

LIVING AN ODD LIFE

by

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**MAJOR PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

in the

School of Social Work

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UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY

Summer 2023

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Abstract

Life is a cosmology with changing scenes and intricate patterns. Over time, I have changed how I frame life's events. Bricolage autoethnography, which is descriptive and interpretive, is the basis of this paper. Within a critical look at the impact of my family of origin dynamics, ecological location & relevance of place, and the historical roots of our various social systems, including child's services, justice and medicine, I aim to discover in what ways might meaning making and knowledge building approaches, applied to the examination of my life experiences, challenge and contribute to my current cosmology and social work practices? As a white-bodied person speaking from a social justice perspective and having spent most of my life in an indigenous context, I am decolonizing my worldview. Lessons learned through this writing inform and enable the connections I make with the clients that come through my door.

Keywords: Changing, Cosmology, Systemic, Bricolage, Autoethnography, Analysis, Social Work, Context, Personal Healing, Narrative, Practice

Acknowledgements

You of a thousand names and the nameless One, K'ukstumc K'uk7pi. Thank you Creator, for this day today. Thank you for this place where I am, Thank you for the land, the air, the sun and the water. Thank you for breath and heartbeat. Thank you, and I ask blessings for All My Relations, those who swim, fly, crawl, those four leggeds and the rooted ones, the stones and those who are family by blood and choice. Thank you for the Elders who have gone before me. Thank you for the ones who are yet to come. Thank you for the teachers you have brought on to the path that I walk, those who I have loved and those who I have fought, I have listened and learned from both. May all that You have offered to me move through me in service to all I live in community with and all that You will. Allah'u'Abha!

Dedication

I dedicate these words to those women and men who are seemingly invisible, not acknowledged, encouraged, or supported by the institutions in which we engage in academic education. Motivation to finish writing this paper came to me from the respect I hold for those who began with us, however, were not with us at the end of the program.

I hold my hands up to you all.

For the People who have influenced and lit the way:

My parents Orville and Ruth and their infamous canoe journey that began my life.

Guides and teachers who have offered their wisdom in support and kindness -

Joyce Mailhot, JC Lucas, Mary Blankenship, Don Manuel Quispe, Yang Lu Ping, Marcia

Violet, Jann Derrick, Carol Camille, JR Fox, Heather McDonald and others unnamed.

Also for those who have both championed and companioned me here in this Territory and

through life - Barb Marchand, Juanita Jacob and Kim Ayers. Patti Roosa and Francine L.

Kavanaugh. Bless all of your steps.

For my family - Vance & Elena, Mercedes, Angela & Scott, Tara, Ben, Ian,

Erin & Melonie, Bradley, Christian & Kalia & Mahlani, Teal & Ivory, Jordan & Baby

Vance, Jackson & Braden - May you always know love, sanctuary, resolution & all the

joy you have ever dreamed. And, for you, my friend, sparring partner and Soul

companion - Riley, may you be free in all ways.

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Living an ODD Life

Life, for me, seems to be most like a kaleidoscope in the living of it. As I have been sitting here writing over the years, since classroom study has completed and life review has been ever-present in my mind, heart, spirit and fingers, my practice of bringing life's experiences into focus has moved and shifted. It is a medley of changing scenes and complex patterns—a phantasmagoria of sorts. This perspective, perhaps for some, may be an odd point of view.

The following paper finds its academic roots/routes charted through bricolage autoethnography¹ that is both descriptive, self-affirming, confessional, and analytical, interpretive. As well, I journal² my process of feeling, healing and writing while interpreting experiences through narrative³ process and identify themes and concepts that I view through analysis across a variety of theories, methodologies and practices (Witkin, 2014). Primarily, I locate myself within anti-oppressive, place informed, perspective, and attempt gesturing toward a post-colonial future (Andreotti, 2023). As I write my way through a life review, I consider-in

¹ Analytical autoethnography focuses on the analysis of data and interpretation of findings. In this type, the researcher uses a methodical and critical approach to examine the relationship between culture and self, and they typically present their findings in an academic format. Researchers often use this type of autoethnography in the social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology.

Confessional or self-critical

Confessional autoethnography is a more personal form in which the researcher critically examines their own experiences and thoughts. They may also evaluate their values, beliefs, and biases and how these potentially influenced their research. In this type, the researcher is usually more explicit about their thoughts and feelings. The goal is to understand the self and provide a space for others to do the same. Confessional autoethnography best suits fields like feminist research and critical race theory.

² Journaling is a method used in qualitative research in which a researcher keeps a written record of their thoughts, experiences, and observations. The goal is to gain insights into their own experiences and understand how these relate to the larger topic under study. Journaling is a way of self-reflection in any format, including a personal diary, blog posts, or audio or video logs. This method can comprise structured or unstructured journaling and helps collect, analyse, and interpret data.

³ This method of data collection and analysis involves the interpretation of stories. It's useful in understanding the experiences of individuals or groups of people and in studying various topics, including cultural beliefs and social interactions. Researchers who use narrative analysis examine how people make sense of their experiences and how their culture influences their stories or perceptions of the world. In autoethnography, researchers often use this form of analysis to examine their personal experiences, which may provide relevant insight.

what ways might meaning making and knowledge building approaches, applied to the examination of my life experiences, challenge and contribute to my current social work practices?

This autoethnographic paper is representative of both—event: completion of a major paper to meet Master of Social Work (MSW) graduation requirements, and process: reflexive analysis and life review. Michael Yellow Bird (Yellow Bird & Waziyatawin, 2012, pg. 3) speaks of both *event* and *process* in a Conceptual Model of Decolonization. He identifies decolonization as an event when we recognize, in a rubicon moment, that we are colonised; we understand fully that we are behaving and reacting to life experiences in “ways that are limited, destructive, and externally controlled”. According to Yellow Bird:

Decolonization is the meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and /or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands.

Decolonization is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realising Indigenous liberation (p.3)

Catalysed from this conscious awareness we begin engaging in “the activities of creating, restoring, and birthing.” (p.3) These activities are generative processes that move the energetics of our lives toward liberation. Furthermore, we begin “contribution to the advancement and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples”(p. 3). Deconstructing my life experiences, researching both family dynamics and social systems relevant to my years of development, integrating understanding of language and intention of the era I grew in are relevant to decolonization. And, transmuting observations of childhood into a life honouring personal cosmology, a coherent, unity of spirit, mind, emotion and practice in the service I offer as a social worker is my gesture toward a decolonized future. A mental health diagnosis, defined by specific people in specific

ways (Duran, 2019, pg 33-34), became solidified in my psyche during the time I spent in an institution and in the following years in foster care. I focused research for this paper around discovering a wider context, across history and process, from which to integrate my life experiences.

Although I identify as indigenous through lived experience, it is not in alignment with my personal integrity, my location as a white-bodied person, or with activated social justice perspectives (Brophey & Raptis, 2016), to identify in this way in my role as an academic writer (Snow, 2018); therefore, I have researched/reached for language that will enable me to write authentically, reflecting my current worldview, and from a decolonized location, in allyship with others who are expanding conceptual horizons and systemic evolution.

Concepts of Note

I will be referring to the following definitions and concepts within this paper, relative to how I managed to make sense of the world I grew up in as I matured in life, became a parent, and in the ways that I have created a social work practice framework.

Growing up in the United States one of the social constructs I internalised was one of being an American, an affiliation with a National identity. Years of deconstructing a framework of colonialism has catalysed an understanding of my location in life from outside of the constructs of being “shackled to a lexicon crafted by the victors in the contest for America, one fashioned to explain, even justify, how things turned out,” (Merrell, 2012, 458). As I edit this paper for submission I take consideration of a critique received regarding how the language I have used continues to reflect the co opted use of the word America, as in state-centric

(Cornthassel & Woons, 2018)⁴, -dominate to the United States, disregarding Indigenous reality of lands and resources that extend North to South across two continents. Thus, I will use the United States rather than America in this paper.

Given that my growing years occurred during the advent of postmodern thinking and the influence of Public Broadcasting Network (PBS) television, I found the following resource online: The Public Broadcasting Network Glossary (*Glossary Definition: Postmodernism*, n.d.). This glossary provides the following definition:

Postmodernism is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objective, efforts to explain reality. In essence, it stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it, but rather, is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality. For this reason, postmodernism is highly sceptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and instead focuses on the relative truths of each person.

I recognize that my struggle in writing this paper has largely been in defining a sense of personal meaning and internal safety from which to generate the remembering, the sensory feelings that this writing requires to reflect an organic, authentic analysis, and thereby, generate healing into reconnection (See Appendix A). I am viewing the reflections of this autoethnography from the place of *Remembrance and Mourning*, which is defined by Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992)⁵, as Stage Two of her treatment process.

⁴ The current dominant global political and legal order, invented in Europe, is state-centric and has since spread everywhere to create the discrete borders that mark the geopolitical world map most use today. (Cornthassel & Woons, 2018)

“Words...[have] real effects for Native peoples and for the course of American history. They were and are tools in the imperial project of relieving [American] Indians of their sovereignty and their land.”

⁵ Herman (1992a) also asserted that psychological trauma, and the likely outcome for a survivor, is often influenced by the society in which such trauma occurred. Her findings, along with this powerful argument in favour of

Herman conceptualized a model for defining, naming, trauma related to sexual assault, domestic violence along with the trauma experienced through military combat or for disaster survivors. Further, Herman's model expanded understandings about trauma into the process of integration of somatic, emotional and mental treatment. The goal of writing this paper remained strongly influenced from the place of Stage Three, which focuses on *Reconnecting* (Zaleski et al., 2016, p.377). In this spirit, I open this next section with a summarised record of my life – that is an autoethnography, as discussed by Witkin and others in *Narrating Social Work through Autoethnography* (Witkin, 2014)

contextualising the environment and a person's reaction to overwhelming life experiences, had the important effect of shifting blame away from survivors, who previously were often viewed as weak and defective for their suffering (Zaleski et al., 2016, p.378).

Journal Entry.

“The Recoradoras/Remembers: Those who compose their stories to share their historicity. Those who can tell their stories, (anecdotal evidence) because they can remember them.” (Estes, 2012,np.)⁶

Experience has taught us that we have only one enduring weapon in our struggle against mental illness: the emotional discovery and emotional acceptance of the truth in the individual and unique history of our childhood (Miller, 1994, pg. 3).

Origin

The roots from which I was born: I grew up in the mid-1950’s, on Pennacook Abenaki Territory, Cowasuk Band – *White Pines Place/At the bottom of the hill*. An ecology that many people refer to as Concord, New Hampshire. State motto: *Live Free or Die*. The closest mountain to where I was born is Agiocochook – *Home of Great Spirit*. The closest body of water where I was born is Lake Winnepesaukee - *Water Between Islands*, which flows into the Piscataqua River -*The Water Looks Dark*, and drains into the Great Bay, The Gulf of Maine. Recognition of place as understood through the history and culture of original people is an essential part of relationship with the land. Self-comprehension deepens in relationship with the ecology, the land, where I was born. I honour this place, it is a key coordinate I remember as a way of locating my Self in life.

My mother was a professionally educated woman born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, into a northern colonial family. Helen Ruth Cahill self-conceptualised from

⁶Leaning into personal growth into Elderhood I appreciate this work by Dr. Estes in her Audible series which includes: How to be an Elder. Dr. Estes guides you through the dark labyrinths of the psyche in search of la chispa - the ember that is the elemental source of all creative work. Dr. **Estes** teaches about the hidden aspects of creativity, including the negative complexes that prey upon creative energy (Estes, 2012) .

within a lineage of Irish mariners who migrated to Prince Edward Island from Ireland as mariners and were strong Irish Catholics. She left home, for college, in her late teens. The concepts of self, the who, what, where, why of being alive, as observed by William James (1892), known as one of the fathers of psychology, would have been relevant in the collective mind of the era Mom grew up in. James locates "the known self" as emerging from within essential parts: the material me, the social me and the spiritual me (p.3-5). I understood my mother from within these distinctive areas in how she reflected life to me as a child. Mom spoke often of Catholic and social rules-of what was acceptable in polite company. Her behaviour, what she did in her life and mine, often were reflective of those rules-except when it came to her behaviour when drunk or at parties or the Officers Club where my parents often went or when we were home after those drinking binges or parties. Then the rules seemed to not apply.

