of social justice. She observes:

There's an opportunity within everything we do to really align our daily actions, our pedagogies with what it means to be trying to decolonize. It can be like you give resources and time or you put your body on the line. I think that's what a lot of communities are calling for, from people who call themselves accomplices or allies.

What are you actually doing beyond the language?

For Ramona, “staying connected to community” is the most important thing educators can do. Her community is what keeps her accountable.

In this extended passage, Ramona shares a story of how her community leaders and elder help hold her accountable to the assumptions and biases clouding her judgment. The story is also particularly vulnerable, which I believe models the humility necessary for accountability:

I was in a meeting with my Danza Azteca group, and none of them are connected to the university… it's a place of freedom for me… it's community coming together from different spaces and professions, and that’s what's beautiful. We’re united by our ceremonial and indigenous practices. A non-native woman, a White woman came to our circle, and I really struggle with this, I am like, “You all have all your places everywhere else in the entire world, why do you have to come to ours?” Of course, I know it’s because cultural traditions is where healing happens, it’s where we connect in ways that are deep and beyond our individual sense of self. Of course, non-native White people
want some of what we have. It makes sense, I get it, but still, I’m like, “Go find your own place.”

She asked the question to our leaders, “I come here not because I’m trying to get regalia, or earn whatever points, but I come here to heal. I want to know at what point does my participation become cultural appropriation?” Let’s give her that credit, she was being thoughtful about her Whiteness in the space, and I’m just like, “Your being here is cultural appropriation to me,” this is what’s going on inside. The rest of my spaces, I’m in predominately White spaces, I want a few spaces for myself!

Our leader is from Mexico and his family has been in the tradition for generations. He responded and he said, “I can’t really talk about that. I don’t really know about cultural appropriation. But what I can tell you is that if you come here in a good way, and you come here humbly, and you’re respectful of our traditions, you’re respectful of our community, and you make a contribution, then you belong here, we’re a family, and that’s what we do.” I was like, “Goddammit.” That” what our relatives and our ancestors would have done, that’s what they did in the past, which is partially why we got into this colonial problem in the first place. That to me is the root of it. That is not this academic thinking about power, privilege, and oppression, it’s not a critical analysis from a critical race theory perspective, or thinking about settler moves to innocence. It’s coming from this place of authentic being connected to the earth, and tradition, and to humanity. In that regard, inside I was like, “Thank you for freaking teaching me so I can be a better teacher.”

Indigenizing, de-centering, and respecting community connection are strategies to challenging coloniality as well for creating spaces of healing and transformation. Yet to put them into
practice requires authenticity and humility. Authenticity, humility, integrity make up the components of Water/Transform, but I will conclude this portrait with a quote from Ramona who shares how water teaches us the lessons of humility and thus healing:

There’s this teaching that I got from being in a ceremony. That was years ago. I don’t remember the tribal affiliation of this elder, but he was the one who was putting cedar on the fire. He said, “We can learn the most about water or about humility from water because water always seeks the lowest place. It fills the container that it's going to, and it always seeks the ground.” That, for me, is a really important theory.

**Possibilities in Rhythm and Relations: Tess Guides the Way**

Kris (she/her/hers) grew up in Fresno, California; identifies as a queer, middle class, white woman. She is an Associate Professor at the University of Helsinki in her second year; she has been a social work educator for close to 30 years. I have known her for over five years, having first met at the LBHC, and consider her a friend and mentor. Kris’s scholarship and activism have addressed communities and issues such as migrants, domestic violence, HIV, critical intercultural pedagogy, and Finnish social care. Kris’s work is deeply thoughtful, engaging, and critical; she has organized and engaged in numerous projects aimed at decolonizing social work. With the opportunity to interview Kris for this project, I felt honored and privileged to learn from her.

**You always have to believe it's possible: Re-imagining.** As Kris and I began our conversation, we spent a few moments recalling how we had met, catching up on current projects we are involved with, which led to Kris inviting me and my students to visit her in Finland, where she currently lives and teaches. She organizes trips for students from Fresno every year, using a community-based model, which means she intentionally does not run it through the
University. As part of the learning experience, students have the opportunity to learn from immigrant communities in Finland, visit City Hall and talk with community leaders; they also have an opportunity to visit Russia, to see how the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are set up and working. Kris is interested in building personal connections and bonds between people in the United States and Finland. As I listened to Kris, I felt an excitement to be part of this trip while simultaneously thinking about all the barriers that would make it impossible for people to be involved. My thought process quickly spiraled from excitement to negativity:

How would students afford this? Actually, most can’t.

I don’t think they would go for it. There’s probably not any financial assistance or grants. And who can take two weeks to travel?

I don’t think this could work.

In the following exchange, I share how Kris, with just a few simple words (which I have bolded), quickly managed to restore my imagination and hope, shifting me out of the negative, deficit-based view I had fallen into:

José: I know students would love to have an opportunity to do that. I don’t know if that would be possible. If we could ever work something like that out, I think that would be just incredible.

Kris: You always have to believe it’s possible.

José: That’s it. That’s exactly it. I totally agree.

Kris: At times, there’s always a way.

I had foreclosed on imagining possibility, resulting in a less than hopeful view. Kris, on the other hand, taught me that hope and possibility can always anchor us, especially in times when we don’t know the answers (#councilofsages). This opening story illustrates Spirituality/Connection
and its emphasis on ongoing learning. Further, it reminds us to remember that maintaining a balanced connection with the elements means we have a more expansive resource kit at our disposal to help us when we get stuck. The remainder of this portrait is composed of stories that emphasize global community building and re-imagining boundaries of power in pedagogy.

**We live in a world of vibrations, of rhythms: Rhythmic relational attunement toward global community building.** As we were discussing pedagogical strategies to disrupt the practices, process, and effects of coloniality, Kris shared how important it is for her to establish an authentic relational connection with students and community. Essentially for Kris, building relationships are about keying into the moment, looking for the opportunities to connect. A big part of accomplishing this is finding attunement by listening to intuition and paying attention the rhythms in the space. She stated:

> we live in a world of vibrations, of rhythms… my teaching, so much is feeling intuition, sensing where people are at, not just words, not just categories.

Vibrations might be thought of as the subtle rumblings in the earth right before an earthquake; intuition senses those vibrations, which inform the sort of rhythm needed to find relational attunement. Rhythm might be thought as the pattern beat of the heart in response to a situation. The interaction and sense making between vibrations to intuition to finding rhythm can occur in an instant, and it can occur over a longer period of time.

What became clear to me while listening to the stories of all the places where Kris has lived, studied, worked, and visited, and hearing about the many interesting people she has met and projects she has been part of, is that she has keyed into the vibrations, trusted intuition, and developed a rhythm of attunement. In this part of Kris’ portrait, I attempt to show some of the vibrations, intuitions, and rhythms that have shaped her pedagogical strategies toward a global
community building perspective. What I hope becomes evident, is Kris’ embracing of interconnectedness, seeking out radical and political activist spaces, and remaining open to finding learning opportunities and possibilities anywhere and everywhere.

**Vibrations.** Kris grew up in the 1960s and 1970s in Fresno, California. She described Fresno as many things all at once. There was community organizing around civil rights issues and there was the KKK; during the height of the civil rights movements there was an economic shift of wealthier people leaving and poverty increasing; it was racially and economically segregated city and there was a lack of job opportunity, but it was also a community where people knew one another well. Kris lived in a white neighborhood, but went to a school with mostly kids of color. However, due to mandated busing, she was forced to leave her school and attend a predominantly white school. She described the experience this way:

> For the first time when I was a teenager, I was in a majority white school. As a queer person, it was really strange because I realized the homophobia at the school… it was horrible and painful. I convinced my parents in ninth grade to let me go back… I didn’t tell them why, but just like, “I need to go back.”

Kris mentioned that although she did graduate, she did not do well in high school. However, she acknowledged that the consequences for her missing school were different because she is white. She explained:

> When I look back now, I came from white privilege. My parents were teachers. I didn’t go to school. There were no real consequences… Fresno was a rough, unforgiving place. There’s an ideology of rugged individualism, but the reality is, people don’t have chances. There’s not those opportunities for people. That’s where the white privilege
comes in. Yes, I’ve had moments when I’ve been broke in my life, but I always knew I wouldn’t be on the street.

**Intuition.** Still, the violence of homophobia made Fresno a place that she could no longer stay in. “There’s a beautiful community there, but it’s so super poor, super violent, super homophobic at that time. My trajectory was just get out. That's basically what I did.”

**Rhythm.** After Fresno, Kris said she “bounced around a lot” attending “a lot of different colleges.” She found her rhythm when she worked as a dishwasher in a restaurant and became good friends with an Ethiopian man who worked as the cook in the restaurant; he was also undocumented. She said her brother also became friends with him and their relationship had a major impact, so much so that they are still friends today. She described the rhythm of their relationship in this way:

We would watch movies. We're watching all these political movies, like Costa-Gavras… We’d sit and smoke cigarettes and… drink beer. Talk about it. The other day he connected with me because we’re still in touch. We were talking about how, “Wow, that really shaped, those conversations.” Because… he left Ethiopia when they had a revolution. He had seen his brother killed. He was a very strong Marxist, but he had also seen how repressive of a so-called Marxist government could be. A lot of that shaped me in the sense that, you have to make ethical choices. You can't be in between. You have to decide things.

**Vibrations.** As Kris began developing a strong ethical response to political and social justice activism, she ended up moving to Portland and attending Reed College where she studied literature. She said Reed was, “very much the western curriculum…We had ONE woman writer, Virginia Woolf. This was a totally white curriculum. THESE were the classics, THESE were the
greats…” Then Kris attended Howard University, which was a very positive experience. She studied Ethiopian history, Afro-Caribbean writers, and took every “class that was non-Western.”

**Intuition.** Listening to the vibrations produced by non-Western scholarship, Kris took a pause from Reed and traveled to Europe, lived in Spain, then traveled to Wales the early 1980s, where she studied and connected with her family who is Irish.

**Rhythm.** She followed her intuition and found the rhythm of relational attunement with community building and political activism. Kris explained that when she got to Wales:

they had a big miners’ strike. It was the first big strike against neoliberalism. The whole society was shut down. I was very involved with that. That was interesting, just to see how you had a huge collective movement, anti-nuclear movement against Reagan with nukes. There were women who were protesting at the American military base, who were out about their sexuality. I went and joined them. It was the first time I really got thrown out of pubs. Like, “You're one of them, women. Get out of here.” There was a lot of connections.

These experiences informed Kris about how politically involved people were in Wales, a rhythmic pattern that Kris continued to pay attention for.

**Vibrations.** Kris returned to Reed, graduated with her literature degree, and then applied to be an English teacher in seven different Nordic countries. She was accepted as an English teacher in Finland, and worked at international school that was founded by Quakers. Kris pointed out the Finland has a “complicated history of being colonized and being a colonizer.” Kris shared that they had been colonized by Swedish people for 700 years and by Russian people for 100 years. But Finland also colonized the Indigenous people in the northern part of Finland.
However, Kris explained that Finland also supported the African National Congress (ANC) during the 1980s by offering ANC members to study in their universities.

**Intuition.** As Kris mentioned before, paying attention to intuition has been a key part of her teaching. This passage offers an example of Kris meeting some of the ANC members, and deciding to follow her intuition:

I met these guys…I just hung out with these guys. They said, “Well, we're going to go to study these university masters degrees.” I was like, “Where?” They’re like, “It's an hour from here. It's going to be in English. No tuition.” I applied and joined them. That’s how I ended up becoming an immigrant here.