My father was a self-made man. His family lineage can be traced back to the 1400s in documented history from the lands bordering Caledonia and Northern England around Hadrian's Wall. His family migrated to Nova Scotia as Scott English mariners. The family left Halifax, travelled down the eastern seaboard to Virginia, were engaged as southern colonialists, and followed across the southern states to settle in Carrizo Spring, Texas. Orville Edward Hardcastle left his family-owned boarding home at 13. He lied about his birth date to enlist in the Navy. Father got an engineering degree, returned to the Navy, and became a decorated WWII Officer. Researching into the development of self conceptualization I recognize my perception of my Father as I read Jerry Sul's writing. Suls (1990) outlines a particular concept of James (1892) termed "selective industry of mind." A concept, when considered today, plausibly reflects the impact of the industrial era and the systemic economic framework of the time, which was profoundly influenced by Ford's "Assembly Line" manufacturing of the automobile. The

mechanistic dynamic of the “Time Clock” for industrial workers and the impact of the immediacy of telephone communication, all available through analog systems of form and function, contributed to societal thought constructs of purpose and efficiency. Jefferey D. Anderson (2011) writes in *Indigenous Philosophies and Critical Education: A Reader, Space, Time and Unified Knowledge: Following the Path of Vine Deloria*,

“Time with the industrial revolution became a mechanism of unprecedented power for unifying and dividing people's knowledge and space. In experience, time became abstract and scarce, a form of Labor to be sold, a flux beyond individual control, and a wedge for estrangement from the local concrete realities of life, nature, and actual human relationships” (p.99).

Father was clear in his form of parenting as directive, definitive and demanding in positioning what was “worthy of development and promotion”. Further, I was expected to excel and grow in ways that reflected his values and abilities, which were defined in our family as ‘relevant and important’, in keeping with Suls explanation of “selective industry of mind”. (1990, pg. 689).

My parents were born and raised between 1913 and 1920. These pre-analog years are identified as *The Progressive Era*. This era followed the post-civil war *Reconstruction Era* and society focused on governmental control of large scale financial and industrial interests, specifically, how those interests impacted urbanisation and were influenced by the middle-class reform movement (*Progressive Era to New Era, 1900-1929 | U.S. History Primary Source Timeline | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress*, n.d.).

Unknown to me, I was born in the middle of what the Library of Congress (2023) describes as the analog, post war, *Baby Boomer Generation*, also referenced as *The Civil Rights Era* (*The Post War United States, 1945-1968* | *U.S. History Primary Source Timeline* | *Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress*, n.d.). My life was framed and influenced from within the full bloom of the postmodern movement (Witkin, 2014). Co-founder of the Global Partnership for Transformative Social Work (GPTSW), Stanley L. Witkin quotes Zygmunt Bauman (1993) “for the modernist, knowledge production is contingent on the circumstances of its generation; that is, it must meet certain criteria to be taken as knowledge. For the postmodernist, knowledge production itself is a narrative, one of many possible narratives” (Witkin, 2014, p.10). Postmodern thinking, with its anti-essentialist perspective of the Self, was the milieu in which I received initial imprinting (*Vanessa Andreotti: Beyond Inclusion*, 2021) and relational patterning as a child. This opened the door for me to challenge the internal rigid, mechanistic mental constructs that drove the industrial systems and were the backbone of the *Progressive era* social milieu my parents grew in, and their parenting style.

Early Days

My father retired from active duty in the 1950s and although the United States executive office for further service, he consistently refused. For him, the romanticism reflected in the conformity and prosperity of the 50s (Aboukhadijeh, 2014) informed assurances of everyday life and the notion of romanticism remained in the forefront of his expectations of life. Orville received the full adulation of the community’s respect for those who had served and had led the battles that won the war. Father was an atheist who firmly believed in *progress*, as delivered by Eurocentric science and industrial advances as long as it remained informed by individuals within the context of their own lives . He was living from within the height of his own

development of abilities and values that were collectively confirmed as *relevant and important*, as outlined by James (1892) in the ‘Selective Industry of Mind’ concept of development of ‘The Self’ (Suls, 1990).⁷

The end of WWII generated a romanticised vision. By then the concepts proposed in Roosevelt’s *New Deal*, which had grown through Truman’s influence to become the *Fair Deal*, wove themselves into the social consciousness of the populace, and the call for social justice, equity, and civil liberties for all Americans⁸ (*Timelines and Key Events - American History*, n.d.). These post-war reformations were being reflected in the rising social consciousness of the early ‘60s. Transformation was driven by political, economic, and societal influences that altered ways of life in the U.S, and most radically, broadened awareness of human rights. That is, there was a collective call for social justice, equity, and civil liberties across the U.S. population, for people from diverse walks of life (*Progressive Era to New Era, 1900-1929 | U.S. History Primary Source Timeline | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress*, n.d.).

These significant changes came about, in part, because of strategic advertising and content delivery in print/imprints and on television. Publications for reading/entertainment pushed and influenced the changing perspectives in the general population. For example, Hugh Hefner’s (Coulter, 2014, pgs.1-33) *playgirls* for *playboys* refigured socio-political issues relating to morality and the rights of women to direct their lives, legally, as owners of a social club and/or as workers in a club. Hugh Hefner’s earlier forms of entertainment were recreated in *modern* terms to include a variety of entrepreneurial endeavours in addition to adult entertainment. The New Yorker magazine’s diverse topics included everyday life, cultural production, social and

⁷“relevant and important”, in keeping with Suls’ explanation of “selective industry of mind”. (1990, pg.689).

⁸As referenced in section: Concepts of Note - Term America used here is a direct quotation.

political commentary, fashion, articles that included science, short stories, and journalism. Amongst these topics were the works of anthropologist Margaret Mead. She wrote books and articles published whose more socially just understanding and theories relating to culture and psychology were published for broader access. National Geographic (*National Geographic Magazine*, n.d.), first published in 1888, had changed profoundly by the 1960s. Text and images, such as, *Space Pioneers of NASA: Journey into Tomorrow*” (National Geographic, Dec. 1969, Vol. 136, No.6) harkened the advent of conversion from analog communications into the digital era. Hemingway published novels that tackled everything from day-to-day life to war and the bible (Ross, 1950).

I was exposed to, and informed by, these contemporary ideas via social media and images (for example, I saw the Playboy centrefold of Marilyn Monroe in the neighbour’s garage) in my *only child* experience with my parents. These images, in print, but not yet on screen or digitised, became neuropathways facilitating my unconscious imprinting of modern-colonial relational patterns (Andreotti, 2023). We are born into a world where the mechanics of socialisation are already in place (Haro,2010). As we grow we become socialised on a personal level by those who have authority in our lives. Over our lifetime, our core Self becomes confused, ignorant, insecure and motivated by fear as Bobbie Haro outlines in her Cycle of Socialization model (Haro, 2010) (Appendix D). I would add that our core Self fossilises around these core concepts until we choose, often from a critical event that catalyses cognitive dissonance, to understand life from a new perspective and change patterns of thinking and behaving (Haro, 2008, (Appendix E), Yellow Bird & Waziyatawin, 2012, p.3)

The writings of Dr. Spock (Rosenberg, 2019), who was the authority of the day, influenced my mother’s knowledge of child rearing and parenting. Although she could only

grasp the ideas that aligned with her own upbringing. Significantly, deeply rooted in Catholicism, Ruth's religious rigour was source, sustenance for daily life and for surviving the challenges each day brought. Today, I recognize her devotion as reflected in how she approached life. This religion, as her devotion, was an anchoring strength in her life, in her spiritual self – one that she wanted patterned into mine. As a child, I bitterly condemned her for this, especially because her *devotion* allowed her to remain connected to her husband at the expense of her child.

My parents were older when I was born. They were professional people who lived within the affluent, east coast informed, military influenced, diaspora of the time. I was conceived within, what many would consider, a trifecta of social privilege: an only child, a white bodied person bred from *good genetic stock*, within a lower upper-class family with economic and educational advantages through their intergenerational entitlement. Thus, together, my parents' parenting embodied the “poisonous pedagogy” (Miller, 1983, pg. 43) that they were influenced by as children, a form of parenting that was entrenched by the same training they grew up in. Their aim was to ensure social compliance and they believed in service to the greater good, at the expense of the child (Miller, 1983).

As described by Alice Miller in *For your own good: The roots of violence in child-rearing* (1983), their form of parenting languaged the influence of direct and subliminal cruelty. Namely, their pedagogical perspective of child rearing reflected prevailing intergenerational social control. This approach to child rearing was embedded with foundational constructs that echoed from a 19th century Eurocentric tradition – an approach that was perceived as a family dynamic norm. John B. Watson's (Cherry, 2023) behavioural methods, originating in 1928 and geared to rearing children who would be able to cope within a scientific-oriented, industrially informed life, were still in influence for my mother in 1954. Mothers were

encouraged to habituate their children to strict schedules, let them cry themselves to sleep and to avoid too much love and attention. Watson argued that children should be treated as adults (Gunderman, 2019). Watson's methods were the marketed, modernised version of the earlier science focused Eurocentric influence. Although Dr. Spock had begun his work in paediatrics well before 1954, my mother had not integrated Spock's more congenial, engaging methods of parenting until she became a grandmother, many years later. When I was a baby, Ruth understood, conceptually, the *to-do list* of required parenting points outlined in Spock's book. What she missed out on then was the relationship dynamics required for actual attachment and safe psychology with her baby.

In retirement, my parents chose an expatriate lifestyle, moving to Guadalajara, Mexico when I was almost 5 years old. Just before we left the country, on our way through Florida, father took me to a carnival. Mom wasn't with us. I won a ceramic horse head through a coin toss or balloon pop game. That was a big deal for me. I remember the feeling of winning and claiming that prize. I loved it immediately. But, just as quickly, my father took it away and gave it to another kid, a stranger, and it was gone. This is the first memory I have of rage. An unreserved, to the marrow, quaking rage that I was unable to resolve. That rage did not disappear. It has fueled me, motivated me, solaced, and informed me across time. It became a wellspring for what was, later in my life, the core of oppositional defiant behaviour, as described by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (*History of the DSM*, 2022) as Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). It also solidified what Andreotti and colleagues (*Vanessa Andreotti: Beyond Inclusion*, 2021) map as relational patterning in the four A's of arrogance of modern-colonial unconscious imprints: (demands for) autonomy, authority, arbitration and affirmation. I have worked with layers of unconscious behavioural strategies that I have wrapped around that enraged child for

protection and defence. Two somatic based processes have helped me most to integrate childhood complex trauma experiences. Dr. Gabor Mate's Compassionate Inquiry process outlined in *Compassionate Inquiry - with Dr. Gabor Mate* (Mate, 2020) and Shirley Turcotte's Indigenous Focused Oriented Trauma Training (IFOTT) which was originally termed Aboriginal Focused Oriented Therapy with her contribution, along with Jeffery Schiffer, in "*Emerging Practice in Focus Oriented Psychotherapy*" (Madison, 2014, pgs 48-63).

Mate's work offered me a model of self-talk that followed a pathway upon which I have been able to work with traumatic experience into a somatically informed understanding, a process of verbalization, and, into an educated integration of the incidents. Additionally, Turcott's concepts offer a broadened perspective through developing pathways of integration across time, history, and within the unique, culturally relevant context of my lived experience. IFOTT bedrocks this internal pathway with strength-based skills, practices and approaches that are reflective of the interconnections found in an All Are Relations perspective.

We are truly all One, in a real way, with each other and with the land we live upon, the natural world we live within. Mexico surrounded me within an entirely new ecosystem.

Guadalajara

Journal entry.

...here is the deepest secret nobody knows
 (here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
 and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows
 higher than soul can hope, or mind can hide)
 and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

I carry your heart (i carry it in my heart) e.e. cummings (1952)

I started school, after we settled in Guadalajara, in a two room, dirt floor, classroom with a cement swimming pool just outside; it had neither door nor window glass, just openings for the sun, breeze, and rain. I learned, through daily living, a language I now know as Hulchol – an Uto-Aztecan language spoken mainly in the Mexican state of Jalisco. I grew up thinking it was Spanish. I learned to read and write English in school. Some of my best memories of childhood are from this time of life. I loved it there, this part of my life where I first knew and felt being loved. I can still smell smells, and hear sounds from the corn grinding in the morning with the women using a Metate (a stone grinder), the morning chats between the women, and the songs they hummed. In my inner world, I can see colours and the hands of the women who cared for me. I can see and almost feel the texture of their clothes. I rode a lovely, dear pony often. I remember the smell and the sound of the leather saddle and halter. There were always children around to play with, and a Nahua woman who I spent most days with. I wish I could remember her name.

Integrating what is being reflexively written and intuitively generated here in response to body memory, sensations, and feelings in a mental review, I recognize that I locate and identify myself in a unique cosmology (Akoto & Piesold, 2008) (See Appendix C), created from within this time in my life. My sense of *self*, and *home*, began in Mexico where I sensed, felt, heard and saw, through the actions of others, that I was loved. This was the initial time in my childhood where I experienced wholeness: known, conscious, and lived. Those actions were simple and inclusive such as a touch and/or an invitation to join into some daily activity including making food, sweeping floors, caring for the horses or dogs, watching the sunset and sitting with others at the lake side. This feeling state continues to guide me to this day in becoming a more authentic person, exploring relationships, and rooting my sense of belonging in the world I live in. These

memories have centred my sense of becoming an individual and the significance of relationship with and between others, within myself, and most importantly, within place.

Contemplating the depth of felt connection and vivid memory that I have generated from my experiences of belonging, stemming from the women who were my day-to-day caregivers, has been significant because of what they offered me, in relationship. Their manner of approach, inclusion, love, encouragement and safety—what was given and felt—has supported a recognition of my Self, a recognition of the origins of my *sense of self*, the beginnings of a living cosmology (Goldberg & Sander, 2008). Given the parameters of an Indigenous Living Cosmology that include connections with ancestors, cultural activities, family ties, concepts of time, and historic and natural structures, among others, it seems an essential component of growth and maturity to understand a coherent vision of ones belonging in the capaciousness of the universe.⁹ Reflecting on this time, as I have done in celebratory, grateful, and chaotic or challenging moments in life, I always find a sense of care and loving kindness in my core being. Through these remembered passages of time, I open relational connections with the natural world around me: resource, sustenance, and safety. I remain attached through the ways in which those who cared for me as a child taught me the natural forces of life, specifically, that Mother Earth is ever present and brings spiritual confirmation in diverse, unpredictable ways. These notions centre, ground and inform me. It has been a deeply moving gift to discover that in the midst of growing within the matrix of my parents' unconsciousness (Jung, 1927), I am companioned by the bio-neurological pathways instilled through good enough caregiver attachments (Nakazawa, 2015, pg. 141) shared within the Nahual cultural context that provided the ground of my becoming.

⁹ Living Cosmology: Cosmic views of a culture are the totality of what a group believes about itself: what it is made of, where it comes from, where it is going, what controls its life, position of individuals in society, purpose of life and the interrelation of all these aspects. (Goldberg & Sander, 2008)

Centering the conflictual context within which my internal sense of Self developed (James, 1889), I recognize the dichotomy of value systems reflected in my family of origin and in the experiences of my life journey. While my evolution was influenced by postmodern ideas, my parents were bound in a binary, cognitively imperialistic construct, which laid the groundwork for their conflicted stated and lived value systems. My parents, though married, occupied different polarities along a spiritual continuum, for example. She was a devotee and he was an atheist. Over the years I have realised the frictional nature of challenging either side of their binary belief systems.

Understanding the dynamic of cognitive imperialism is significant; it has been a fundamental component of a colonial worldview, which ensures enfranchisement within an imperial identity (Red Corn, 2022, Battiste, 2005, Grande, 2004, Gehl, 2010). Colonial imperialism, as a construct of thought, leads thinking onto a path of stagnation. That is, an object, person, place, or event becomes named (noured) within imperial, dominant systems of measure and specific contexts, identified by an imperial perspective exclusively. Thus, by extension, all—or any of the above—become fossilised (Selinker, 1972) into the form so defined and named (Duran, 2019). Therefore, through this kind of imperialist thinking, a concept becomes an action such as one of colonising Indigenous land, and naming the land in the singular, as in *The Colonies*, which were situated on lands that have come to be known and – singularly referred to at that time – as *America*. *America*¹⁰ is a place where life has been *settled* and populated by newcomers, who solidified their ways of knowing, thinking, and being on what they perceived as *a new land*. As postmodern ideas sprouted, they butted up against entrenched

¹⁰ See Concepts of Note section re: use of term America. Used here in reflection of the ideology of settler's and colonisation.

cognitive imperialist ways of thinking and being. Navigating the contradictory ideas and conflicts of the time, at home, in school, and in community, left me adrift internally as a child.

Jann Derrick's work *The Box and The Circle – Two systems of Life: A Model for Understanding Native/ Non-Native Issues* differentiates the underlying values that catalyse the unique natures of both cultures (See Appendix B). Her work has fundamentally supported my journey of recovering from the severe trauma that came into my life after we left Mexico and returned to the United States. Derrick has been in the vanguard of forward thinking people who were scouting an integrative practice years before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission clarified calls to action for Canadians. She deeply explores, through contrast, what she identifies as the Box—the currently Eurocentric social system of life, and the Circle—a co-current Indigenous social system of life. Derrick riffing from other sources such as Riane Eisler's historical insights—the dominator or Andocratic System (The Box) and the Gylanic System (The Circle), and Anne Wilson Schaeff's process work—The Addictive System (The Box) and the Living Process System (The Circle), among others, Derrick's work facilitated within me an untangling another layer of the deep rage I spoke of earlier. I began to have some space internally, fresh air and flow—mentally, spiritually, emotionally—that loosened chains of fear, resentment, and powerlessness. Rising above oppositional reaction, and a strong fight drive, broadened my viewpoint. With changed perspectives, I began to critique experience and responses in life rather than default into self-blame and self-criticism. The internal awareness of component parts (mental, emotional, physical, spiritual) in relationship and interacting with others as components of a whole living, and evolving, system held within natural laws—ie: not man-made—illuminated possibility and authentic opportunities for change within me. I was willing

to listen, and began understanding life in new ways that encouraged changes in behaviour and relationships.

As I write about the next part of my life, I also lean into the work of Judith Herman who presents *Three Stages of Recovery from Severe Trauma* of which she says: “Recovery unfolds in three stages. The central task of the first stage is the establishment of safety. The central task of the second stage is remembrance and mourning. The central focus of the third stage is reconnection with ordinary life (*Judith Herman: Trauma and Recovery — Recovery Stories*, 2021).

Further, from New York Times book review by Christine Kenneally (April 2023):

Herman was the first clinician to propose the diagnosis of “complex post-traumatic stress disorder,” now commonly referred to as CPTSD, to describe the hard-to-treat set of symptoms caused by prolonged, repeated trauma, such as domestic violence or cult membership. Now CPTSD is a formally recognized diagnosis in the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases (though not in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)

(Kenneally, 2023)

Hallmark dimensions of colonisation mirror similar dimensions of complex trauma. Notably, it requires a specific structure of ideology to proceed, it is violent and it is ongoing. Herman’s definition of complex trauma and the framework of colonisation outlined by Memmi (1965) and Said (1993), among others, in Sheila Cote-Meek’s book *Colonised Classrooms: Racism, Trauma and Resistance in Post Secondary Education* (2014,p.18) underscores an ongoing theme of

supremacy in the refusal to recognize the immediate and intergenerational impact of violence for people and families (Cote-Meek, 2014, p.18).

Returning to the United States

My parents went about their ex-pat lives: bull fights, drinking, and parties with gun play (I know about this from the black and white photos someone took). I have only one clear nuclear family memory of this time, when our Irish Setter, Casey Knock-a-Long O'Flynn, died. My mother acquired a digestive illness soon after he died. As I was too young to recognize the adult world realities, today, I only have remembered stories mom shared about what brought us back to the United States. Those stories always centred on her ill health. In hindsight, I recognize that I learned something, an unconscious imprint perhaps, from her stories about ways she managed, people could manage, relationship challenges, conflict and social entanglements through illness and alcohol use. Understanding about and accessing healthy alternatives for wellness and mental balance was not available for her at that time, so a geographic cure for her physical illness became the solution. We travelled up to the Northwest in the early 1960s.

We settled on the peninsula area of Washington state. Mom got a job outside the home in the restaurant/resort service industry. She worked her way up from waitressing to being a resort manager. Dad bought a fishing boat that he chartered out on the ocean. Mom worked every day and I stayed with dad when I wasn't in school. But mostly, I stayed away from home-from him-as much as possible, unless he had me as First Mate on his boat, a place I couldn't escape from.

Dad's behaviour escalated during these years. He drank daily; I spent time in the car while he was in the tavern or visiting people, often other women. However, when we were home, I was a target of his focus. It seems, as I reflect now, that my father's rage was fueled not only by

both his lived experience as a child, and by his long stint in the military at war, but also by a historical, intergenerational familial pain. To me he was a powerful and unpredictable man. He was, at times, brave and most always intelligent, but he was an extremely violent, alcoholic, and sexually active man. And I grew up in the shadows of himself that he was unable to resolve.

As I allow memories to surface about this time, I am taken with the memory of his speech and presence, and the environment of the room, or space we were in.

Journal entry.

I am at once aware of the rigidity of my muscles, the curl of my toes, the sweat on my lip and the smell of liquor and pipe smoke or gun oil, fish, salt water or wild meat being butchered.

Interactions with him left me with penetrating, absolute fear, and terror, and nurtured within me submissive, sly, defiant, and detached strategies of survival. Orville used guns to emphasise his point of view. He would shoot the wall, after my mother when she left the room. I would leave our house and run to the woods, or beach when I could. When I wandered too far from home the sheriff would be notified by someone, and I was taken back home. I vividly remember how he often railed in drunken, passionate, not short of terrorising, soliloquy about any given subject but most often about the *modern navy restructuring* that was ruining the *integrous authority of the military* and all that it had historically stood for. In retrospect, his proclamations set up an awareness for me, at a young age, about opposition, about personal agency, about speaking out on social constructs, about the power of an individual voice.