**Vibrations, intuition, rhythm.** For the next 23 years in Finland, Kris’ work experience involved working with asylum seekers, as well as working in social care at a daycare with elders; for a time, she worked for the European Union, and specifically worked with migrants affected by HIV. During this time, she earned her MSW and then Ph.D, and began teaching.

Obviously, there is more to Kris’ story than what I covered here, and clearly this is a very specific sort of timeline I have created and should not be construed into a single-story narrative of her experiences. Rather, my intention is to demonstrate the background context and diversity of experiences that have shaped Kris’ perspective of teaching from a place of intuition and rhythm. The focus on relationality, recognition of interconnectedness, and her resourcefulness of applying the characteristics of the natural elements of power, I believe align with the conceptualization of Spirituality/Connection. In the final portion of Kris’ portrait I illustrate a story of re-imagining boundaries of power in pedagogy.

**Re-imagining boundaries of power in pedagogy: Lessons from a dog named Tess.**
In this final portion of Kris’ portrait, I begin with another portrait (Figure 4.13), this one a painting of Kris’ dog, Tess. The painting was done by Kris’ friend Lori Schafer.

**Figure 4.13 Tess**

As we discussed ideas on how to re-imagine social work education, Kris shared a powerful story she learned from Tess. The story focuses on challenging the traditional boundaries of power between teacher and student, as well as ideas for re-imagining power from a balanced relationally attuned perspective.

After living in Finland for 23 years, Kris returned to Fresno to care for her aunt who had Alzheimer’s. She took a teaching position at California State University, Fresno. At the same time, she shared that she had recently separated from her partner of 20 years. Kris described that time as stressful in dealing with many big changes all at once. During this time, she also had a
dog named Tess, who helped Kris transform the way she viewed power. While Kris had had many dogs, and felt she could handle dogs well, she was finding significant challenges getting Tess to do obey and follow directions. Kris said, “My dog was like…half lion, half chow, and just didn’t listen to anything!”

There were so many issues with being unable to control Tess, in addition to everything else that Kris had going on, she decided she needed to return Tess to the pound. However, Kris’ veterinarian encouraged her to work with a veterinarian behaviorist who specialized with dogs. Kris agreed. During the first meeting, Tess ignored all of Kris’ commands. She explained, “The dog was like…walks in, stands up on the bench, just looking out the window. Just like, ‘I don’t care.’” While Kris felt frustrated, the behaviorist told her the following:

That's the smartest dog I've ever met. The reason that dog is being difficult is because YOU'RE reacting. You're reacting and trying to control that dog. YOU'RE trying to dominate that dog, and that is not how animals work. You have to be relational with the dog. YOU have to learn to control. You have big emotions going on right now in your life because of all kinds of life changes, and the dog feels that, and feels that you are unsteady, and therefore, you guys are competing here.

That experience began a two-year relationship working with the behaviorist of learning to be steady, non-reactive, and relational with Tess. As a result, Kris and Tess developed a more balanced relationship. For example, Kris stated that Tess was fierce, and she didn’t want to take that part away from Tess. However, to make the relationship work, they had to have balance and respect. Kris had a deep and loving connection to Tess. Kris said, “I have my portrait here. She died a couple years ago. I have her ashes. Tess is my talisman, it comes with me because dominating does not work.”
Lessons from Tess: #1, dominating does not work. The most important lesson Kris learned is the dominating does not work. The lesson helped re-shape Kris’ perspective as a teacher who is engaged in challenging coloniality. Kris explained:

What I learned was, don’t go into a classroom thinking like, “I’m going to manage these people. I’m going to tell them what to do, and they’re going to produce this for me.” Otherwise, you’re always in that situation of… “Dominate, make them fearful, scare them, make them run,”… that kind of a top-down pedagogy.

Kris shared that the top-down pedagogy is a process of coloniality in that sets up binary thinking which limits who we can be:

It limits our way of thinking and it limits our way of imagining how we could relate to one another, we just can't think outside of these very narrow constructions. I think that’s why coloniality is so insidious. It limits us. We’re just very narrow in how we imagine things.

Further, the dominating others style of pedagogy is reinforced in educational institutions that constantly manage teachers to fall-in line with the hierarchy or risk severe consequences with negative evaluations that affect promotion and derail careers, “I saw a lot of my colleagues, anytime they stepped out of line to be creative, they'd get a negative peer review or something.”

Lastly, Kris pointed out how the effects of coloniality in the classroom set up a practice of determining who is and who is not worthy. She has observed how educational systems emphasize “breaking down students to build them up.” She explained that the message sent to students is:

If you can’t sit here for eight hours, when your child’s crying at night, you’re not worthy. Instead of working with the community, understanding the situations that people are in,
one is imposing this kind of structure ON the community, trying to find worthiness through dominating people to maintain this position.

Sometimes the way these professional boundaries are constructed...you can’t really be empathetic because that would be transgressing on our boundary.

**Lessons from Tess: #2, relationality, empathy, and listening work.** For Kris, the antidote to the dominating pedagogy is to be interconnected, relational, and balanced. It’s paying attention to the vibrations around you, listening to your intuitions, and finding those rhythmic patterns of attunement. Kris explained, teaching is about empathy and deep listening:

- Learning to feel the needs of those other people. Just learning how to listen beyond words, and what that other person needs, and how you can sit with them, be with them.
- Also in silence, sometimes you don't have to spell it all out. You just are in solidarity with people. That’s it.

Finally, Kris believes that re-imagining social work education would have to involve community members:

*the way to decolonize this curriculum is not going to be coming from the social work department, it's going to be opening up these avenues for community to come and say what they need to have.*

In all, Kris’ portrait shows us the vital necessity of Spirituality/Connection to re-imagine social work education from a place of kinship, mutuality, and community. Her experiences and insights help key us into our own intuitions, while learning to find relational attunement in global context. And lastly, Tess has taught us the lesson of learning to be steady, balanced, empathetic, and in connection with our environment.

**Now is The Time: Decolonize for a New Social Work**
Ann (she/her/hers) is originally from Chile, South America, and identifies as “a Mapuche woman from the southern part of what they call South America. We call… the Turtle Islands.” She is a lecturer teaching social work in her 14th year at University of Mid-Southern. This interview was the first time I met Ann. Her scholarship provides a comprehensive and critical analysis of the limitations of cultural competency and multiculturalism, and provided me the confidence to think more widely about alternative approaches. When Ann agreed to be part of this project, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to get to learn from someone who has had such a major impact on my thinking.

We are not alternatives: Decolonize. As I was reviewing the details of the project, Ann shared how important the need is to have Indigenous social work perspectives to “talk about a new way of doing social work and teaching it.” This sparked our conversation into re-imagining what “a new way” would look like. Ann cautioned about the pitfalls of social work educators looking for new ways and ending up trying to Indigenize social work education without decolonizing. She observed that doing so ends up situating Indigenous voices as the “alternative” and thus forever “on the periphery.” For Ann, mainstream social work needs to be to decolonized; a decolonization project requires a dismantling of systems that center Western theories and perspectives. She pointed out:

We need multiple ways of thinking, being, and knowing, that are EQUALLY valuable and EQUALLY relevant...NOT that are alternative to a mainstream Western superior way of doing things or being or thinking. That's the decolonization project.

Ann added that Indigenizing work is also vital and necessary, noting however:

That's the work we do as indigenous scholars, not white people. That's the other thing that I think people think, that white scholars can just jump into the indigenization project
without decolonizing. That ain't going to work. That's just more of putting us on the side. We can do this work. We can do it and WE ARE doing it. What we need the white fellow to do is to look at himself or herself and change too.

What struck me about this opening conversation was how empowered I felt. Ann gave me a sense of interconnectedness and belonging to a movement, that the dissertation was connected to a larger project of decolonization. Further, Ann reminds us that if we are to decolonize and Indigenize, we will need to search for and enact a balance within each of the components of power (e.g. Fire/Insistence, Land/Persistence, Wind/Influence, and Water/Transformation, Spirituality/Connection). In the next portions of the portrait, I will focus on Ann’s journey of finding inspiration reclaim and restoring ancestral knowledges while recognizing that now is the time for “a new way of social work” that emphasizes connection, interdependence, and collectivity.

**Why did I have to be me: Inspired to be brave.**

*Finding inspiration.* Ann shared an image of the cartoon comic character named Mafalda who was extremely popular all throughout Latin America especially during the 1970s when Ann was growing up. Ann described Mafalda as a six-year old girl, who had “fuzzy untamable black hair,” and was known to be rebellious and opinionated. Specifically, Mafalda always made political and social critiques of oppression and inequality in Latin America. Because Mafalda was always critiquing society, she regularly got into trouble and had a hard time fitting in. Ann loved Mafalda, read all her comics, and even felt she looked like Mafalda. Ann said Mafalda had a huge heart, held a huge concern for the well-being of the world, but could also be naïve and innocent, while still finding ways to show adults how unwise they were. Ann noted the
translation of the phrase “Justo A Mi Me Toco Ser Yo” would be “Why did I have to be me.”

For Ann, this phrase along with the image (Figure 4.14) represent:

> everything I feel everyday being a First Nation woman social work academic in the West.

I feel naïve, idealistic, full of opinions, I carry a big heart of worries for this world and I critique everything I see as an impediment to peace on earth. I feel like a child sometimes, ignored by the adults yet wise in my thoughts, words and feelings. I always get into trouble for not conforming to the norm and for being “Passionate” (code for confronting). Mafalda inspires me because despite feeling so burdened by who she was, she never gave up being who she was and she has left a legacy in millions of Latin Americans who look to her as the spirit of social justice. She reminds me to value my inner knowing, to listen to my naivety, to treasure my imagination.

**Figure 4.14 Malfada**

![Malfada](image)

The experience Ann shares reflects a sense of the significant physical and emotional toll it takes to be a First Nation woman in a Western social work academia. Not conforming to the norm while speaking out against oppression, carries serious consequences. Ann shared that instead of
social work education being supportive of innovative ideas to challenge coloniality, educators who do so face backlash and get bad evaluations.

Ann noted while there is a lack of support within the institution, it is the students and younger generations that make it all worth it. She recounted stories of students over the years who have come back to share with her how the experiences of challenging coloniality stayed with them. Those were the key moments, the relational work to build a critical thinking and learning space, where students could be affirmed and valued. Ann stated that when previous students come back they:

remember the moment… they remember the emotion. They never tell me about readings. Instead they tell me, “I’ve done that.. in my practice.” “I did it with a group of kids the other day. It was great.” I live for those moments.

And with younger generations, Ann said she is at a point in her life where she feels called “to help create a platform for younger people.” Specifically, Ann elaborated that it has been younger generations pushing older generations to get past fears and engage in activism for change:

It has been the younger generations coming through saying to the older generations, “Come on, we need to do this. The world needs it. It's our time. The condor has taken flight. If it's taken flight, it is because it's time.” The oldest really struggle with that because of fear. Fear. In my country, that has revived itself lately, in the last few months, this huge upheaval again, and the fear amongst the older people is enormous and it's been the young people who've said, “No more. No more fear. This stuff is needed.” I just grabbed hold of that when I'm feeling a bit shaky and it keeps me strong to the core.
Lastly, finding inspiration can be seen as part of ongoing and fluid learning processes, toward honoring the knowledge of your ancestors and reclaiming those traditions. Specifically, Ann mentioned that what keeps her sustained are the words of her mother who said to her, “You cry one tear, you cry it well.” Ann also thinks back to the women in her clan and the dances we do to “wake people up and...ask for things.” Further, Ann has created a “wall of inspiration” that has images of poems from Indigenous peoples, the Chilean flag, a poster of her husband’s band. Thus, in the face of oppression and backlash Ann continues to find inspiration from various sources of relationships such as Mafalda’s spirit, her students, her mother, and the women in her tribe.