I ran away from home many times. I was returned by the local sheriff to relive the cycle of violence as identified by Leanore E. Walker and conceptualised in Social Cycle Theory (Walker, 1979, p.55-70)). My father's violence was witnessed in the community; he used his

physical ability and social influence in ways that were public as well as private. At home, I witnessed his violence toward my mother. I listened to him verbally batter her. I watched her drink and take pills to cope. She never considered identifying herself as a battered woman or acknowledged that we lived with domestic violence. In fact, her communication with me centred my lack of compliance as the issue most troublesome. She always reflected to me that my father was a great man, a war hero. In our family I was the problem, I was the one that was not obedient; I had a mental and emotional problem that needed correcting. These messages were underscored by a catholic notion of being born evil, an inexorable reality, which was only redeemed by confession and penance prescribed by a priest. Mom's brother, Bill, diagnosed with mental illness, catatonic depression, and one of my first cousins, schizophrenia. There was an unspoken possibility that this or something like it could explain my behaviour. Also, somewhere in there was a message about being born a girl. Subliminally I got the message that as a human being the evil in me was inescapable: Catholic God was the only way to goodness, defiance of God's Will would lead to mental illness, only specific people and ways could ensure the truth of my worth. God and medicine.

From an historical perspective, the awareness and focus of the time "characterised battered women as mentally ill" (Zorza, 1998, p.67-70) In the 1960s, the focus of study, of women's experience, was on women who were in institutions. The results of these studies were skewed due to the lack of consideration of where these women were located across the social spectrum, or the dynamics of their lived relational experiences. As Zorza emphasises, "battered women are not mentally ill. Many of those who were institutionalised were misdiagnosed because of society's failure to recognize or understand the physical and psychological effects of domestic violence" (p.65). In our family story, at that time, I wore the labels and lived the reality

of institutionalisation, not outwardly in relation to mental illness, that was my internal story and fear, but in relation to physical violence and protection.

Amid the rising protests over racial disparity, civil liberties, disillusionment with war and governmental policies, the evolution of behaviourism and psychoanalytic approaches into humanistic psychology emerged through the efforts of Virginia Satir, Erik Erikson, Carl Rogers, among others, in the early 1960s. Underscored was a collective approach to social inequalities (Clay, 2002, p.2). At the same time there was a shift of approach to the issue of child protection. Prior to the early 1960s, the leading rationale for child protection arose from the same thinking that generated the protection of animals in the United States, with its definition of ownership and tiered worth. The SPCA model was used as a guidepost for protection of children (Costin, 1991, p.204); animals were given privilege only as much as their usefulness as economic resources. Eurocentric society was, as a collective, unenlightened about how to raise and protect their own children.

As the medical and judicial systems began to address child protection in alignment with Roosevelt's New Deal (carried forward by Truman) and the issues being headlined in media sources, reporting laws spurred social program development and the issue of protection migrated from private societies to governing systemic programming (Myers, 2008, p. 456-460). I received community support when I left home as a pre-teen because of the increasing influence of social work programs and community awareness campaigns, Indigenous people, women, and the interrogation of the notion of children as chattel. One night I ran out of the house and down the road, my father followed me with his gun. A neighbour intervened. Another time I didn't catch the bus home from school and attended a school event. When questioned about how I was going to get home I told the teacher I didn't want to go home. I made an irrevocable decision and I

remember the moment. She contacted social service support instead of the sheriff, which had been the choice made several times before that night. That decision, mine, and her action, changed my life.

Journal entry.

As I sit here to write I am struggling to allow the memories to come forward. My breathing is short and shallow. My neck is tense and my stomach aches. There are tears behind my eyes, and I am fighting with the words inside a fogged mind. So many years later, healing ceremonies, fasting, prayers, writing projects, trauma-informed group experiences, 1:1 counselling sessions, and still, I am somatically influenced -physiologically - emotionally, mentally, and spiritually in the remembering. Today, when I sit with someone who comes to receive social work support for a similar situation, this lived experience and healing work becomes the ground from which I offer connection and witness.

There are two probable reasons the choices made this night prompted a change in outcome for me. First, in school I attended physical education (PE) classes. We were required to shower after PE prior to attending class again. I often had deep purple bruises on my body that I could not hide and was regularly teased by other kids when they saw them. In juxtaposition, in these days an Indigenous child would have automatically been removed from their home had they exposed ceremonial scars or markings. The school staff probably saw the marks and bruises and heard the other kids' stories. In those years, social welfare systems and child protection reporting laws were newly instituted in medical and professional environments. The teachers likely noted my situation before the night I was placed into custody. Secondly, at the time, sexual abuse/assault was still a *taboo subject* as the rights of parents, especially fathers, via the values of individualism, ownership, private domain, and male superiority dominated social constructs and behaviors (children as chattel) (Walker, 1979, p. 108). Therefore, I am grateful for the observable physical indicators that substantiated my stories and influenced a different intervention by the teacher and social workers who helped me the night I finally left home (If I had disclosed the

sexual assault I was experiencing, I doubt that anyone would have believed me). I am also grieved in the recognition of how skewed colonial perspectives are in terms of justifying actions taken that are so influential in someone's life. In my life, I waited to be removed from my family, whereas an Indigenous youth would be removed from a safe and nurturing family because of a colonial interpretation of their *experiences/needs*. Truly, how *helping* turns out for a person depends on the ideological bias of the *helper* (Boga, 2023).

I was placed in a detention centre where I was housed before going through the court system. Just after placement, my parents brought me to a psychologist, most likely by an attorney's suggestion; the psychologist was a kind, blind man. His office was bleak, dull grey-brown and spare, which contrasted starkly with the bright orange shag carpeted reception area we entered. There was a small window behind and above his head where I could see the grey sky. He spoke softly and slowly. His laugh was gentle. I felt safe in his office. He wanted to know about my life. He asked me how I was feeling. Though blind, he looked at me directly. He asked simple questions. He waited. He listened as I stammered answers. At the end of our time together he said I was a *normal* kid. I remember his words.

Perhaps, the psychologist innately practised Two-eyed seeing (Marshall, 2004, Bartlett, 2012, DeZilva, 2022); he most genuinely exemplified a strengths-based approach in relationship with me. Two eyed seeing, brought forward by Albert Marshall, Mi'kmaw Elder, in 2004, refers to "the gift of multiple perspectives treasured by many aboriginal peoples" (p.338). With two eyes, one can be used to see with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing (for example, where relational and collective perspectives are highlighted), and the other eye used to see with the strengths of European knowledges and ways of knowing (for example, science as a singular truth), and to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all (Bartlett,

2012). Strengths-based perspectives-conceptualised by Dennis Saleebey (1985) in his work on addictions and social work in the late 1980s, directs social work assessment and case management to be grounded first in an individual's strengths and personal capacities, what they know and what they can do, and what resource supports are in their environment. The man, who was my psychologist, interacted with me from these conceptual frameworks, even though they were both years away in the authoring. His authenticity worked forward, beyond the framework provided by the newly generated Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), which fast became the bible of professional practice in mental health. I think of him when I am most challenged personally and professionally. I wonder if he ever had any idea how much of an anchor his words offered to me.

These emerging theoretical foundations, taxonomy, and definitions of mental illness outlined by DSM -I 1952) were in the forefront of focusing perspectives identified as treatment in clinical psychology. In the United States, along with the influence of humanistic psychology, medical and judicial changes, the DSM – I was also beginning to influence social work theory in major ways as a definitive reference for diagnosis and treatment for mental illness. The naming of mental disorders from within a Eurocentric perspective influenced academic focus, skills, and practice style for novice social workers. Further, and I suggest most importantly, the underpinnings of the DSM theoretical foundations were skewed toward industrial, economic, and financial advantages for the dominant culture, most especially for a social control mechanism that served developing corporate agendas (*History of the DSM*, 2022).

Permanent Record: Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Journal entry.

“I want you to know that you are normal. There is nothing wrong with you. It is important that you understand this.” (Psychologist, personal communication, 1969)

“It is on your permanent record, all of it! Your grades, how you behave, even late library books, all these things are recorded and carry with you wherever you go.” (School Principal, personal communication, 1965)

It was during a court hearing, I was 11, when the origin of language that would, in later years, become a mental health diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), was added to my *permanent record*. This marked the beginning of my entry into institutionalisation, both as a verb and as a noun, and sanctioned my rubicon decision. I have carried what the psychologist said about me being a *normal kid*, and what I also heard spoken about me in court, as conflicting components of who I took to be as a person. Holding these two dichotomous notions within me at the same time seemed natural given its similarity to my experiences within the dynamics in my family of origin.

Clearly, and admittedly, I was muffled in the chaos of a traumatised, prematurely hormonal, pre-teen mind; the impact of the judicial process and my internal conceptualization of this experience was formative. It both balanced and unhinged me. I began identifying myself with the words - *oppositional* and *defiant*, also *difficult*, *lying*, *angry*, *bad*, *evil*, and *unmanageable* more consciously. This naming of my Self as defective stood in opposition to, and eventually overshadowed, my view of Self as *amiable*, *respectful*, *honest*, *pleasant*, and *good - normal*. My father's perspective was that I, like a green sailor, needed strict discipline and control. My mother's perspective, shadowed with catholic rhetoric, was that I needed to conform, to submit to the holy order of Life. And, here in the courtroom, where a secular order would be imposed, I truly did not know who I was, what was going on or even how I had gotten where I

was. Neither my father nor my mother spoke to me nor looked my way that day. I remember feeling a deep, sharp, white, lightening pain, and also, relief in those moments. Both were tangible. Also, I did know, seeing my father for the first time since going into the institution, and feeling his energy as he walked by to the front of the courtroom, that the seat beneath me got very warm and my socks felt wet.

In 1965, the foster care system was just beginning systematic development. Judicial directives were still informed by a Eurocentric institutional mindset. Orphanages, mental hospitals and institutions were the first order of placement for children who could not live safely in the family home (Myers, 2008). By the decision of the court, my parents were allowed to arrange a privately paid placement for me.

I went to a Catholic, Dominican-run orphanage in Tacoma, Washington. I ran away as often as I could find a way out. I became increasingly oppositional and defiant and one of those kids that spent a lot of time in isolation. That institution was brick and mortar. It was imposing and seemed impenetrable, solid, correct, and inviolable. The building itself sent the message that I would break before it would. It symbolised the essence of the Victorian industrial era; inflexible, power consuming, repetitive and continuous.

Analog, digitization and diagnosis

Growing up in the analog era , 1945 – 1964, (*Vanessa Andreotti: Beyond Inclusion*, 2021) and evolving through the phases of technological advancement, analog/ digital to digital and now to virtual awareness, I often reference The Urban Dictionary (TUD, 2023) to orient myself in reference to current terminology. The Urban Dictionary defines *Permanent Record* as a Victoria era standard of social measurement and control, as “Where all the bad things you've done as a

child go” (2021). The inexorable, inescapable idea of *The Permanent Record*, that I took as a threatening overseer in life - something beyond a parental role and instilled conceptually during primary school – has found its physical demise and digital transformation as the postmodern world cyber-advanced (Wylie, 2019) through the neo-liberal economic paradigm shift of the 1970s–1990s (Steger & Roy, 2010), leaving behind analog records and the “last undigitized generation” (Snowdon, 2019); that would be *my* generation. Currently, we live within the world of algorithms, mobile phones, networks, *data brokers* and *The Cloud* (Wylie, 2019). According to the collective discussions between analog, digital and virtual generations, which Vanessa Andreotti (2022) has facilitated, there is a clear voice that articulates a demand for inclusion; it clashes with the internal and formative notions held by the generation of the analog years. Analog children grew up with the concepts of inclusion as assimilation, with a demand for deference and gratitude, both as appeasement and as burden, and with a social strategy of patronization (*Vanessa Andreotti: Beyond Inclusion*, 2021). This work clarifies for me an intuitive knowing I had as a child and youth that had fueled internal dissonance and instigated oppositional behaviours.

Vanessa Andreotti participates with Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures (GTDF) which is a collective of Indigenous youth and elder representatives from global communities. In her education video *Beyond Inclusion* (2021) Andreotti states:

“We bring forward concerns related to racism, colonialism,unsustainability, climate change, biodiversity loss, economic instability, mental health crisis and intensifications of social and ecological violence. We work with issues that are extremely heavy. The main thing we try to do is create pedagogies and pedagogical containers for us to be able to have difficult and painful conversations without relationships falling apart, expand capacity to hold space for difficult and painful things without feeling overwhelmed,

immobilised or wanting to be rescued from discomfort.(2021)”

Understanding the contexts and themes of experience found in social realities each generation imprinted as they grew and developed helps to encourage listening and inclusion of perspectives offered from across generational difference.

The timeline of communication development, moving forward through generations, shows the next stage (1965 to 1984) to be the analog/digital stage. Children born during this stage grew alongside analog technologies¹¹ and lived digital¹² formative years (*Vanessa Andreotti: Beyond Inclusion*, 2021). According to Andreotti, they experienced the same inclusion issues as the analog generation, pivoting around assimilation and their main social strategy was focused on stopping consumption and being virtuous. 1985 was the year the first Dot Com (.com) domain was registered. The Millennial generation, 1981 to 1996, grew with digital internet, computers and phones, but they did not have social media in their formative years. Facebook was created in 2004. Inclusion focus for this generation is on representation and demands for performance and validation such as looking for white people’s redemption.

Bringing this discussion of inclusion dynamics up to date, the current generation, 2005 to 2024, the inclusion focus for this generation, all born within a virtual¹³ world, a world where relationships are largely sustained through social media, calls for major systemic overhaul. These folks are intolerant of analog generation demands and call for negotiation of terms of

¹¹ Analog: of, relating to, or being a mechanism or device in which information is represented by continuously variable physical quantities (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2023).

¹² Digital: of, relating to, or utilising devices constructed or working by the methods or principles of [electronics](#) (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2023).

¹³ Virtual: being such in essence or effect though not formally recognized or admitted (Merriam Webster, 2023).

engagement as they are aware of the power of social media groups bringing voice to the diversity of multicultural needs.

The evolutionary process of communication development, from analog (direct replication of sound or picture repeated over and over) to virtual (access to an essential representation of sound or picture relayed within various contexts) could be analogous, and run parallel, to a social spiritual evolution process. This analogy could be a reflection of postmodern deconstructionist perspectives which originated in 1977 (*Glossary Definition: Postmodernism*, n.d.).

However, in my analog developed journey, the ongoing influence of unconscious self-talk obtained from parental interjections and the social thought constructs predominate in my formative years, currently used in marketing campaigns as *algorithm profiling* (Wylie, 2019), continued to play the role of the analog *Permanent Record* as an internal, autonomic, psychological *intra-neural net*. This self-perpetuated invisible neural net, working subconsciously, integrated with my perceptions and interpretations in relationship to others, the world, and my spirit. It also defined how my character developed through the stories I heard, repeated to myself across my lifetime, and believed about who I was. I was *trouble*, and thereby, the construct of institutionalisation found its growing ground inside my psyche.

Eduardo Duran writes in his book *Healing the Soul Wound: Trauma Informed Counseling for Indigenous Communities* (2019) that diagnosis is a naming of a process a person is experiencing. And, the power of diagnosis, nouning and objectifying, is that it solidifies, fossilises, and holds us captive, settles us in a defined space rather than acknowledges process and flow of experience that better serves as a catalyst of change and personal transformation. I question the intention of the diagnostic process. Who, and to what end, does it serve?

Duran recognizes the potential harm of diagnosis. “[P]atients who identify themselves as a diagnosis and tell their therapist that they are depressed, anxious, alcoholic and so on. Their identity has been crystallised through the unconscious naming ceremony of the diagnostic process.” (2019, p.33-34). Further, “...one of the first tasks for the therapist working in Indian country is decolonizing the individual from the ideology of diagnosis and naming.” (p.33-34)

Oppositional Disorder (OD), as a diagnosis in the DSM – III, first appeared in 1980. It was redefined in the DSM-III R (1987) and remains as a diagnosis today. The language embedded in this diagnosis has entrenched in my inter-net, my inner world, a fugacious and insistent construct that can be recognized best in visualising a horse being controlled and constrained by a bit and harness. Due to the diaphanous nature of intention woven into language construction and inflection that underscores primary social systems currently and deep-seated in regulatory bodies, it can take a life’s journey to unravel the core messages that motivate our emotions, behaviours, and actions.

The first diagnosis that roots the DSM construct of mental health classification was found in the 1840 U.S. census: Idiocy/Insanity. Interestingly, this language was transferred to the census from a slave ship log of cargo, human cargo. This same year the southern alienists languaged a malady called Drapetomania – the inexplicable, mad longing of a slave for freedom (Nuckols, 2013). For clarification, an alianist in this context refers to a psychiatrist who specialises in the legal aspects of psychiatry (as determining sanity or capacity to stand trial) according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2023). What is of more interest in considering this information is the background from which these definitions arose. Although the term alianist as defined above was not commonly used in relation to Euro-colonial constructs of psychiatry until 1864, the action of alienation was reflected in legal context in the early 15th century in terms of a

transfer of title to property, in a religious context in identifying one's separation from God, and in terms of deprivation or loss of mental faculties-insanity-within a medical framework (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2022). These Eurocentric perspectives crossed the ocean with the explorers who were themselves attempting to escape the social constructs that evolved from these philosophical ideas. Add to these facts the historical environment in the early years of the development of the United States-an emerging political reality of division between the industrially flourishing northern abolitionist and the southern economically prosperous slave trade-and the foundational origins of the DSM show up quite differently from the beneficent healing light that is marketed in academia and social media presently. The DSM system of mental health codification remains primarily in the U.S. However, mental health services as configured in the DSM are codified by globally conglomerated insurance companies who primarily use the DSM codification system to define symptoms and treatments, and thereby, access, coverage, and payments (Kaiser Permanente, 2022).

Alongside the nascent DSM codification¹⁴ of mental health diagnoses, originating in the denial of sanity for individual's who strove for their birth right of freedom, was another codification system based on distribution patterns of diseases and mortality, eventually focused toward public health, that was derived from a statistically based taxonomy. This was the International Classification of Diseases¹⁵. Both of these developing classification systems were developed during the age of Imperialism and the Victorian Era (*Victorian Era Imperialism*

¹⁴ Codifications seemingly derived from the economic impact for what were developing corporate agendas.

¹⁵ The International Classification of Diseases (ICD – 9) diagnosis coding system originated in 17th century England during the first industrial revolution, which sprang from the Enlightenment Era (ref). Statistical data was gathered through a system known as the London Bills of Mortality which counted the who, how and where numbers associated with deaths and arranged those statistics into numerical codes. These codes were used to measure the most frequent causes of death. This information became a cornerstone of public health, and shaped policy decisions and evidence-based practice by identifying risk factors for disease within geographic areas and determined goals and targets for preventive healthcare. These understandings generated the study and analysis of distribution (who, when and where), patterns and determinants of health and disease conditions in defined populations.

Definition, n.d.) For instance, Eurocentric directed social influence was on naming, developing the order of the natural world, standardising, and building/settling the world by order of the Kings and Pope of the time. During this period of renaissance, revitalization of European conceptualization of life, the European-influenced societies broke, broadly speaking, with traditional earth-based wildcraft and *superstitious* social controls and moved toward a European-scientific approach of understanding. What was left unintegrated was women's (and Indigenous) knowledges and the essence within the natural world. The patriarchy was determined to classify and order for form and function but not for spirit or relationship. Rupert Ross (2014) speaks of this denigration of women and their roles, and the removal of women from positions of power and authority, as an important step in colonisation.

How could these systems of classification work to help people become whole and free? I understand reflexively that the diagnosis given to me as a teenager, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, carries truth in it for me. It is true that I have lived life in defiance and opposition to what I recognized as untrue and unworthy in the institutionalised systems that I have lived and been educated within, which had structured and centralised supremacy and power. And, what then of liberation? My core *felt sense* of value, worth, and truth experienced dissonance in the imposed naming of who I was told I was. I knew what had happened in our home-between my parents and I-was wrong. Seeds of change were planted, and slowly, the core Self in me began to grow (Duran et al., 2008, p.293)(Harro, 2008) (See Appendix E).

Jeffery D. Anderson (2011) references Vine Deloria, Jr.(2006), “ In Lakota, there is a force known as Wakan. In Algonquin languages it is known as Maneetu, and in Iroquois, Orenda. (p.98)” Deloria posits the reality of *life force* beyond the Newtonian world of matter and space-time absolutes, which circumscribes narrowly empirical European views and even folk

ideologies. Following William James' 1936 call for *suspending existential judgement* about religious metaphysics and turning to its value in pragmatic terms *informs* almost all social scientific levels of inquiry. This thinking was, in itself, positive and a generative, a beneficial source of influence and capacity building, given James' impactful voice and location within a Progressive Industrial era. The individual or collective human psyche is *positive as the generative source and beneficiary* of its own creations or imaginings (Anderson, 2011). At this same time, 2011, Cindy Blackstock proposed *The Breath of Life Theory* (Blackstock, 2011, p.1). The Breath of Life (BOL) theory assumes that a set of interdependent principles known as the *relational worldview principles*, principles she attributes to Terry Cross (2007), overlay an interconnected reality with expansive concepts of time and multiple dimensions of reality. These are concepts that I intuited as a child, and as a youth, but had no reflection for through family or community. I was searching for a felt sense of life force that matched my experience as a child in Guadalajara, *life force* that was positive, generative and beneficial.

The friction I have with the label of Oppositional Defiance Disorder is that, for people identified as oppositional and defiant, it is most likely not a disorder and this behaviour is definitely not a disease. More accurate would be a consideration that these behaviours are a response to the friction and dissonance engendered in society that espouses ideological domination replete with "vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture plentiful with words and concepts like "inferior" or "subordinate peoples," "dependency," and "authority" (Said, 1993 referenced in Cote-Meek, 2014, p.19).

For me, the way I have behaved, effectively or not, has been a pathway through which I have lived life in service with spirit, and my own Soul. If we could untether from deeply settled

patterns of thought about how we perceive the world we live in and the purpose of the systems that define our society, could the definitions of mental disorders in the DSM 5 (2013) be recognized as various pathways that are unique to those who pilgrimage upon them rather than labels or names of *who they are* as individuals?

Living my ODD life

The physical trauma, sexualization, the inability of my mother to reconcile her complicity with my father's behaviours, my mother's, and the public small-town shaming of my non-compliant behaviour, left me feeling alienated, confused, and unearthed as a teenager. Coming into relationship with understanding how to live in a world, much bigger than I, was a basic first step bringing my own life into focus. I have had to contemplate, to seek essential understanding, about life, my responses to it and my place in it. Given the authority of the court, social services, the church, and the *permanent record* of my life to this point, succumbing to the ODD diagnosis seemed inescapable. I continued to attempt escape nonetheless; I continued to search for freedom. Revolving through thirteen different foster homes until my father died. Mom had to call the sheriff to take him from the home as he refused to stop drinking and required hospitalisation. He died in the Naval hospital from Cirrhosis and COPD.

I moved home to live with my mother, filled the next few years, until I was 16. I lived my own life regardless of the consequence or influence of others. I left school the year before having almost finished the ninth grade. I had jobs as I needed them. Relationships and networks of friends, drugs and parties, filled my world, and then I was arrested.

Back in court, facing a small-town judge and a detention officer that still held resentment toward my father's demonstrative and commanding interactions with him, the detention officer

spoke disrespectfully to my mom and I, both, during the court hearing. I called out his attitude and language when I was on the stand, which was read as defiant by the judge. They sentenced me to jail time. Our attorney negotiated release into my mom's custody on conditions that arrangements were made for me to leave town. In retrospect, I recognize how the analog, colonised world framed my willingness, eagerness, to adventure further out into a global landscape. Although internally, I identified as a delinquent, defective, problem kid, the external world would give me privilege and assistance as a white, U.S born, kid from a military family. Today, I understand myself at the time as a radically influenced, privileged, rage filled, teenaged explorer searching for belonging and ground in a world I felt alienated from.