**Being brave.** Ann noted that two important markers in her early childhood were the death of her mother and growing under a dictatorship in Chile. When she was a teen, her family fled from Chile and went to Australia as refugees. Ann noted that these experiences have shaped her career. Ann’s work has predominantly been with “people of refugee background,” but she also does a lot of work with postgrads who are Australian Aboriginal people or queer intersex people: they are negotiating their identity from those in-between spaces they are pushed to by a white heterosexual colonial society... I feel incredibly privileged to walk with them. I feel like it's a walking, very much a walking because— Sometimes I feel like I fall behind because they're just so incredibly forward-thinking, and I'm becoming awkward I feel as I age and feel the toll of time passing.

Ann feels passionately about her work with the Aboriginal community which has helped her develop many important friendships.
However, a critical moment in her career was in the early 2000s, working with newly arrived African community (people from Sudan, the Congo, and Sierra Leone) who faced extreme racism. Ann explained that this part of Australia is predominantly a white place, and:

some people have never seen a black person before… Literally just being frightened because there's Black people here now. There was no preparation of the host community, the government did no groundwork to welcome them… I was helping and working with them and their experiences, what they shared with me about what they've been through, and what they were facing here really, really shaped me, and made me think about whiteness. I think that was probably the catalyst for me professionally, to work with visibly different people with very starkly different ways of life in such a white place. They, using those terms, how white people are here, and they didn't mean the skin color, they meant the way of life. The way of approaching life.

Ann began studying whiteness, introducing the ideas in class, and facing backlash such as being called a reverse racist and suffering bad evaluations. All of this contributed to slowing down her progression in her career.

Still, Ann persisted in teaching and addressing racism, even though there were repercussions. She pointed to two mentors who helped her become brave enough to keep doing this work. One of her mentors is an Australian Aboriginal scholar who provided very nurturing spaces to identify as a First Nation academic, “She helped me to be brave, and to call the voices of my ancestors and reclaim the vision for me.” The other mentor was a Euro-Australian male Professor, who helped her develop a relational pedagogy, as well as language, framework and analysis to address white privilege and masculinity. Ann described finding a relational pedagogy that allowed her to “feel strong enough and brave enough as a Brown person to do this work.”
Lastly, Ann noted that over the last two years, she has developed even more bravery to push her classes into a more radical space by “drawing on First Nations and indigenous knowledge and wisdoms and science” to address the major issues in our world. Ann says she feels the call of her ancestors to be brave, to take responsibility in making changes:

I really felt that calling. I really, and even talking about it. It fills me with emotion. I really feel that responsibility. This is probably why I now feel much more comfortable and stronger in sharing our wisdoms and stories from our people and embedding my teachings in my classroom...

In sharing with students, Ann details how it is Indigenous people today within the context of historical trauma of colonization who have helped in her journey toward finding inspiration and bravery. Ann shared:

Being brave…and saying to them I've come from a group of people who have always for 500 years been in a struggle against colonization and the struggle can get very familiar to the point where you become unfamiliar with peace, with certainty and safety. My people were always very defensive about sharing their stories with white people. Very defensive about sharing wisdoms in science, but that changed in 1992, I think it was a lot of the South American First Nations communities announced that the condor had taken flight again, and we were waiting for the eagle to do the same so that we could join again. That in saying that they declared that it was time for us to bring in the white people, share our stories and our wisdom, so there's been active work across South America through First Nations to do that, to share more of what we grew up with and be proud and strong in that and do it with compassion and also with a sense of obligation like, “We must do this. Mother nature needs us to do this, and our time is now.”
Wake up, we must do this: A new way of social work. In this final portion of the portrait, I discuss ideas that Ann shared in order to shape a new way for social work. As previously mentioned at the start of the portrait, she stated that for a new way to emerge in social work education there must a focus on decolonizing. She made it very clear that to decolonize should not be considered a short-term project, and thus requires a critical analysis of how coloniality is embedded deeply within the structures of our society. Ann explained it this way:

I think it's worthy for the audience of your work to be mindful that's the tentacles of this work. That you have to think laterally about how far this needs to filter for it to be a long-term decolonizing project. Not just a short term. Decolonization is not a metaphor.

For example, Ann explained the Australian government created a “preferable profession” immigration list that named specific jobs (e.g., nursing, doctors, engineers, social work) as a pathway for citizenship; essentially if you get trained in one of those professions, you are seen as a preferable migrant. The effect of this policy has seen an influx of international students enrolling in social work programs in order to gain citizenship. Ann said that since the policy began three years ago, this year was the first time where international students represented 50% of students at her university. Further, she explained how universities are benefitting financially:

It's a way to make money bringing international students, all interested in migration and make lots of money out of them… You've got some universities have completely followed the capitalist ideology and just bring them in, bring them in.

There are additional ethical issues such as having people seek social work degrees but not necessarily be aligned with the values of the profession, and social work programs not being well equipped to work with international students. Ann shared this example to illustrate “the
tentacles” of coloniality and how complicated the work really is. Again, she emphasized decolonization is not a metaphor.

For Ann, there is still plenty to be hopeful for. She has developed a course that uses an intersectional decolonizing framework, and she is noticing that students are responsive to the critical content. However, this by itself is not enough. Ann suggests that a new way of social work would start with a vision toward building “a different campus, a campus of community,” which would include working directly with First Nation Aboriginal Peoples and listening to their teachings. It would mean Bush therapy, which essentially means “using nature as content…nature as classroom.” Ann described “a campus of community” would entail getting out of the classroom, scheduling classes in community centers, engaging with community members. This type of education would effectively take down the walls between academia and the community, building meaningful relationships and networks. The university space, after all, was “not designed as a community place.” She stated:

   The lecture room, the university campus… It's elitist. It reinforces elitism and whiteness. Nowhere in the campus does a student, particularly people like us, feel represented unless they've hung a token picture of one of our elders or one of the jewelry pieces is on show or something.

   In this space, Ann would continue to do what she currently does by exposing students to a variety of learning opportunities through “song, music, dance, the written word, oral history.” She would continue to bring in clients and community members to talk as keynote speakers and share so that we could learn from their lived experiences; and she would find ways to have a constant and more sustained engagement between internship placements and coursework.
Importantly, Ann recognized that making changes for a new way of social work would require a major shift in the cultural norms of academia as well. A significant shift would include radically re-thinking the roles between teachers and students. In particular for teachers, our role would be expanded to that of student as well. Ann explained that in her re-imagined education, teachers:

would be people who were teachers and students. We would...contribute to learning and receive learning, be learners. We wouldn't be stuck in an office writing papers or constantly doing that. We would be seeking each other, collaborating, doing together, being together. We would have time to BE. Go away and have...retreats, so we can BE with each other and share and hear from one another, what each other's doing to learn and unlearn together. There will be no competition in that way. Everything would be shared, and everything will be a collaboration. That's the academy I dream of.

In the academy Ann dreams of, there is an understanding of learning as an ongoing, fluid process that entails learning how to be with others in a respectful and collaborative way. Ann’s vision is about valuing humility and respect for the unknown, a sincere desire to reclaim and restore knowledges from ancestors alongside younger generations. A new way of social work, for Ann, is imagined as spiritual/connection mindful practice of working to live in an interconnected, interdependent, and balanced relationship with fire, land, wind, water, and all beings.

Chapter 4 in 2 Sketches: Final Remarks

In chapter 4, I have attempted to bring “us” together, weaving the threads of knowledge and experience into a collective portrait of power. I have detailed my process of getting to know and understand my council of sages. I attempted to share the relational nature of the interactions I had with each participant, using co-constructed poems. The council of sages, has shared openly
and sincerely, providing me with the insights of personal experiences from previous generations up through the present. They have remained active in their efforts to disrupt the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality, offering numbers pedagogical strategies to create a more just, equity, and liberation-based learning space. They have opened up their imaginations to express their visions, hopes, and dreams for what they would like social work education to be.

With all of this new knowledge, I move forward to the final chapter of this research project. In Chapter 5, I will offer an interpretation of the themes (Fire/Insist, Land/Persist, Wind/Influence, Water/Transform, and Spirituality/Connection) that includes reflections from conversations with the CAB, while relating back to earlier themes discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. I will provide an evaluation of the research questions, the overall limitations of this project. Finally, I will also offer ideas for potential implications for future research around dismantling coloniality.
Chapter 5: Discussion

In the final chapter, I hope to weave threads from each of the previous chapters to address what I have learned and come to understand about the experiences of MSW educators resisting coloniality and re-imagining social work education and profession. I begin with a brief summary of the study. Next, I will provide an in-depth discussion of my interpretation of the themes (Fire/Insist, Land/Persist, Wind/Influence, Water/Transform, and Spirituality/Connection). I will include feedback and reflections based on conversations with the Community Advisory Board (CAB). I will contextualize the findings by relating back to theoretical foundations (coloniality, decolonial, CRT, TribalCrit, intersectionality) discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. From here, I will provide an evaluation of the research questions and describe the overall limitations of this project. Finally, I will provide ideas and suggestions for potential implications for future research around dismantling coloniality and reimagining social work education.

Summary of the Results

This qualitative analysis used decolonial and portraiture methodologies to understand the experiences of MSW educators. The study embraced a strengths- and asset-based analysis from the outset by recognizing pedagogies of hope. Doing so shifted the Western academic tradition of building research studies around a sole focus on problems that need to be addressed. Nonetheless, coloniality and its many manifestations is the defining problem impacting social work education. Coloniality in social work education explicitly and implicitly centers dominant ideologies of white supremacy, capitalism, cis-heteropatriarchy, Christian hegemony, audism, and sanism within curriculum design and CSWE standards of education. The consequences of this lead to a perpetual reinforcement of hierarchical systems of oppression and domination that
negatively impact students, and high levels of emotional stress on faculty engaged in anti-colonial practices.

As stated, this study was informed by decolonizing and portraiture methodologies that encouraged and supported a search for goodness, resilience and strategies to challenge coloniality. With this in mind, the purpose of this qualitative study is to learn from and understand the experiences of MSW educators who actively challenge, resist, and disrupt coloniality toward a re-imagining and re-envisioning of the social work profession. The goals of this study are to share space with educators informed by an ethic and understanding of relational interdependence, engage in a meaningful and respectful dialogue of inquiry, and to share ideas and strategies toward re-imagining social work education from a decolonial approach. The research question for the study consisted of the following:

1. Who are the MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?  
2. How do they challenge and disrupt the practices, processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?  
3. What do they envision as a re-imagined social work education?

After completing 14 interviews of MSW educators, I conducted an analysis of the data, developed relevant codes and themes. The main themes were summarized as insist, persist, influence, transform, and connection. Further, my analysis revealed that the overarching story was one of power. I applied John Trudell’s definition of power that stated power is related to our interconnection and balance with the natural elements. Thus, I selected five of the natural elements, fire, land, wind, water, and spirituality, and connected them to the themes. This was done as a way to reflect Trudell’s definition of power.
Discussion

In Chapter 4, I began the analytical work of discussing textual data from the interviews by organizing them into sub-themes and emergent themes. I developed the organizing structure of the patterned themes by combining and applying decolonizing, intersectionality, and portraiture methodologies. This process allowed me to narrate a story of power, thematically organized into five natural elements of power (fire, land, wind, water, spirituality). I crafted fourteen participant portraits, relating their insights and experiences as the textual evidence of the emergent themes. Figure 5.1 is a visual organizing table overview of the research questions, overarching story, elements of power, emergent themes, sub-themes, and associated participant narrative.