A World of My Own Making

In 1970, at 16 years old, I went to the Philippines. I left on the day Richard Nixon declared, on national and international news, that the war in VietNam was over (it was not). I arrived three days before they bombed the Philippine National Airport, leading to Marshall Law and the governmental coup of then president Ferdinand Marcos. This was the time in my life when I lived through the realisation that the core concepts and values of social justice and equity the generation I had been raised in was educated to believe, were not reflected in a global or universal reality. I was living in the truth of the U.S. political lie. The war was not over. Every day I saw planes being resupplied with bombs to fly out to VietNam. The groundswell of opposition to the war was in full swing with Jane Fonda and Don Sutherland at the lead of that movement overseas. The riches I saw in the church, altars of gold and fine linens and wine, contradicted the poverty of the people who came, centavos¹⁶ in hand, to give tribute to the church and kiss the feet of a worn prone effigy of Christ. I was afraid, angry and resentful. It is

¹⁶ 1 centavo PHP = .0017 cent USD

interesting to note that those times were when I began to understand my father's torments. Those terrifying, drunken soliloquies of my Father, that I spoke of earlier, I understood as his way of processing disappointment and dissonance with the values he was imprinted with and the reality of the changing world he lived in.

In 1971, I was married to my long-time Senior Airman boyfriend in Angeles City on Luzon Island at the church I mentioned above. And, I became a heroin addict.

This part of my life is internally cringe-worthy. The writing, reliving, and contemplating the events of the next 20 years of life, challenges every part of my being. Judgements, shame, guilt, and regret come fast, and I feel them deeply. I continue to this day to make amends with those who are willing and remain willing myself, sometimes with a core personal cost, to acknowledge accountability for my own actions. As Judith Herman (2021) outlines in the second stage of trauma recovery, it is in this deep acknowledgement, this choiceful remembering of trauma inflicted and committed, integrated with somatic acceptance through story, by word or art, that becomes a firm ground of empowerment, allows for recognition of authenticity, and also honours and sustains a true relationship with one's own personal power. Within this deep acknowledgement, I lean into Indigenous ceremony, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), an international mutual aid fellowship focused on helping alcoholics achieve sobriety, founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith and the fourth step from Alcoholics Anonymous (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2023), and, also, knee bended prayer, with willingness to recapitulate core moments and own my decisions and actions, I frame the boundaries for working with the darkness I have created and lived (Myss & Harvey, 2020). Interestingly, the struggle to keep

balance in thought and emotion allows a recognition of a nascent observant Self (Deikman, 1982) to emerge while traversing the path between good and evil.

The marriage lasted seven years. During that time I birthed six children. A son and two daughters remain living from this union and have children and grandchildren. The impact of two stillbirths and an abortion dissolved the emotional bond with my husband, sent me into a hormonal storm, compelled an extensive tubal ligation and catalysed a complete and thorough transformation of my life. And no surprise here, a geographical cure brought me out of hometown, small-mindedness, and opened the door to the gifts and challenges of education and student life.

From 1978 to 1989 I studied my way through a nursing degree. I discovered that I could learn and in this awareness a doorway to freedom opened in my life. My internal perception of Self was challenged. I began to receive external feedback, through grades and practicum experiences, of accurate thinking and processing. I earned high marks, and capacity and skillful ability through hands-on practice and compassionate relationships with teachers, students and patients over time. I began to experience my Self differently.

Working within high stress moments, with an intense patient load, in the vertically oriented, hierarchical medical system worked well for me having come from a military family structure, as a student learning the rules and procedures and as a fresh nurse graduate. I was held by the security of compliance within a set structure and the expertise of those with lived experience who held decision-making power. As long as I followed the rules and procedures, I was not held accountable for independent thinking or decision-making or actions. Eventually, I found myself repeating oppositional behavioural patterns as I began to see and experience the

impact of decisions made by my superiors that had detrimental effects for patients of colour, lower income, street folk, women and older people. What was supposed to be healthcare for all people became health care for those who could afford it or who received social sanction through gratuitous exchange, connections, and/or privilege.

During these years I also met a man, got married, separated, worked in hospital as a generalist nurse, experienced the profound hate, bigotry, fear and social education that AIDS virus brought out of the closet, drank, fumble parented and met a man, got pregnant with my seventh child, got a divorce from the second marriage, relocated a number of times, dragging all the kids along with me, entered university, completed alcohol and drug treatment, received a Bachelor of Social Work degree and slowly, slowly moved toward a less complicated life.

Healing Begins

In 1984, I got married again, and, together, we delivered a robust baby girl in a home delivery. I grapple to find English words that can convey the intense, transformative impact of a living miracle as a felt experience; it is beyond description. Both of us had comprehensive biological and reproductive complications. How this baby girl came into our lives will forever remain a true mystery. The experience of this event became another rubicon moment in my life.

Although my husband and I had spoken about our lineages and cultural differences and acknowledged parts of our histories, *the fuller impact of the diversity* of our united families clarified with the birth of our daughter. The wonder, joy, and responsibility of who we were as people parenting an Indigenous child in a blended family was confronted and dulled by the baggage of our past that still influenced our relationships and daily lives. We drank together and fought. We worked and studied. We went to Pow Wows, travelled to family events, and tried to create a happy family life. The fighting overshadowed our happiness. I had my baggage, and he had his.

He was not that long out of residential school when we met and this was his first long term relationship; his parents had both passed away from alcohol and violence. He had not returned to the family homeland since leaving the school. All of his immediate family had left Nlaka'pamux Territory due to the interference of the Canadian colonised system imposed control over the education of children, resulting in a complete disruption of his family and their daily living.

My husband grew up in the old ways. He can remember seeing a car for the first time as strange lights travelling across the mountainside on the other side of the river. He travelled with his parents to town in a horse drawn wagon, taking two or three days to travel and stopping overnight with friends and family along the way. The family got their water through a living flume from off the mountain that surrounded their log cabin, and they grew their food and crops for sale. His grandparents, aunts and uncles all shared the land, work, and daily life. These memories were alive in him as he struggled with life in the city, in the U.S. He coped by using alcohol, working hard, and playing basketball or volleyball. He developed survival strategies of regression, repression, and compartmentalization to deal with his experience of violence, sexual assault, and oppression in residential school. Alcohol opened emotional doors for both of us, and the fights came. He would leave for days without notice and, sometimes, when he returned home, the fights became physical. Neither of us knew what was missing. Both of us were oppositional - to the world, to social expectations, to changing social dynamics, to each other and, in many instances, oppositional to our own selves through internal struggles with the residue of our histories and trauma. It became clear for both of us that *trauma bonding* was at the origin of our relationship

We managed to stagger along through it all. Eventually, we moved to Canada. Initially, the reason was for me to attend university, however, it became clear over time that my husband was beginning his journey back home. To help us along the path of healing, he received several *driving while impaired* tickets and was court ordered to alcohol treatment. In 1986, he went to an Indigenous developed and run alcohol treatment centre. I followed later that year and we returned for couples' treatment after that. This was another turning point for us both, for our marriage, our family, and our lives entirely. For me, other than the moments of giving birth, this

was where I met Spirit in a personal sense, and recognized internal knowing, I slowly released the obligation to be defined by external commandments and directives. I started to become relational with my own ability and accountability for how I could problem solve situations; I began to be observant of the life I lead, and the outcomes of living in/with the world around me. Medicine Wheel teachings and ceremonies, emotional cleansing and forgiveness of self and others, and learning about personality styles and coping mechanisms, defined a clearer context for safely processing the terror and trauma of my early life. All of which helped me establish a strength-based sense of personal empowerment. We learned about our lineages, Ancestors, the impact of historical events and our responsibilities, commitments, and life goals.

The work of Virginia Satir (1967), Angeles Arian(1997) and Jann Derrick(2008) helped me to reframe perceptions I had oriented to that reflected external dominance and superiority. Satir's work in Conjoint Family Systems theory brought forward the idea of locating Self in relation to family, community, and world events. Satir highlighted the significance of communication and validation in a process model that includes a perspective that all behaviour is oriented toward growth even if it appears distorted (*Family Models*, n.d.). Further, the work of Angeles Arian (Arrien, 1997) frames character development in relation to mathematics; I used numerology to track cyclical phases across my unique life span. Jann Derrick's (Derrick, 2008) approach, in a pragmatic and clear way, languages the values held within the diversity of social systems in her Box and Circle Model. This model exposes the underbelly of the driving force, the ambiguous enmeshment of power, dominance, control and *rightness*, a Eurocentric social system that was the genesis of institutional organisations. Through experiencing techniques such as Family Sculpting, genograms and anchoring, I was able to identify, feel and integrate my

family of origin experiences internally and truthfully, especially humorously, in ways that included discovery, messiness, and self-expression through creative art and crafting.

Finding Home

We still travelled after treatment. We mostly stayed in Canada though. My husband began to work his way back to, and attempted to reintegrate into, his home community. It was painful and a struggle. Memories of how life was in the late 1960s and how life was during the early 1990s took some translation. Friends had grown and died, moved away and married, raising families. None of his immediate family returned to the community so he connected with cousins and aunts and uncles. I had a difficult time living in the interior as I had always lived by the ocean. The ecology of the area was desert-like and hot. I connected with some parts of the land, especially the land where my husband was raised. There is a particular valley in the area that I loved to visit, and the creeks and rivers were inviting and sources of healing. We fished in the summer, in large family gatherings that went on for days and nights, catching, cleaning and canning around the clock. We gathered at Healing Gatherings in the mountains, with friends and family from the States, and with community folks. Our children grew into teenagers and the cycles of life continued as we learned how to live without drugs and alcohol. Many experiences occurred that reflected my own unhealed thinking and behaviours. We lived between Canada and the US, where most of our immediate family lived. I continued to seek help, sourced schooling and knowledge. I travelled and worked, went to Ceremonies and listened to Elders, and helped my mother die at home; she died in my arms in 2010.

After she passed away, I moved to Canada permanently. I worked as a social worker in medical settings primarily, until I began working for the Friendship Center and became part of the Friendship Center movement (*Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples*, 2018). The

Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centers is a collective of Indigenous-lead social educational centres across Canada that provide direct service for Indigenous people living in urban areas. We provide services for those who have been disenfranchised from their home communities, those who choose to live in urban areas, and those who have lost touch with their families or communities through the 60s scoop, foster home placements or residential school experiences. As a national collective Aboriginal Friendship Centers, though non-political, raise our voices and advocate for those who are working toward affirmation of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UDRIP) (*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* | *Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD)*, 2007). The following are four rights outlined in UDRIP:

- The right to Self - determination
- The right to be recognized as a distinct People
- The right to free, prior, and informed consent
- The right to be free of discrimination

Further, as representatives for urban Indigenous people in British Columbia (BC), our local Friendship Center advocates for the implementation of an Action Plan outlined in the BC Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People Act (DRIPA) (*Declaration Act Action Plan - Province of British Columbia*, 2022), which passed into legislation in November of 2019. The obligations of the Province of British Columbia as outlined in RIPA are:

- Align Provincial laws with UNDRIP
- Establish an Action Plan to meet obligations
- Province to report annually on progress made toward alignment of laws and achievements of goals in Action Plan

I work currently as a Mental Wellness Team member and my husband is the Cultural Wellness Coordinator there as well. We live in a community that is near my husbands' home community. We work with folks across the spectrum of social service needs and are active participants in community capacity development projects that originate from Indigenous leadership within a multicultural context for “*anyone who comes through our doors*” (Lillooet Friendship Center Society Mission Statement, 2023)

Cosmo-Glo-Cal **(Understanding Cosmology, Thinking Globally, Acting Locally)**

With contemplation and the scaffolding of the perspectives explored so far in this paper, I find, held within the container of time, historical perspective, and societal development, a path that helps me unpack the origins of social systems that defined my formative years. As I come toward the conclusion of this paper, I can see that the exploration and discovery inherent in reflexive work supports a reintegration process. Deep reflection, and reconnection with my original question *In what ways might meaning making and knowledge building approaches, applied to the examination of my life experiences, contribute to and challenge my current social work practices?*, leads me to observe the intersections of my personal perspectives with the specialised framework of social work theory and practice.

One of the leading frameworks of social work practice to date originates as another form of classification, a taxonomy of sorts, reflective of industrial era thought. The PIE (Person-in-Environment; Welch Saleebey, 2017) framework provides a guiding philosophy for social workers in coding and classifying problems in social functioning . Derived from interdisciplinary Systems Theory, which observes how systems relate to one another within

larger, more complex systems (OnlineMSW Programs, 2023), PIE concepts were first introduced when Mary Richmond (1917) wrote the book *Social Diagnosis* (Richmond, 1917), outlining her belief that a person's behaviour was a product of their environment; this was reflective of perspectives proposed during the Progressive/analog era. These ideas have developed over the decades as a way to integrate, into an accessible practice model, a fundamental social work philosophical dichotomy between the *micro* (i.e. individual intentions and actions) and the *macro* (social structures and systems). (Austin et al, 2016). The PIE system, as it is utilised currently, was created in the 1990s - Analog/ Digital generation - and promoted by the National Association of Social Workers (Saleeby, 2017). It is sometimes called *the social worker's DSM* (Rogge & Cox, 2001). It is an assessment and planning framework, addressing four overarching factors that influence individuals within their environment: Social Roles/Relationship Functioning, Environmental Problems, Mental Health Problems/ Strengths, and Physical Health Problems/ Strengths. These domains are addressed on rating scales including Severity (1 – 5 most severe), Duration (1 – 5 shortest duration), Coping (1 – 6 with 5 being poorest coping and 6 being unable to judge at this time), and Strength (1 being notable strengths and 2 being possible strengths). It is important to recognize that the environmental domain focuses on the person in their structural environment, (ie: home, access to services, ability to access resources) rather than on place or ecology. This assessment and planning tool carries the imprint of mechanistic industrialised thinking; it does not engage the influence of relational dynamics between individuals and the landscape or ecosystem, the actual place where people live beyond the structures of the buildings they live within. Wenders (2001) as referenced in Zapf (2010) says “The cinematic option of telling a place rather than telling a story challenges our cultural notions of place as mere scenery” (p.36). Environment in PIE assessment denies a focus on the

ecology of where a person lives; instead, environment is simply a backdrop, a setting, rather than a *place*.

In Dr. Patricia Saleeby's (2017) critique of the PIE structured assessment model, presented in South Africa at the 2nd International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Educational Symposium and created from a virtually informed perspective, compared the World Health Organizations (WHO)'s ICF with the PIE system of assessment. Saleeby promotes the ICF as an alternative framework for better situating disability, and to bridge curriculum gaps between education and practice, to better prepare social work students for practice. ICF is a classification of health and health-related domains, a WHO framework for measuring health and disability at both individual and population levels (Welch Saleeby, 2017).

This framework reviews body functions, activities and participation, environmental factors and body structures (WHO, 2023). Here environmental factors include the physical, social and attitudinal environment in which people live and conduct their lives. Environmental factors are either barriers to or facilitators of the person's functioning (WHO, 2023) and include consideration of the natural environment and human-made changes to the environment. This framework remains a codified, scaled assessment tool.

Although the ICF framework opens up opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration because it uses a common language and system for data collection and offers a universal mechanism to collect and communicate health information globally (Saleeby, 2017), this model, and the PIE model, remain detached – through assumptions, perceived cultural norms and languaging - from our current environmental state, as in the ecology, of the world we presently live within.

Moving from local to global perspectives, contemporary, virtual-thinkers champion an environmental framework that is entrained with concepts of cycles, phases, seasons and processes, as reflecting our ecological reality, the natural world within which we live. Renovation of PIE and ICF, through the lens of ecological thinking, would produce relational reformation of the social worker power dynamic (dominant/subordinate). Such reformation seems to be supported by the International Policy Statement on Globalization and the Environment (2014) set forth by the International Federation of Social Workers, of which I am a member. In this policy statement, *paragraphs nine and 15* put forth specific calls to action regarding environment and social work practice. *Paragraph nine* recognizes that natural and built environments have a direct impact on people's potential to develop and achieve their potential, and that the earth's resources should be shared in a sustainable way. *Paragraph 15* calls on social workers and their representative bodies to recognize the importance of the natural and built environment to the social environment; to develop environmental responsibility and care for the environment in social work practice and management today and for future generations; to work with other professionals to increase our knowledge and with community groups to develop advocacy skills and strategies to work towards a healthier environment; and to ensure that environmental issues gain increased presence in social work education.

(Globalisation and the Environment – International Federation of Social Workers, 2014)

In 2010, Michael Kim Zapf proposed a “paradigm or metaphor of *people as place*, humans cannot be understood separate from the natural world” (p.39) as an alternate starting place for social work assessment/practice. He references Morito (2002) to clarify “an important distinction between thinking about ecology and thinking ecologically” (p.38). Further, he underscores that “Ecological thinking is a process, a worldview, a set of principles, an awareness

that must affect all approaches to inquiry and practice if we are to survive.” (p.31) Zapf also draws on Hawley (1986) stating that “[t]hinking ecologically involves thinking about “people” rather than the individual “person.” (p.39) According to Zapf, the purpose of an ecological model can be simply stated as *living well in place*. He contends that when individuals are seen beyond a binary, mechanistic mandate that, *collectively*, they are recognized as an expression of the place, the natural environment, where they live.

For me, ecological thinking, process-oriented engagements, and deeply held somatic connections with place, have become pathways of decolonization in action, in felt experience, in practice from knowledge to wisdom. These pathways have been indentured biologically, through neuro-decolonization of thought constructs and practices formed from, and influenced by, a current, lived and living reality.

Journal entry.

My spine - the longitudinal axis of my body, a place of integration, a place of somatic support, a communication pathway within my body - returning to my Self, my own wholeness I sense, maybe for the first time, the iron in my bones, the strength of my spine. More, I also sense softening within me as I acknowledge that the tension of fear has released into the strength of my bones, and provided motivation for engaging with writing, speaking, and connecting with others. This originates from presence, and the honouring of life as it is coming towards me. Deep Breath.

Nature, space, history and time, coherence and unified knowledge are concepts outlined by Vine Deloria, Jr. (1969 - 2006) in his many written works have been largely ignored by social theorists. Jefferey D. Anderson (2011) writes “even though his critique of the universality and progressiveness of Western epistemologies predates subsequent attempts in various fields at reflexivity, deconstruction, decolonization, and anti-essentialism” (p.92), “Deloria imagined a genuine intertribal, intercultural, and interdisciplinary inquiry that draws on Western and Indigenous pathways toward understanding the unifying reality underlying all existence (p.95).

As I consider how much my life has been anchored with, and to, and felt, safety and attachment with the ecology of places where I have lived, and consider the echo that resounds within, I am sourced and located in the world by the consistent, indefatigable, generative presence of the natural ecosystems I have experienced. I know the truth of, and live in solidarity with, Deloria and his vision.

Systems and thinking have changed multiple times in the sixty nine years of my life. Permanence, as defined by the brick and mortar, analog, industrial, progressive era, has morphed into a digital, electronic, automated, post-modern, anti-essentialist era, featuring a virtual, matrix physics, a societal interval that is *hospicing modernity*, and *gesturing toward postcolonial futures* (Andreotti, 2022).. As I consider the experience of writing this autoethnography, the concepts of nature, place, space and history, development, and time, which have woven themselves into my life, seem to be the warp of my story. The weft being the events and transitional moments. And, the fabric - the whole, the outcome, and the design is recognized cosmology of an internal coherence and sense of unified knowledge garnered from an eagle's eye perspective, grounded in willingness, humility, and presence in my current social reality. This has been a point of transition, another phase of development, and a voyage through history, time. It has been a gathering of Self in moments of awareness and learning.

Conclusion

Journal entry:

“If the angel
deigns to come
it will be because
you have convinced
her, not by tears, but
by your humble resolve to be always
beginning: to be a beginner.”
Rainer Maria Rilke

From this vantage point I can begin to understand ways in which social constructs have influenced my family of origin and, thereby framed my life experiences. They also provide a reflection of the possibilities available within my internal cosmology that carried me beyond conceptual understanding and into a somatic reality that begins to integrate spirit-full connections with emotional intelligence, and rooted belonging within/across space, time, community and with the geography, the land, in the place where the I of me lives.

Currently, I am genuinely connected to the ecology of where my husband and I live. We live high up in an ecosystem that rises with the mountains and follows the course of the Fraser River. Daily I seek relationship with the land and the spirit of place where we live. The relationship with land, and those who live with me on that land, centres the practice I bring into the office with me each day, it sources all the work that occurs in that room or place where I meet with others.

In some ways these are new thoughts, perceptions that arise from recognition of how honoured I am to engage with the folks who step into my office. I see within them, some reflections of myself. As I witness their journey, walk with them for a while, invite grace and stillness to inform me, I am able to expand capacity in holding space for both the difficult and painful, as well as celebration and joy.

From Liberation psychology, the term psychology itself literally means the study of the soul (Duran, 2008). Through the study of my own soul wounding and healing journey, including this culminating paper for my MSW degree, I have honed my experiences and knowledge into a natural legacy of wisdom, in ways that inform, nurture, and sustain my social work practice in this last phase of living. In fact, the spiralling impact of my early years continues to unfold in my

life today as I sit in reflection while writing this paper. In my sixth decade, with another phase of transition begun, I am dedicated to discovering in the wildness, wonder and unwinding of what life offers; a personal perspective for this next stage of life. I am comfortable in the realisation that I continue to live an *awed* life.

Appendices

Appendix A:

Judith Herman's Three Stages of Recovery From Severe Trauma

Stage 1

The first stage of dealing with and overcoming trauma-related problems is about:

- Getting a 'road map' of the healing process.
- Establishing safety and stability in one's body, one's relationships, and the rest of one's life.
- Tapping into and developing one's own inner strengths, and any other potentially available resources for healing.
- Learning how to regulate one's emotions and avoid emotional overwhelm.
- Developing and strengthening skills for managing painful and unwanted experiences, and minimizing unhelpful responses to them.

Most important, the key to healing from traumatic experiences in childhood is achieving these 'stage-one' goals of personal safety, genuine self-care, and healthy emotion-regulation capacities.

Importantly, the first stage of recovery and therapy is not about discussing or 'processing' memories of unwanted or abusive experiences, let alone 'recovering' them.

Of course, everything is not always so perfectly ordered and sequential. For example, during the first stage it may be necessary to discuss the contents of disturbing memories that are disrupting one's life. This may be required to help manage the memories, or to understand why it is hard to care for oneself (e.g., the abuser acted like or even said you were unworthy of care or love). However, in this case addressing memories is not the focus of therapy, but a means to achieving safety, stability, and greater ability to take care of oneself. Throughout all stages of recovery, it is often necessary to address psychological themes and 'dynamics' related to one's history of unwanted or abusive experiences. These include:

- Powerlessness
- Shame and guilt
- Distrust
- Re-enacting abusive patterns in current relationships

In the first stage these themes and dynamics must be addressed when they are obstacles to safety, self-care, and regulating one's emotions and behavior. Therapy can help with recognizing habitual behavior patterns, beliefs, and motivations that maintain self-defeating and self-destructive behaviors outside of conscious awareness or reflection. Increased awareness of these themes and dynamics brings greater understanding, greater ability to take responsibility for them, and greater capacity to respond differently to life events. Mindfulness meditation practices can also help cultivate such awareness and freedom.