Figure 5.1 A Visual Organizing Table of RQs, Overarching Story, Elements of Power, Emergent Themes, Sub-Themes, and Associated Participant Narrative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Overarching Story</th>
<th>Elements of Power</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Participant Narrative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who are the MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Insistence</td>
<td>Remember Mother Corn: Dig for that Knowledge</td>
<td>Michael</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E hō mai, Invitations, Ipaay mo kadakami, Wisdom (Give forth, Invitations, Grant it to us, Wisdom)</td>
<td>Alma</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fuck Ralph: The Beginnings of a Liberation Theology Informed</td>
<td>Rafael</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Social Work Practice</td>
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<td>Roots of Persistence: Pakikiisa</td>
<td>Maria</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Roots of Persistence: Collectivity in the Land of Forgetting</td>
<td>Vona</td>
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<td>Roots of Persistence: Communities of Mothers Welcoming Us to Learn Differently</td>
<td>Alicia</td>
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<td>Wind</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Quilts of Recovering and Liberation: New Ways of Being</td>
<td>Willie</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Blowing Away Colonial Narratives: The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Redefining Our Knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Wind Carriers: Passing on Our Ways of Knowing and Planting Seeds of Hope</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
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<td>Water</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>Stripped as You Are: The Hummingbird Warrior, The Hummingbird Healer</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
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Transitioning from the “narrated story to theorized story” (Durdella, 2018, p. 373), I offer my interpretations of the findings as they relate to the research questions. I connect my interpretation within the theoretical frameworks of settler colonialism, CRT, TribalCrit, and intersectionality. In alignment with decolonial methodologies, I integrate feedback from participants and CAB members to serve as balance to the interpretation models that rely exclusively on academic theory. I have organized this section of findings according to the elements of power (e.g. fire, land, wind, water, spirituality) and their related themes.

The findings can only be described as one aspect of who these educators are, and I do not mean to totalize their lived experience in any way. Nor do I want to make it seem as if they never

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Power</th>
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<th>Connection</th>
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<td>Works in Progress: Multilayered, Juxtaposed, Collective Healing Spaces</td>
<td>Lios Enchim Aniavu, Cualli Tlaneci, Buenos Dias, We Will Not Need the Manual: We are All Connected</td>
<td>Ramona</td>
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<td>Moshoula</td>
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<th>What do they envision as a re-imagined social work education?</th>
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<td>Spirituality</td>
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<td>Connection</td>
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<td>Possibilities in Rhythm and Relations: Tess Guides the Way</td>
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<tr>
<td>Now is The Time: Decolonize for a New Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kris</td>
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<td>Ann</td>
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had any struggles as they engaged with challenging coloniality. I want to re-state, each participant embodies Fire/Insist, Land/Persist, Wind/Influence, Water/Transform, and Spirituality/Connection in their own way. Further,

**They Are Power: MSW Educators Invested in Challenging and Disrupting of Coloniality**

**Fire/Insistence: Power of Survivance**

The first key finding that I address is the theme of Fire/Insist. At its essence, this finding has to do with the idea of surviving and thriving despite hundreds of years of settler colonialism and enslavement resulting in historical trauma and forced assimilation. Participants shared moving and deeply tragic stories of how their families were impacted by the violence of colonialism, imperialism, war, enslavement, cis-heteropatriarchy, sexism, and classism. However, they also share the many strategies and resources their families used to deal with discrimination, humiliation, shame, and pain. In this way, Fire/Insist might be thought as “survivance” (Vizenor, 2008, p. 1). According to Vizenor (2008), “Survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry” (p. 1). Survivance stories are insistent upon another truth, another perspective, and thus like fire, must not be ignored. Participants were engaging in survivance storytelling, and it was a through line connecting each of their stories. The effect of coloniality has been the attempt to erase such stories from memory, and yet the people I spoke to insisted that their histories be known. They expressed an insistence of respect and acknowledgment of what was being shared. And not just their histories as individual stories, but rather they insisted on their stories be connected to a collective of experiences harmed by coloniality.

CRT scholars discuss the use of counter storytelling and the centering of people of color’s lived experience (Solórzano, 1997) as tools to fight back against the logics and
domination of white supremacy. These are the tools of insistence, which demand attention and respect. Each participant engaged in some form of counter storytelling, sharing how they utilize and model this in the classroom. This strategy is used to create space and pathways for additional counter narratives, so that students, in instructional spaces and learning environments across campus, feel empowered to share their lived experiences from a contextualized understanding that white supremacy and coloniality have been trying to silence them in institutions of higher education and broader sociopolitical and socioeconomic structures. Learning to tell counterstories ignites the sparks of validation and affirmation, and can fuel students’ insistence on having their stories be seen, heard, and acknowledged. Once the fire has been stoked, it becomes even more likely to carry out the visions for a re-imagined way of social work. Further, centering people of color’s lived experiences is another tool for challenging coloniality, particularly in classroom spaces and instructional processes historically constructed by white men, as it acts as an insistence that western, male dominated perspectives are limiting and harmful in their erasure.

Centering people of color’s experiences can be accomplished with the intentional de-centering of Westernized and Eurocentric readings, theories, and practices. It can also be achieved when participants effectively self-disclose personal experiences of how they navigated coloniality in their social work careers. In fact, participants often shared the long journey that included lots of trial and error, mentorship, feedback, and guidance that helped them to get to the point of where they are at today. They considered themselves ongoing works-in-progress, regularly seeking feedback to develop their strategies of insistence. As an example, Maria shared her experience of ongoing learning that is reflective of the other participants.
Every year, I feel I'm learning something new so I'm teaching in a different way. I myself, like, re-evaluating and recalibrating all the time because I'm also in a personal way shifting and evolving and recalibrating. I do believe that that's important, that that's part of a personal process of growth, but also how we understand human behavior and resilience.

Maria is responding to the Fire that insists for us to be self-reflective, attentive to how we can grow and evolve, and further sharpen our survivance stories as strategies of insistence.

**Land/Persistence: Restorative Power**

A second key finding that I address is the theme of Land/Persist. At its essence, this finding has to do with regeneration, restoring, and renewal of memory, language, and identity. The effects of coloniality has created a violent separation and fragmentation from our families, histories, languages, and traditions; further coloniality has normalized land theft and dispossession, as well as all of the people who were enslaved and exploited for their labor. As Trudell (1985b) points out, this disconnection from the land is intentional as it diminishes our sense of power. He (1985b) notes:

> The people who have created this system, and who perpetuate this system, they are out of balance. They have made us out of balance. They have come into our minds and they have come into our hearts and they’ve programmed us. Because we live in this society, and it has put us out of balance…they have separated us from our spiritual connection to the Earth, so people feel powerless.

Indeed, participants shared their family origin histories, revealing the many ways coloniality has interfered with the transmission of important cultural, healing, and community rituals and
knowledge. Within these discussions, the connective thread was persistence evidenced by the many ways participants continued to move forward in the face of coloniality.

Vona provided an illustrative example of persistence, noting that in the early 1990s she had become an avid drummer and joined a feminist Korean American drumming group. They traveled to Korea in the late 1990s and visited a village that was known for its drumming tradition. Vona said the experience was transformative, and elaborated on how it helped her learn about her roots while finding healing from the violence of colonization:

They really tried to instill what drumming meant, what being Korean meant, what the village meant, what a village tree meant. All of this drumming, we would be going to these different parts of the village. They would go around the village tree. Many of those village trees were uprooted by the Japanese during colonization because that was so important part of the lifeblood of Korean people. This happened in so many places. This is what colonization does…They find all kinds of ways to just tear everything out of you.

Along their journeys, participants identified the many ways they found their foundation while getting to the root of the issue. The process of learning how to find community support, mentorship, and even friendship resulted in what Maldonado-Torres (2017) referred to as the decolonial turn. The participants in this study illustrated a decolonial turn, which is the:

shift from the acceptance of inferiority and the conditions of slavery to the assumption of the position of a questioner… As a result of this turn, the colonized subject emerges not only as a questioner but also as an embodied being who seeks to become an agent. (p. 118)

Indeed, the participants having found their space, their community, their connection to the land, began to take actions that positioned them as have agency.
As Maria found friendship and pakikiisa, and Alicia and Vona found communities of support to help them navigate, each of them also began to organize their relationship to the work from a more specific lens of critical analysis. Similarly, Sarah had shared how she made a decolonial turn in high school when organizing for a GSA on campus, Rafael made a decolonial turn when he said “Fuck Ralph” and reclaimed his name. These were moments of learning to embrace a stance of persistence and groundedness in a new truth of anti-coloniality thinking. They developed a strong sense of defiance in their effort to challenge coloniality, which served as a path toward connection and healing. Again, Vona explains persistence through drumming and how that has helped her stay connected to her roots, family and community:

I don't speak Korean, but connected through drumming and the language of drumming…
I've connected to people who are part of the drumming group, mostly women…we're still drumming. We just met the person that's the lead of that village drumming tradition, the son. I remember drumming with his son when he was a little toddler. Now he's in college and he's actually teaching drumming… That's a way in which, despite not having the family connections, that I've kept a connection with Korea.

In a sense, while colonization “tears everything out of you”, the decolonial turn has the effect of regenerating, restoring, and renewing the foundations of previous generations that help to persist onward.

Collectivizing Power: MSW Educators Challenging and Disrupting Practices, Processes, and Effects of Coloniality

Wind/Influence: Multidimensional Power

A third key finding that I address is the theme of Wind/Influence. At its essence, this finding is about the various roles of influence that the participants play in challenging and
disrupting practices, processes, and effects of colonality. Coloniality has normalized the ever-expanding chasm of inequality fueled by a capitalist system. Wealth and resource inequality are just some symptoms of a capitalist economic system; another symptom are the fragmentation, isolation, and individualism normalized within the structure of academia. Within this system, it is normal to stay solely within the confines of a discipline or field of study, so much so, that those who transgress the discipline divide are either haileded for the “creative” and “multidisciplinary” approach, or viewed as unwanted visitors who should stay in their lane. Alma shared that social work education contributes to this by encouraging students to specialize in a particular aspect of social work (e.g., macro practice vs. micro practice).

Participants shared a variety of strategies and roles they utilized, including being the wind carriers of decolonial messages of recovering and redefining within the classroom and outside in the community. La paperson (2017) discussed this role as “decolonial riders” (p. xvii) or the “ghosts in the machine” (p. xiv) who have agency to challenge, resist, and disrupt from within the system. The ghosts in the machine are the winds of influence who can be as subtle as a breeze, or can be as powerful as the tornado in creating change. La paperson notes that “Colonial schools have a tradition of harboring spaces of anticolonial resistance” (p. xv). Similarly, the MSW educators I interviewed all hold “decolonizing desires” (La paperson, 2017, p. 71) and thus are part of the anticolonial resistance within the walls colonial schools. Willie, Aissetu, and Andrea each shared variations of roles they enact to plant seeds of influence while encouraging a deeper relationship between academia and the community. Kris noted her decolonial desire to transgress boundaries and bridge community in this way:
the way to decolonize this curriculum is not going to be coming from the social work department, it's going to be opening up these avenues for community to come and say what they need to have.

Further the CAB members are also “ghosts in the machine” (Ia paperson, 2017, p. xiv) within the organizations where they work. During our meetings, they shared the various roles they play to challenge the non-profit systems from within. Some of the roles they play include collaborating with external community organizers and critical scholars to bring anticolonial and liberation-based healing frameworks to their organizations; other times, they have actively worked within to collaborate with colleagues toward developing healing spaces that center Indigenous healing practices. In this way, both the MSW educators and CAB members are “decolonial riders” (Ia paperson, 2017, p. xvii) who are the wind that blows in all directions, across disciplines, spreading messages of community, hope, opportunity for redefining a new way of doing social work, and creating a collective and community-oriented learning space.

**Water/Transformation: Healing and Restorative Power**

A fourth key finding that I address is the theme of Water/Transform. At its essence, this finding is about radically altering educational spaces to embrace transformation and healing. As Patel (2016) reminds us, education has been “within the grip of coloniality” (p. 6) since the outset when Indigenous lands were taken, and enslaved people were forced to build and work at universities. Further, coloniality has reinforced and normalized Eurocentric viewpoints as objective and thus free from critical interrogation, or what Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva (2008) refer to as white logic. White logic informs much of the research in social sciences, the so-called foundational research that makes up the canon of theories often used in social work, as well as the way research methods are taught. Under the grip of coloniality, the MSW educators in this
study shared various strategies for dealing with the harm and erasure of white logic, and identified in challenging and disrupting practices, processes, and effects of coloniality, toward building a transformative and healing learning space.

The portraits of Sarah, Moshoula, and Ramona are three examples from the MSW educators who practice authenticity, vulnerability and intergenerational support/solidarity; art and multilayered storytelling; and a de-centering of coloniality while Indigenizing the learning space. Specifically, intersectionality served as key theoretical lens to challenge and loosen the grip of coloniality and white logic. Intersectionality helps identify the areas with social justice movements where groups of people have been invisibilized due to the oppressive forces that grant privileges and power to certain groups.

An example of intersectionality was Sarah’s critical question that asks us to consider how social services are constructed to harm queer and trans youth. She says, "How are we structuring our social services in ways that might be injurious to queer and trans young people?" With this question, Sarah is opening up a critique about cis-heteropatriarchy value structures being applied to create a social service framework; essentially her question brings into view the intention of holding social services accountable for creating more inclusive spaces. Sarah’s critique is a water strategy of getting education to adapt and become flexible to the needs of the community being served; simultaneously through the critique she is sharing an imagination of what it would be like to transform the social services spaces to queer and trans centered perspectives.

As another example, Rafael shared that for the 19 years he’s been teaching, he uses art as meditation. At the beginning of class a student will share “a piece of literature, a clip from a film, a poem, a painting, a sculpture” and begin to analyze what it means for them. Rafael noted that
using art to open critical conversations about relationality, racism, oppression, etc. is an effective tool to help undo the grip of coloniality. Rafael explained:

Artists have this remarkable way of getting into the pain and death and what it means to be fully human, fully alive. What does it mean to rage? What does it mean to love, to lust? What does it mean to feel connections with ancestors?

He explained that students engage in a critical dialogue about the meaning in the art, and he pushes them to go deeper than surface level responses. Students initially are challenged by this approach, since their training has been mostly under the rubric of white logic objectivity where you leave emotion out. As Rafael engages students to identify feelings, deeper level reactions and thoughts, what he observes is that they begin to transform the classroom to be able to create space for relating to one another in a more authentic, vulnerable way. Collectively they are challenging coloniality while creating spaces for healing and transformation.

Sustaining Power: MSW Educators Envisioning a Re-Imagined Social Work Education

Spirituality/Connection: Power of Balance

A fifth and final key finding that I address is the theme of Spirituality/Connection. At its essence, this finding is about searching for the balance between the natural elements (e.g., fire, land, wind, water, and spirituality), and teaching. The portraits of Kris and Ann highlighted the examples of relational attunement and reclaiming and restoring ancestral knowledges, as strategies to re-imagine social work education.

As Brayboy (2005) points out TribalCrit centers “Colonization is endemic to society” (p. 429). With this as the starting point, Brayboy (2005) helps us decode the language of civilizing projects that portend to bring a sense of justice to a situation, but actually remind Indigenous people, and people of color, deaf people, people with disabilities, about how they are less than
civil. For these groups of people, they are people who require civilizing, or they need policy and programmatic interventions to assimilate them into civilized society. This idea of civilizing is, to be sure, a very colonial mindset that holds the group needing to be civilized as inferior. Part of the civilizing project in academia has been to construct Western, Eurocentric, cis- and hetero-normative, male-dominated theoretical foundations as the most legitimate and thus objective and “approved.” Brayboy (2005) points out that stories for Indigenous people can also be considered just as valid and valuable theories since they not only provide a roadmap, but serve as “reminders of our individual responsibilities to the survival of our communities” (p. 427).

It was clear that in talking with each MSW educator, there was a rejection of civilizing projects and an embracing of finding balance and restoring connection through the importance of relationality and decolonizing. Jos had advocated for more Native social work scholars to have space within the profession, while also advocating for social work to be decolonized through challenging the dominant norms of 500 years of colonialism.

**Contributions to the Field: Joining in Solidarity to Disrupt and Re-Imagine**

Aligned with the spirit of relational accountability, interconnectedness, and decolonizing methodologies, I believe the contributions made by this research project have been co-constructed. While I hold hopes for how this project will contribute to the discourse and praxis of decolonizing social work education, I also believe that community members, educators, scholars, and whoever else reads this, will play an essential role in determining how this work contributes to the field of social work education, teaching, and community-based practice.

First off, I hope my project can join the efforts of strengthening and growing the generations of critical, decolonial, liberation-based, arts-based scholarship in education and social work. The tradition of defiant, resistant, activist, and radical scholarship has been a huge
influence in my life, and I hope that, in some way, the work in this project can join in their
chorus for change, equity, and liberation.

Second, I hope my work, reflects a stance of **solidarity** with other multi-racial or mixed-
race peoples, whose scholarship and work crisscrosses disciplines. Having the experiences of
being asked and told to identify as **one thing**, or made to feel as **not authentic** enough to be
considered a specific racial identity, has created a sense of self-doubt and insecurity about my
identity and began to creep into my imagination as to who I could be as a researcher. However, I
have been empowered to be authentic to my multi-layered experience. And so, I have used this
project to attempt to convey the flaws in either-or, binary thinking, while illuminating the
strengths of multi-perspective taking and being. My project has made an intentional emphasis to
weave multi-theoretical, multi-methodological, and multi-disciplinary viewpoints, as a challenge
to the uni-dimensional and uni-versity principles of learning. I hope that my multi-dimensional
approach is of value to those invested in creating pluriversities, and especially to those who have
been made to feel confined to being one thing. **We can just be.**

Third, I hope this research project can serve as a point of **disruption** and departure from
a rigid adherence to the structures of traditional Westernized research projects. Along those lines,
I hope that my project can serve as an inspiration, example, template, or maybe roadmap, for
current and future researchers eager for something different, something validating and affirming
to their lived experience. Far too often, students share with me that they are encouraged to **settle**
for doing “re-search” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, para. 4), that otherizes the communities they are
from. I hope that my project can be one more example, particularly in the field of social work but
also more broadly in the social sciences, that gives them permission to trust their instincts to be
bold and creative, hopeful, and imaginative—this is what moves the field to a more inclusive,
participatory, empowerment place to design and implement projects that co-construct transdisciplinary narratives of lived experiences. I hope that my focus on relational accountability is evident, and that they will know I had them in mind when I wrote this narrative. I hope that my students will also know they can count on me to support their journey toward decolonizing social work and their pursuit of higher education.

Finally, I hope this project can assist us in re-imagining social work research and education toward a more inclusive community collaboration and partnership. Consistent with decolonizing methodologies, relational accountability, and the values of community-based social work, I worked collaboratively with the Community Advisory Board (CAB). I believe doing so is a significant step toward advancing a community-informed approach in social work education and research. Given the values embedded in social work practice to serve communities, it is surprising that CABs are not used more often. While working with the CAB did mean additional steps including planning logistics, organizing information, and ongoing consultation, simultaneously it provided a well-rounded praxis and helped me shape the research in a way that could be relevant to community members. Further, I was able to receive meaningful support, feedback, and ideas that helped me consider and plan out strategies to maintain accountability.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this project, first and foremost begin with my limited knowledge as a first-time researcher. While I had excellent guidance and support, I was still limited by my lack of experience. With more experience, I hope to improve on my interview skills such as pacing, listening, and exploring additional areas of material during interviews.

A second limitation, which relates to my lack of experience, is that I never asked any participants what kind of training they received to become a teacher. In retrospect, this seems
like an excellent question to have asked as it most likely would have demonstrated that many social work teachers do not receive any type of formal instruction. Along these lines, I was unable to conduct any field observations that would have really helped to understand how educators put into practice the strategies they discussed in their interviews. Further, this information could have been very helpful to learn how students responded to a liberation-based view of teaching.

A third limitation was the use of the word coloniality. Prior to beginning this project, I had awareness that term coloniality along with the robust scholarship on the topic, was not as well known. A few of the participants in my study shared that while they understood the word coloniality and its significance, they generally used language such as colonialism or imperialism. The CAB also shared the word coloniality may cause an even wider gap between academic scholarship and lived experience.

A fourth limitation was that particular critical issues were not adequately addressed within the project. While I tried to bring in as many critical points of view of coloniality as possible, my lack of knowledge on certain communities is evident. My research project and agenda does not have an end point, but rather I will continue to develop the layers of this project of understanding coloniality and how to build a re-imagined educational system. I will continue to seek out and learn from communities who have not been well represented here.

A fifth limitation was that I was unable to focus on understanding the experiences of MSW students. While this may be the next research project, having student perspectives alongside teacher perspectives would have been a truly remarkable process. It would also have been a more collective and accountable conversation for learning and deepening the understanding of what it would take to create a liberation-based education space.
the Chapter 1, specifically, what do students think about their educational experience in MSW programs? How do they respond to MSW educators’ active and intentional efforts to challenge coloniality? What are their critiques and suggestions for how to challenge coloniality? What are their experiences in challenging coloniality? How do they envision a re-imagined social work education? These questions, along with many others, may be the foundation for the next project.

**Generalizability of the Findings to Broader Populations**

The findings in this study reflect the journeys of 14 MSW educators, along with their ideas and experiences in disrupting coloniality, and their strategies and imaginations for a new social work education. Collectively, their portraits tell a story of power that emphasizes action and critical consciousness, relational accountability, healing, and transformation as the core of a re-imagined social work education. I believe these themes and ideas are broad enough in their scope that they can be applied throughout social work education. However, the ideas expressed by this group of teachers, took a tremendous amount of time, effort, and lived experience to cultivate, nurture, and refine. The work to implement their suggestions, and build out their imaginations, I believe entails additional conversations and organizing with each person. In this way, the generalizability of these findings is situated in a relational context, where learning occurs in community. My hope is that the findings create a pathway for new relationships to develop and for new communities to form, with the aim of transforming social work education.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

In this section, I integrate guidance from the participants with the findings of the study, to offer of implications for policy and practice.
Aligning and Working with Intersectional and Decolonial Community-Based Organizations

At the moment of this writing, the world is mourning the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and a countless number of Black people who have been killed due to state-sanctioned racist policing and white supremacist violence. Massive uprisings and protests have been occurring in every part of the country and across the globe for weeks, calling for justice, accountability, and defunding and abolishing the police. It is a historic movement and incredibly inspiring to see the coalitions and solidarity organized to bring so many people into the streets to demand justice. The current movement did not occur spontaneously. It has been the work of generations of activists, organizers, and community members pushing and advocating for decades to have radical changes.

For years, the participants in this study have been aligned and active with those community activists and organizers calling for radical transformation; further they have been challenging social work to re-examine its relationship with the needs of local communities. A good example of this is recalling Sarah’s critical question, "How are we structuring our social services in ways that might be injurious to queer and trans young people?" Indeed, Sarah’s questions sums up the need to align with communities and leaders who most are often dismissed and erased from discourse.

Specifically, they advocate for aligning, supporting, and working with intersectional and decolonial community-based activists and organizations. Such an alignment would include (a) acknowledging and working with the Indigenous peoples, and supporting their efforts for sovereignty, land protection and repatriation, and self-determination; (b) conducting critical analysis of the historical and contemporary patterns of coloniality and how the local
communities have been affected; (c) examining the effects of and aiming to dismantle the systems of white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy, and militarism; (d) creating accountability plans and strategies to repair relationships with the most marginalized community members who have been harmed through historical and contemporary social work practices; (e) critically examining the way capitalism and neoliberalism influence the design of social work curriculum and practice, and advocating for alternative economic structures that favor redistribution, restitution, and reparation; (f) increasing recruitment of students and hiring of social workers from historically marginalized communities; and (g) creating educational spaces that connect community and students, so that learning is located outside of the traditional brick and mortar classroom. While this list is clearly incomplete, it does provide a sense of the breadth of alternatives that social work education could embrace by aligning with the organizations fighting for liberation.

**Integrate Ethnic Studies Frameworks to Re-design Social Work Curriculum**

The historic uprisings and protests call for a re-imagined social work to meet the intensity of the moment. If defunding and abolishing the police and prisons is to be a reality, there is an expectation that social workers would be a group of professionals called on to expand their role and reach in providing critical care and supports to communities. However, as has been demonstrated in this project, social work curriculum is rooted in coloniality as evidenced by practices like teaching social work students to be culturally competent. What this current moment should make even more clear, is just how woefully inadequate it is to train social work students to think of themselves as being able to be competent in cultures they have no experience with. Further, how can we expect social workers to be responsive to the current moment when
there are not sustained conversations or analysis on carcerality, abolition, decolonization, or liberation?

Participants in the study, again and again shared the transformative effect that Ethnic Studies had on their identity and overall outlook on life trajectory toward activism and social work. I understand there are vigorous and important debates about what programs, perspectives, and analysis constitute Ethnic Studies, and that not all campuses or scholars share the same view. I also know there are important differences between Ethnic Studies and Critical Ethnic Studies. While I do not plan to address these tensions in this paper, I do want to acknowledge my experience at CSUN which has informed my view of Ethnic Studies, as including Chicana/o Studies, Africana Studies, Asian American Studies, Native American Studies, Deaf Studies, Gender and Women’s Studies, Queer Studies, Disability Studies, and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies. The history of the development of Ethnic Studies at CSUN was borne out of resistance, liberation and decolonial movements. The frameworks of analysis provide a very critical narrative of U.S. and world history, while centering the perspectives of those communities historically marginalized due to race and racism. Moreover, Ethnic Studies Departments are often at the forefront of campus activism, organizing, and protest. While Ethnic Studies has its own set of limitations, it is clear that social work education could greatly benefit from aligning with the scholarship, research, and pedagogical stances from Critical Ethnic Studies. It would help social work education develop a more critical analysis of its own profession, which in turn could empower students to feel affirmed and validated, as opposed to having to socialize another generation of students to learn from a foundation of overwhelmingly white, male-dominated perspectives.
Recommendations for Future Research

With respect to the outlined implications, I offer the following recommendations for future research based on the ideas from the participants in this study.

Support Teachers Engaged in Radical Change

Participants in this study shared numerous experiences of pushback, dismissal, undermining, and retribution for attempting to challenge coloniality within social work education. They shared the emotional and traumatic toll it takes on them to continue doing this work, especially when there is a lack of support. Given the current fight for liberation and freedom, it is likely more social work educators and students will engage in work to dismantle coloniality, meaning they will need support. Further, if social work educators aim to align with the goals of activists, abolitionists, and community members calling for radical transformation, they will need departmental leadership to provide the necessary support. Support might include open-minded perspectives to learn about ideas of decolonization and abolition; the hiring of “more than one” faculty member who conducts such work; redistributing workload so that the burden of educating on decolonial ideas is shared evenly; accountability practices enacted with professors and students who use racist, sexist, classist, cis-sexist, homophobic language and analysis, and cause harm; equal and equitable funding for decolonial, abolitionist research projects and course designs; recruitment policies and practices that open access to students from minoritized backgrounds to enter MSW programs such that decolonial, community- and place-based agendas are more likely to be enacted; and active efforts from allied colleagues to de-center white supremacy, neoliberalism, cis-heteropatriarchy, and carceral practices within social work education.
Liberation, Abolition, Decolonial Trainings for Teachers

The participants in this study have spent their careers advocating and pushing for an alternative social work education program. During that time they used various resources to improve their teaching to align with their vision of a re-imagined social work education. They have relied on trial and error, student feedback and evaluations, regular consults with mentors and colleagues, attending conferences, and reading critical pedagogy literature. While all of this is essential and part of any teacher’s journey, it also seems that social work education could offer trainings for emerging social work teachers that emphasize liberation, abolition, decolonial pedagogy.

Concluding Statement

Calling back to James Baldwin’s (1985) comment that the times we are living are dangerous, it is remarkable just how relevant his statement is today though he said it close to 60 years ago. With severe political polarization in a presidential election year, massive uprisings against racism, racist policing, and white supremacist violence, and a deadly pandemic causing historic unemployment and revealing extreme health disparities for communities of color, it is indeed a critical moment filled with complex and seemingly intractable problems. And yet, I end this project filled with hope and inspiration after learning and understanding the journeys of the fourteen MSW educators and the strategies they use to disrupt coloniality, and their ideas for re-imagining social work education. We are indebted to their efforts, sacrifices, and generosity. They have taught us to be courageous, critical, relational, and relentless in our pursuit for liberation They have provided use with numerous tools to build a new way of social work education, one that can adequately address the current times while also sustaining our efforts of
decolonization. Importantly, they have helped us to reclaim, recover, and remember that we are power.
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Appendix A

TEXT OF EMAIL MESSAGE AND/OR SCRIPT FOR PHONE CALL INVITATION TO CANDIDATES FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE EXPERIENCES OF MSW FACULTY CHALLENGING COLONIALITY AND RE-IMAGING SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Dear __________,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is José Paez (gender pronouns he/him/his) and I am writing to invite you to participate in a dissertation study I am conducting as a doctoral candidate at California State University, Northridge (CSUN).

I am calling you/I am writing to you/I was referred to you by______ because your research and scholarship have been influential in challenging the effects of coloniality. Thank you for all of the critical work you do! With much respect, I would like to ask you to participate in my dissertation research study. The purpose of this qualitative study is to learn from and understand the experiences of MSW educators who actively challenge the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality toward a re-imagining and re-envisioning of the social work profession.

To learn from and understand the experiences of MSW educators, I am asking you to participate on two data collection procedures for a total of 3.5 hours maximum (if you participate in both procedures):

- **Part 1:** I will be facilitating one 2-hour semi-structured focus group. The focus group will consist of 4-5 participants, and will occur in-person or via online platform (e.g. Zoom). The goal is to engage in a meaningful dialogue about experiences as educators, while also building a sense of community and connection where we can share ideas, strategies, and aspirations.

- **Part 2:** Following a thematic analysis of the focus group, I will select four of the focus group participants and invite them to participate in one additional individual semi-structured interview. The individual interviews will be approximately 90-minutes in length, with the possibility of a brief follow-up if needed. Interviews will occur in-person or via online platform (e.g. Zoom). The goal is to expand and explore on the responses provided in the semi-structured focus group, while continuing to maintain the sense of community and connection.

In traditional Western based research, participant information is generally kept confidential and anonymous, and thus your name will not appear in the study unless you give me permission to use it. However, this research project is informed by a relational ethical framework and therefore empowers participants to have control in expressing how they would like their information to be used and disseminated. If you elect to participate, you will affirm what information is shared in published work on a consent form. Participation in this study is voluntary and although we do not expect any risks to your participation, you may end participation in the study at any time.

If you should like to participate, please contact me at jose.paez.84@csun.edu and/or 818-677-4991.

Thank you for your consideration!

Shu’ ’aa-shi nin-la/Thank you,

José Miguel Paez, LCSW
Appendix B

California State University, Northridge

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

TITLE: A Qualitative Analysis Using Decolonial and Portraiture Methodology to Understand the Experiences of Master of Social Work Educators Challenging Coloniality and Re-Imagining Social Work Education

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM:
Researcher:
José Miguel Paez, doctoral candidate
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Email: nathan.durdella@csun.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to learn from and understand the experiences of Master of Social Work (MSW) educators who challenge the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality toward a re-imagining and re-envisioning of the social work profession. The goals of this study are to share space with educators informed by an ethic and understanding of relational interdependence, engage in a meaningful and respectful dialogue of inquiry, and to share ideas and strategies toward re-imagining social work education from a decolonial approach. Additionally, the hope is that by bringing together these educators, a supportive and resourceful collective may emerge to continue beyond this research project.

The study will blend decolonial methodologies with portraiture methodology to understand the experiences and approaches of social work educators as they engage in resisting and disrupting coloniality. A further goal of this study is to make sure this information can become accessible to current and future social work educators, as well as current and future social work students.
SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements
You are eligible to participate in this study if you meet the following criteria:

- A full or part-time professor teaching in MSW program
- Must have a MSW degree or higher.
- In-depth knowledge regarding coloniality, settler colonialism, decolonization and/or other critical theoretical frameworks as evidenced by publication, presentations, community work, or other relevant work.
- Engaged in active efforts to resist and disrupt coloniality through a wide-range of activities including activism, organizing, research approach/agenda, pedagogical stances, publications, professional presentations, course syllabi and so forth.

Time Commitment
This study will involve:

- Approximately 2 hours of your time if you participate in the focus group only. This is a one-time commitment. The focus group will take place sometime during the Fall 2019 academic semester.
- Approximately 3.5 hours of your time if you participate in the focus group (2 hours) and individual interview (90 minutes). The individual interview will take place sometime during the Fall 2019 or Spring 2020 academic semester.

PROCEDURES
The following procedures will occur:

- I will email you an invitation to participate in the research, along with the “Consent To Act As A Human Research Participant” document. Please read, review, and let me know if you have any questions.
- I will send a doodle calendar in order to select a mutual date, time, and location for the semi-structured focus groups or individual semi-structured interviews. Once a date, time, and location are selected, I will send a confirmation email.
  - If we are meeting via Zoom, I will send link and instructions to access Zoom platform.
  - If we are meeting in a physical location, I will location, map, and parking information.
- One week prior to the meeting, I will send reminder email.
- Prior to the meeting, please advise me:
  - if you need particular accommodations regarding accessibility;
  - if you have ideas, suggestions you believe could help improve or enhance the experience;
  - if there are any issues of a personal or professional nature you wish not to discuss;
  - if you have any immediate feedback, concerns about any aspect of the project.
- If we are meeting via Zoom (or other online platform) please ensure your technology (e.g. computer, internet access) are in working order prior to our meeting. If we are meeting in a physical location, please let me know if you have any questions about how to find the location.
• Please allow yourself permission to prioritize your emotional and physical well-being and safety before, during, and after the semi-structured focus groups and/or individual semi-structured interviews.
• At the beginning of the semi-structured focus group, we will review the consent form, allow time for questions, and feedback. If you agree to participate, please sign and return the consent form to me.
• During the semi-structured focus group, you will be asked questions about your understanding of coloniality, your educational/professional journey to develop this understanding, as well as the ways you believe you are challenging the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality; finally, you will be asked to share your thoughts on how you are re-imagining social work education.
• At the conclusion of the semi-structured focus groups, I will offer a $50 Visa gift card (in-person, or via email, or US mail) to each participant who participates in a focus group as one way to express appreciation for their time. If the m
• During the individual semi-structured interviews, you will be asked questions that aim to expand and explore the responses you provided in the semi-structured focus group.
• At the conclusion of the meeting of the individual semi-structured interviews, I will offer a $50 Visa gift card (in-person, or via email, or US mail) to each participant who participates who is interviewed as one way to express appreciation for their time.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
This study involves no more than minimal risk, such as emotional and/or social discomfort related to thinking and talking about experiences and efforts challenging coloniality in the classroom. Your emotional and physical well-being are of tantamount importance, and I will take every precaution to ensure all participants can engage in a safe and meaningful space. I will make sure to check-in with participants throughout the semi-structured focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews.

If additional support is needed beyond what can be offered during the semi-structured focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews, the following is offered:
• For CSUN participants, we will encourage participants to seek out CSUN counseling resources (or other counseling resources of your choice), at their own expense, if they experience any discomfort as a result of participating in this study. CSUN counseling services can be found at Bayramian Hall 520, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8217, 818-677-2366, Option 1, coun@csun.edu.
• For participants who are not affiliated with CSUN, we will encourage participants to seek out online/web-based services, at their own expense, such as the Latinx Therapists Action Network: https://www.latinxtherapistsactionnetwork.org.

BENEFITS
Subject Benefits
The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study include: engaging in meaningful, respectful dialogue of inquiry; exchanging and learning ideas, strategies to challenge, resist, and disrupt coloniality; collectivizing ideas about re-imagining social work
education; finding support, kinship, and resource with other social work educators; and renewing our sense of determination, inspiration, and hope.

**Benefits to Others or Society**
The possible benefits to society and others may include developing an arts-based format to share the collectivization of ideas beyond the walls of academia; integrating ideas learned within the collective into your practice as a social work educator thus impacting your students, colleagues, and spaces/places you do this critical work; engaging a wider audience to join in re-imagining social work education.

**ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION**
The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

**COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT**

**Compensation for Participation**
For your participation in this research project, and to express my appreciation and gratitude for your time and energy, you will receive a $50 Visa gift card for participating in the semi-structured focus groups, and an additional $50 Visa gift card for participating in the individual semi-structured interview.

**Costs**
There are no costs involved for your participation in this case study research.

**Reimbursement**
You will be refunded for the following expenses that you incur: parking fees at CSUN.

**WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES**
The decision whether to participate in this case study research is up to you. Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time. You may refuse to answer any of the questions you do not wish to answer. You can refuse to participate, or withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, and such decision without any negative consequence to you. If you decide to withdraw your participation from this study, all information and data that you have provided to me will be destroyed. If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the principal researcher, José Miguel Paez as soon as possible at jose.paez.84@csun.edu or 818-677-4991.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

**Subject Identifiable Data**
Identifiable data in the form of art work/images/objects will be used with consent/image release agreement only and retained indefinitely for research purposes.

Identifiable data: In cases where participants have not affirmatively indicated (check box on written consent form) the use of their personally identifiable information in published reports, etc. on the written consent form, all identifiable data in transcribed data files will be redacted and images will be omitted. During semi-structured focus groups, I will ask participants to identify themselves before speaking, each time they speak, to be able to identify which participants have
consented to the use of personally identifiable information use and which ones have not consented to such use.

Identifiable data: In cases where participants have affirmatively indicated (check box on written consent form) the use of their personally identifiable information in published reports, etc. on the written consent form, all identifiable information will be retained in transcribed data files and images. During semi-structured focus groups, I will ask participants to identify themselves before speaking, each time they speak, to be able to identify which participants have consented to the use of personally identifiable information use and which ones have not consented to such use.

**Transcription Services**
The transcription service I will be using is GoTranscript. To ensure confidentiality, their transcribers must sign a non-disclosure agreement, and when needed transcriptionists also sign job-specific NDAs for certain tasks or as required by clients. They keep files on their own servers only, so they can’t be accessed by outsiders. They also encrypt files while sending them over the internet. All the transcription files are cut into small parts of 5-10 minutes. As a result, whole files cannot be obtained by the same transcriptionist. They can only see the parts on a list among all the other transcriptions. There is no possibility to work on more than one part of the same file. The actions of their transcriptionists are always monitored, so they can see which files are being worked on. After the transcription is complete, they delete the file from their system.

**Coded Data**
When we have removed identifiers from transcribed data files and replaced them with a random three-digit code, we will create a linking list—so there exists or there is the ability to re-identify data. We will use a data separation strategy, which will enhance efforts to protect confidentiality, by storing the list linking identifiable to de-identified data stored in a separate location (folder) from coded data. The location will be a separate folder on the password-protected computer of the researcher (office/primary residence) and will not be stored in any other location, including a secure cloud site. I will destroy the linking list six months after the final publication of my dissertation so that only de-identified data files will exist.

**De-identified Data**
After publishing findings from the study, only de-identified data (and identifiable data where participants have consented to the use of their personally identifiable information) in transcribed interview and image files will remain indefinitely for research purposes. De-identified data files (where applicable) will prevent the ability of researchers to directly connect a research participant to data.

**Data Storage**
**Linking List:** I will create a linking list between participant names and three-digit code so that I have the ability to re-identify data if necessary. I will store the linking list in separate location from both the identifiable and de-identified data. Only the researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page will have access to this linking list. This location will be a separate folder on my password-protected computer. The list will not be stored in any other location in digital or print
form. I will destroy the linking list six months after the final publication of my dissertation so that only de-identified data files will exist.

**Identifiable Data:** Identifiable data in the form of digital audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription, which will occur as soon as possible after data collection. Where transcribed data files contain personally identifiable information that can be linked directly to participants, the principal investigator will use a password-protected laptop to store study records/files. In cases where participants have requested confidentiality, all identifiable data in transcribed data files will be redacted. With digital audio recordings, we will replace identifiable data with the assignment for a random three-digit code for the file name. We will store all digital audio recordings on researchers’ (i.e., PI/co-PI) password-protected computer of the researcher (office/primary residence). Then, we will de-identify transcribed data files with the assignment of a random three-digit numeric code and redaction of personally identifying information (in cases where participants have requested confidentiality). Further, we will redact personally identifying information from transcribed data files, unless participants have affirmatively indicated the use of their personally identifiable information. At that point, we will destroy identifiable digital audio files and retain coded transcribed data files on the password-protected computers of the researchers (PI/co-PI) and indefinitely for continuing research purposes.

Identifiable data in the form of artwork/images/objects will be used with consent/image release agreement only and retained indefinitely for research purposes.

**Coded Data:** When we have removed identifiers from transcribed data files and replaced them with a random three-digit code, we will create a linking list—so there exists or there is the ability to re-identify data. We will use a data separation strategy, which will enhance efforts to protect confidentiality, by storing the list linking identifiable to de-identified data stored in a separate location (folder) from coded data. The location will be a separate folder on the password-protected laptop of the PI and will not be stored in any other location, including a secure cloud site. I will destroy the linking list six months after the final publication of my dissertation so that only de-identified data files will exist.

**De-identified Data:** After publishing findings from the study, only de-identified data (and identifiable data where participants consented to the use of personally identifiable information in the written consent form) in transcribed interview files will remain indefinitely for research purposes. All of these de-identified data files will prevent the ability of researchers to directly connect a research participant to data.

**Data Access:** The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

**Data Retention**

**Linking List:** I will destroy the linking list six months after the final publication of my dissertation so that only de-identified data files will exist.
Identifiable Data: Identifiable data in the form of digital audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription, which will occur as soon as possible after data collection.

Identifiable data: In cases where participants have not affirmatively indicated (check box on written consent form) the use of their personally identifiable information in published reports, etc. on the written consent form, all identifiable data in transcribed data and image files will be redacted and stored indefinitely for research purposes.

Identifiable data: In cases where participants have affirmatively indicated (check box on written consent form) the use of their personally identifiable information in published reports, etc. on the written consent form, all identifiable information will be retained in transcribed data and images files and stored indefinitely for research purposes.

De-identified Data: After publishing findings from the study, only de-identified data (and identifiable data where participants have consented to the use of their personally identifiable information on the written consent form) in transcribed interview files will remain indefinitely for research purposes.

Mandated Reporting
Under California law, the researcher is required to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any researcher has or is given such information in the course of conducting this study, he may be required to report it to the authorities.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS
If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research and Sponsored Programs office, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, by phone at (818) 677-2901 or email at irb@csun.edu.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT
You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

I agree to participate in the study.
___ I agree to be audio recorded
___ I do not wish to be audio recorded
___ I agree to the use of my personally identifiable information in published reports
I do not wish to use my personally identifiable information in published reports

Participant Signature  Date

Printed Name of Participant

Researcher Signature  Date

Printed Name of Researcher
Appendix C

California State University, Northridge (CSUN)

Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview Guide

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to talk with and share your knowledge and insight. Before we begin the interview session, I’d like to collect the Consent to Participate in Research form; does anyone have any questions, concerns, or feedback? For participating in this research project, I would like to share my gratitude with this gift card in appreciation for your time and energy.

Land Acknowledgement:

Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge we are on Indigenous lands, and are guests in this place. I would also like to recognize the _________ Nation/Tribe who have been the original caretakers, persevering to maintain their sovereignty.

Purpose of the focus group interview:

This focus group interview is intended to collect information for a research study that aims to identify and understand the experiences of MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality within their classrooms in order re-imagine social work education. During the interview, we will talk about your journey as a teacher, your experiences and efforts to disrupt coloniality, and your ideas for re-imagining social work education. Additionally, in sharing a collective space the intention is to relate to one another with an ethic and understanding of relational interdependence, engage in a meaningful and respectful dialogue of inquiry, and share ideas and strategies. The hope is that by sharing
space, a supportive and resourceful collective may emerge to continue beyond this research project. Finally, I believe it is my responsibility as a researcher to find a way to share this information beyond the walls of academia. I am hoping to do so from an arts-based approach. Please feel free to share ideas and thoughts about what you think this could look like. Thank you!

**Consent:**

Please review, sign, and date the written informed consent form. I’d be pleased to respond to your questions about the form.

**Timing:**

Today’s focus group interview will last approximately two hours. Are there any questions before we get started?

**II. Interview Session**

1. **Introductions**

2. Please let us know your name, your gender pronouns (if you’d like), your current work location, and how long you’ve been there.

**RQ #1: Who are the MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes and effects of coloniality within their classrooms?**

3. Using a timeline to reflect on your journey to the teacher you are today:
   1. What were/are your personal and educational experiences that have shaped/are shaping your work?
   2. Are there certain people (e.g. family, mentors, colleagues, communities, students, etc.) that have helped shape/guide you along the way?
   3. What theoretical traditions and experiences inform your pedagogical approach?
4. What is an object or token (it could be anything, like a song, poem, movie, artwork, book, etc.) that could represent or serve as a metaphor to describe your pedagogical approach?

5. Have you ever shared this with your students? If so, please describe that experience. If no, please elaborate as to why not.

RQ #2: How do they challenge and disrupt the practices, processes and effects of coloniality within their classrooms?

4. Continuing to use the timeline imagery:
   1. what are some of the key changes within MSW education since the time you were a student up through current day?
   2. In your opinion, how do you define or describe coloniality?
      1. What would you say are some of the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality within MSW education?
   3. What are some of the challenges educators face in challenging coloniality?
   4. What are some of the opportunities available to educators to help challenge coloniality?

5. What are the ways you challenge coloniality in the classroom?
   1. What are your strategies or methods?
      1. Name and describe a strategy you’ve used that’s worked?
      2. Name and describe an approach that hasn’t worked?

6. How do you engage students and colleagues to address challenge coloniality?
   1. Do you engage other communities off campus, and if so who, and how?
   2. How important is that to your work?
7. Challenging coloniality is very difficult to do.
   1. What challenges and barriers do you experience in your efforts to challenge coloniality?
   2. What are the opportunities for change?

8. Could you describe the emotional and healing components of doing this work?
   1. What/who has kept you going?
   2. How do you access support? From whom?
   3. What parts of this work have been healing for you?

RQ #3: What do they envision as a re-imagined social work education?

9. What kind of social worker do you want or envision future generations to be?

10. How would you describe your re-imagined social work education?
Appendix D

California State University, Northridge (CSUN)

Semi-Structured Individual Interview Guide

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to talk with and share your knowledge and insight. Before we begin the interview session, I’d like to collect the Consent to Participate in Research form; do you have any questions, concerns, or feedback? For participating in this research project, I would like to share my gratitude with this gift card in appreciation for your time and energy.

Land Acknowledgement:

Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge we are on stolen lands, and are guests in this place. I would also like to recognize the _________ Nation/Tribe who have been the original caretakers, persevering to maintain their sovereignty.

Purpose of the interview:

This focus group interview is intended to collect information for a research study that aims to identify and understand the experiences of MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes, and effects of coloniality within their classrooms in order re-imagine social work education. During the individual interview, we will follow-up with more specificity on comments you made during the focus group in an attempt to develop a more nuanced portrait of your experiences as a teacher working toward challenging coloniality. Central to this process is that you have control of your narrative and experiences, and are able to discuss them in a way that feels valuable to you. As with the focus group, the intention for
engaging in a critical dialogue is to relate to one another with an ethic and understanding of relational interdependence that allows a meaningful and respectful dialogue of inquiry as well as sharing of ideas and strategies. Please feel free to share ideas and thoughts about what how you think this material could be made accessible to a wide range of communities. Thank you!

**Consent:**

Please review, sign, and date the written informed consent form. I’d be pleased to respond to your questions about the form.

**Timing:**

Today’s interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes. However, you may feel free to contact me after the interview if you feel like there are additional thoughts you would like to share. Are there any questions before we get started?

**II. Interview Session**

**RQ #1: Who are the MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes and effects of coloniality within their classrooms?**

1. During the focus groups we discussed a timeline of your journey to becoming the teacher you are today. In your timeline you identified personal, educational experiences, as well as people who have influenced you.
   
   1. To gain a deeper understanding, please share 1-2 specific stories that elaborate on any one of those experiences?
   
   2. Have you shared these stories with students? If so, what sort of impact did it have?
   
   3. Reflecting on these stories, is there any connection to how you think your ancestors envisioned you to be?
4. How do your experiences influence or shape the kind of ancestor/educator you want to be?

RQ #2: How do they challenge and disrupt the practices, processes and effects of coloniality within their classrooms?

2. During the focus group you identified obstacles, opportunities, and strategies that were successful and that you struggled with toward challenging coloniality.

1. Please share one specific story about a successful strategy, and one where you struggled.

2. Please guide me through the process of trying out specific strategies to challenge coloniality.

3. What did you learn about yourself, others, academia, etc. throughout the process?

4. Were you able to develop ideas for expanding your work, or making it more effective?

RQ #3: What do they envision as a re-imagined social work education?

3. Recalling your ideas for a re-imagined social work education, I’m interested to learn more about:

1. How could this be implemented?

2. Who else should/could be consulted to help with this effort?
Appendix E
California State University, Northridge (CSUN)
Community Advisory Board (CAB) Guide

Purpose of CAB

The purpose of the CAB is to provide a critical perspective, feedback, and share insight toward clarifying/adjusting/evaluating goals of the study, strategies and methods for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting stories/data, and developing a concrete arts-based representation to share with the wider community (Pinto, Spector, & Valera, 2011, p. 1006).

Recruitment of CAB Members

Relying on my personal network of colleagues to contact a diverse group of community members including previous students, activists, community organizers, social workers, and teachers across disciplines. For their participation, I will offer $50 gift cards to each member. All CAB members will be made aware that participation is voluntary, that their identities will remain confidential unless they provide consent to share their names). I will also review issues of informed consent.

Roles and Responsibilities of CAB Members

1. Be available to meet once a semester to discuss the research project.
2. Provide critical feedback around issues of relational accountability, power and privilege as it pertains to the research.
3. Brainstorm and generate ideas for how best to disseminate information to wider audiences, as well as how to ensure that Indigenous communities are involved.
4. Help disseminate the findings of the research to the community.
5. Potentially recruit new members to be involved throughout the process.
Research Contact Information

For additional information, questions, or concerns, please contact:

Principal Researcher: José Miguel Paez, Ed.D. graduate student

Email: jose.paez.84@csun.edu

OR

Department: Educational Leadership and Policies Studies Telephone Number: (818) 677-2403

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nathan Durdella,

Email: nathan.durdella@csun.edu

Department: Educational Leadership and Policies Studies Address:

ED 3103

18111 Nordhoff Street

Northridge, CA 91330-8265

Fax: (818) 677-4190

Email: edd.mdecoe@csun.edu
Appendix F

California State University, Northridge (CSUN)

Modified Semi-structured Individual Interview Guide

Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who are they?</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introductions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Please state your name, gender pronouns (if you’d like), and any other identity markers, along with your current work location, and how long you’ve been there.</td>
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<td><strong>What were/are your personal and educational experiences that have shaped/are shaping your work?</strong></td>
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<td>Look for or follow-up if not addressed:</td>
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<td>• Are there certain people (e.g. family, mentors, colleagues, communities, students, etc.) that have helped shape/guide you along the way?</td>
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<td>• To gain a deeper understanding, please share 1-2 specific stories that elaborate on any one of those experiences?</td>
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<td>• Have you shared these stories with students? If so, what sort of impact did it have?</td>
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<td><strong>Reflecting on these stories, is there any connection to how you think your ancestors envisioned you to be?</strong></td>
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<td>Look for or follow-up if not addressed:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How do your experiences influence or shape the kind of ancestor/educator you want to be?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Pedagogy Style</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
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<tr>
<td>What theoretical traditions and experiences inform your pedagogical approach?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Follow-up</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>What is an object or token (it could be anything, like a song, poem,</td>
<td>Look for or follow-up if not addressed:</td>
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<td>movie, artwork, book, etc.) that could represent or serve as a</td>
<td>• Have you ever shared this with your students? If so, please describe</td>
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<td>metaphor to describe your pedagogical approach?</td>
<td>that experience. If no, please elaborate as to why not.</td>
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<td>Coloniality</td>
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<td>How do you define coloniality?</td>
<td>Look for or follow-up if not addressed:</td>
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<td>• What are some of the key changes within MSW education since the time</td>
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<td>you were a student up through current day?</td>
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<td>In your opinion, what are the practices, processes, and effects of</td>
<td>Look for or follow-up if not addressed:</td>
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<td>coloniality within MSW education?</td>
<td>• What are some of the challenges educators face in challenging coloniality?</td>
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<td>• What are some of the opportunities available to educators to help</td>
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<td>challenge coloniality?</td>
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<td>What are the ways you challenge coloniality in the classroom?</td>
<td>Look for or follow-up if not addressed:</td>
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<td>• What are your strategies or methods?</td>
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<td>• Name and describe a strategy you’ve used that’s worked. Is there story</td>
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<td>about a successful strategy?</td>
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<td>• Name and describe an approach that hasn’t worked. Is there story about</td>
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<td>one where you struggled?</td>
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<td>• How do you engage students and colleagues to address challenge</td>
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<td>coloniality?</td>
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<td>• Do you engage other communities off campus, and if so who, and how?</td>
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<td>• How important is that to your work?</td>
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<td>• What did you learn about yourself, others, academia, etc. throughout</td>
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<td>the process?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Could you describe the emotional component of doing this work?</td>
<td>Look for or follow-up if not addressed:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What/who has kept you going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do you access support? From whom?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Re-Imagining</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your re-imagined social work education?</td>
<td>How could this be implemented? Who else should/could be consulted to help with this effort?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of social worker do you want or envision future generations to be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

California State University, Northridge (CSUN)

Email to Research Participants Explaining Methodology in Order to Review Portrait

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to review this portrait of our conversation. I truly appreciate your support and guidance! Before reading the portrait, I offer a brief explanation of how I analyzed all of the interviews, along with the themes I created based on the findings.

Research Questions:
1. Who are the MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices, processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?
2. How do they challenge and disrupt the practices, processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?
3. What do they envision as a re-imagined social work education?

Data Analysis
1—I used mixed methodologies, blending in portraiture, decolonizing, intersectionality, Tribal Crit, arts-based.

2—I applied these methodologies in three general stages of coding: identifying descriptive and interpretive codes; identifying pattern codes; and lastly constructing emerging themes.

3—I tried my best to align the coding process with what Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot refers to as a search for goodness (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) which essentially is a strength based lens that helps us shift away from what Eve Tuck refers to as “damage centered research” (Tuck, 2009, p. 409).

4—As I constructed themes, I applied intersectionality, CRT, Tribal Crit, and decolonial analysis to find metaphors, themes in rituals at the cultural and institutional level, and triangulated experiences with data.

5—I identified many themes, but here are the 5 that were most prominent throughout and in relation to the RQs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Insistence</strong></th>
<th>Emphasizes the experiences of historical and present day resistance to coloniality and demands for dignity and respect.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persist</strong></td>
<td>Illustrates the efforts to move forward despite coloniality, while restoring, renewing, and recovering what is needed for healing and empowerment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence</strong></td>
<td>Identifies the multiple strategies used to disrupt the colonial consciousness within the classroom, while planting seeds for future growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transform</strong></td>
<td>Highlights examples of pedagogical strategies that aim to transform the classroom into a space of liberation, healing, and community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connection</strong></td>
<td>Describes the radical imaginations aimed at cultivating community and connection within social work education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at these themes, I realized that collectively they tell an overarching story of power. I used the definition of power from American Indian poet, activist, and artist John Trudell’s (1980) speech titled *We Are Power*:

*Power. They can’t stop the wind and they can’t stop the rain. They can’t stop the earthquake and the volcano and the tornado. They can’t stop power. We are a spiritual connection to the earth. As individuals we have power and, collectively, we have the same power as the earthquake, the tornado, and the hurricanes. We have that potential. We have that connection.*

Trudell’s understanding of power is liberating and transformative for me. Further, his definition describes natural elements of power—fire, land, wind, water, and spirituality.

**Amongst Indigenous peoples, there are many meanings and interpretations of fire, land, wind, water, and spirituality. I made an intentional choice not to give any account or analysis of those variations as I did not want to appropriate their related connection to rituals, ceremonies, or prayers. Instead, I defined fire, land, wind, water, and spirituality based on my personal experiences and interpretations.**

7—Here is how I defined each of the natural elements of power:
8—I connected these natural elements of power to the themes:

![Diagram showing the connection between elements of power and emergent themes]

9—This table shows the RQ connected to the elements of power and emergent theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Overarching Story</th>
<th>Elements of Power</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who are the MSW educators invested in challenging and disrupting the practices,</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Insistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>processes, effects of coloniality within their classrooms?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do they challenge and disrupt the practices, processes, effects of</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wind</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coloniality within their classrooms?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do they envision as a re-imagined social work education?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Connection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10—I created 14 portraits (one for each participant in the study). I grouped participants according to how their stories best reflected the themes of Fire/Insist, Land/Persist,
Wind/Influence, Water/Transform, and Spirituality/Connection. When you read your portrait you will notice the connection to an element of power and emergent theme.

Thank you again for taking time to read, review, offer feedback, and make sure I represented your story with accuracy. Please re-confirm if you are still comfortable with me using your name and school, and/or if there is any part of your story that you would prefer I not share. If you could send me your comments/feedback by June 24th, that would be greatly appreciated!

Please let me know if you have any questions or thoughts. Once again, my sincerest thanks and appreciation for your continued support, guidance, and encouragement.