Stage 2

This stage of recovery is often referred to as ‘rememberance and mourning’.

The main work of stage two involves:

- Reviewing and/or discussing memories to lessen their emotional intensity, to revise their meanings for one’s life and identity, to reduce flashbacks and nightmares if they are ongoing problems.
- Working through grief about unwanted or abusive experiences and their negative effects on one’s life.
- Mourning or working through grief about good experiences that one did, not have, but all children deserve.

After establishing a solid foundation of understanding, safety, stability and self-regulation skills one can decide-mindful of the potential pain and risks involved-whether or not to engage in the work of stage two. In fact, once the first stage of recovery has provided such a foundation, some people realize that thinking and talking about painful memories is not necessary to achieve their goals, at least in the short term. Some find that the memories are no longer disrupting their life and no longer of much interest to them. And sometimes people need to teach their therapists about this!

For those who choose to focus on disturbing memories, because those memories are still disrupting their lives, several ‘memory processing’ methods can be used during this stage. In general, these methods involve re-experiencing the memories within a safe and healing therapy setting. They can be effective at ending the influence of such memories in one’s daily life. EMDR practitioners and therapists experienced in working with trauma can provide this. This process does not need to take years-a few sessions can often be helpful, once people have attained stability and safety in their lives.

Stage 3

The third stage of recovery focuses on *reconnecting* with people, meaningful activities, and other aspects of life. The person having learned about impacts of abuse during stage 1 and 2 that previously made it difficult for people to do this make this easier.

(Judith Herman's Three Stages of Recovery From Severe Trauma Stage 1, n.d.)

Appendix B

Indigenous Cosmology of Cultural Heritage for Impact Assessment

Manifestation of Cosmic Views

Cosmic views are manifested in the manner in which a people conduct its life. The table below identifies some of the ways cultural values are manifested. The significance² of these manifestations and instruments that could be used to assess them and their negotiability are summarized in the table.

Table 1. Cultural Heritage Assessment Matrix			
Manifestation of Culture	Significance	Assessment Instruments	Negotiable
Ancestral Worship	Intrinsic spiritual ³ contentment Communication with ancestors Healing	Traditional Knowledge Community Consultation	NO
Cultural Activities (e.g. dance, funeral, harvest festivals, special days, etc.)	Intrinsic spiritual contentment Emotional contentment Life and life cycle sustenance Healing	Traditional Knowledge Community Consultation Historic Knowledge	NO
Hunting & Farming	Life and life cycle sustenance Economic value (e.g. trade)	Traditional Knowledge Community Consultation Historic/Archaeological Knowledge	YES
Family & Community Ties	Spiritual contentment Emotional contentment Life and life cycle sustenance	Traditional Knowledge Community Consultation	NO
Time Concepts	Regard for nature Spiritual and emotional contentment	Traditional Knowledge Community Consultation Historic Knowledge	YES
Historic/Natural Structures	Intrinsic spiritual value Aesthetic value Architectural Historic/Scientific value Economic value (e.g. tourism)	Local, National & International Regulations. Traditional Knowledge Community Consultation	YES
Artifacts	Intrinsic spiritual value Aesthetic value Historic/Scientific value Archaeological value Economic value (e.g. tourism)	Local, National & International Regulations. Traditional Knowledge Historic/Archaeological Knowledge Scientific Knowledge	YES
Special Sites (e.g. sacred groves, graveyards, battlefields, special event sites, etc.)	Intrinsic spiritual values Emotional contentment Healing Economic value (e.g. tourism)	Local, National & International Regulations. Traditional Knowledge Historic/Archaeological Knowledge	YES

² Significance is used here to denote the basis for estimating cultural value.

³ Spirituality is the harmonious connection between the living and supernatural spirits that control life. This includes peaceful co-existence with the physical (natural) and the unseen (cosmic) environment.

⁴

Appendix C

The Box and the Circle - Two systems of Life: A Model for Understanding Native/Non-Native Issues

Both Social Systems are composed of these same parts:

***Human beings *language *families *basic human needs communities**

***a history *cultures *a means of using information *laws and rules**

***a governing body *relationships *interaction between parts (communication)**

***roles**

The most striking contrasts between the two systems are:

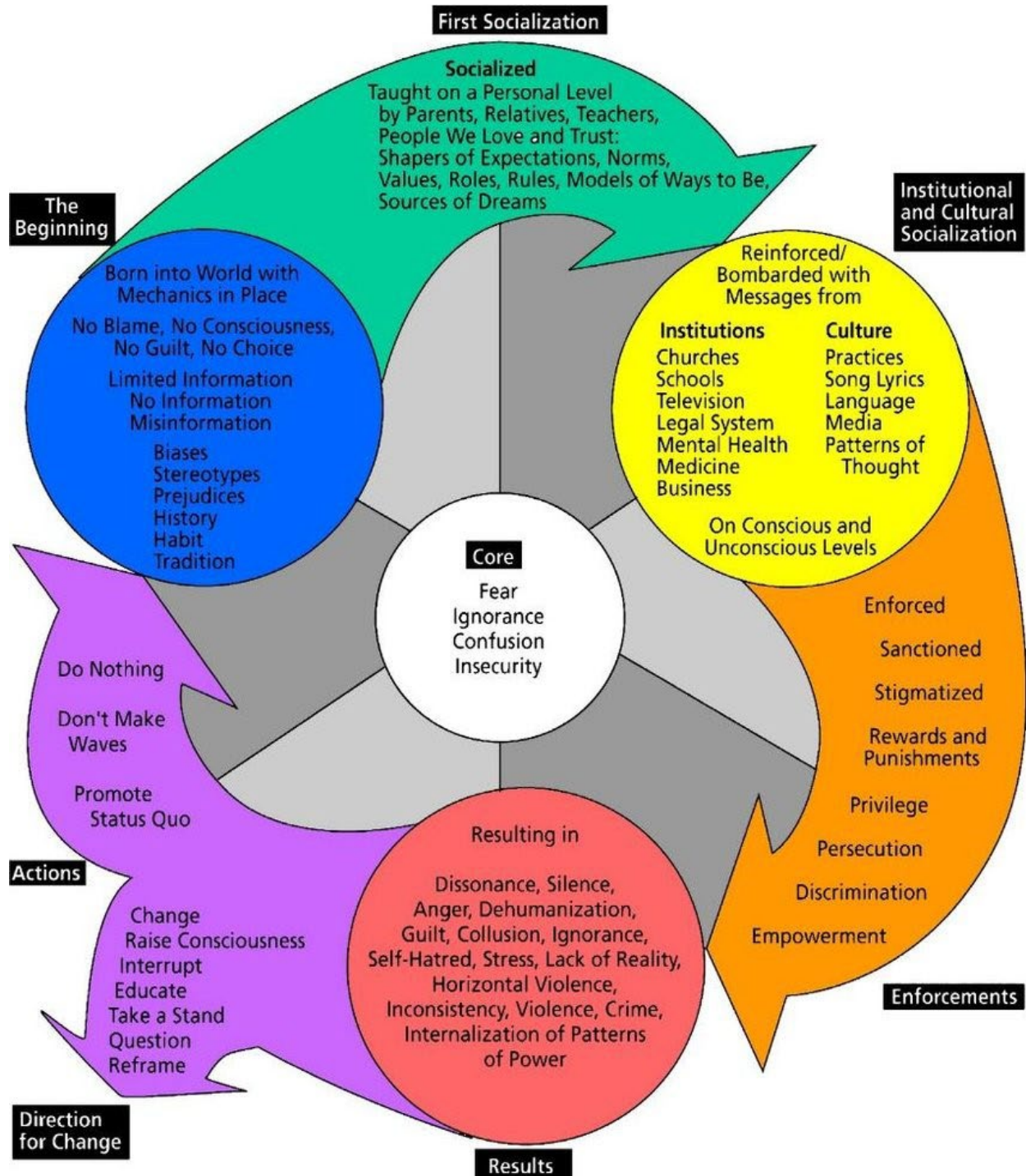
- ❖ **POWER** - *the Circle* sees power as inner awareness and intuitiveness and existing within each person, to be shared together for the good of the Whole; *the Box* sees power as the degree of control and domination each person has over their emotions and actions, as well as over others around them.
- ❖ **RELATIONSHIP** - *the Circle* believes in partnership and a balanced female-male relationship with the greatest honor going to the woman. *the Box* believes relationships are dominant male over female and children and others in the system.

- ❖ MIRRORS IN RELATIONSHIP - *the Circle* sees what it is that is most appealing or bothersome in a relationship and sees it as information about the self. *the Box* takes the mirror of relationship and analyses the mirror itself - it is bad, held too close, has the wrong beliefs, behaves in ways they do not approve, etc.
- ❖ SPIRITUALITY - *the Circle* believes that spirit is androgynous, that it is within us and connected to all other spirits, is loving, and forgiving; *the Box* believes that spirit is male and is controlling and outside ourselves, is rigid and judgmental.
- ❖ APPROACH TO LIFE - *the Circle* believes that life is abundant, joyous, and a constant learning - we must be open to give and receive. We live life as a process and individually create what fits best for each of us; *the Box* believes that life is survival, hard and fearful - we must fight for what we get. We live life according to a recipe in order to achieve perfection.
- ❖ LEARNING - *the Circle* believes that learning is intuitive and the interaction of all four parts of us (emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual); *the Box* believes that learning is step-by-step and logical and only mental.
- ❖ TEACHING - *the Circle* believes that teaching is experiential - the development of innate wisdom present within each person; *the Box* believes that teaching is didactic - the imparting of learned knowledge in a dominator-submissive manner.
- ❖ LANGUAGE - *the Circle* believes that language is limited to experience and is simply the best verbal reflection of ourselves that we can create; *the Box* believes that language usage and manipulation is the ultimate mark of a learned person.

- ❖ WISDOM - *the Circle* believes that wisdom is within us and comes to us directly through our intuitive connection with the Universe; *the Box* believes that the skill of language usage and repetition of learned behavior creates wisdom.
- ❖ POLARITY - *the Circle* believes that both poles are essential to balance and wholeness, and that the poles ask us to integrate opposition and put them together in harmony; *the Box* believes that there is a duality and that this imposes constant distress upon us as humans.
- ❖ NEGATIVE - *the Circle* believes that negativity and blackness are essential in order to contrast with positiveness and light - therefore the negative is to be honored, accepted and respected; *the Box* believes that negativity and blackness are bad and should be eradicated or controlled.
- ❖ WORLD VIEW - *the Circle* believes everything is an expression of the Creator, to use and to share together; *the Box* believes that 'what is mine is mine, and what is yours is mine'.
- ❖ RESPONSE TO THE WORLD - *the Circle* believes that we need to see and accept 'What is'; *the Box* believes that we need to always ask 'What is wrong here?'
- ❖ MONEY- *the Circle* sees money as one of many ways of exchanging gifts and goods and services; *the Box* sees money as the means for surviving life and therefore has developed complex systems for manipulating, counting, using and administering it.
- ❖ SEPARATENESS - *the Circle* sees separateness as our own boundary of Self in the total Oneness and interconnectedness of All; *the Box* sees separateness as necessary for survival - we are each separate from one another - the individual is the most important.

(Derrick, 2008, p.20-2)

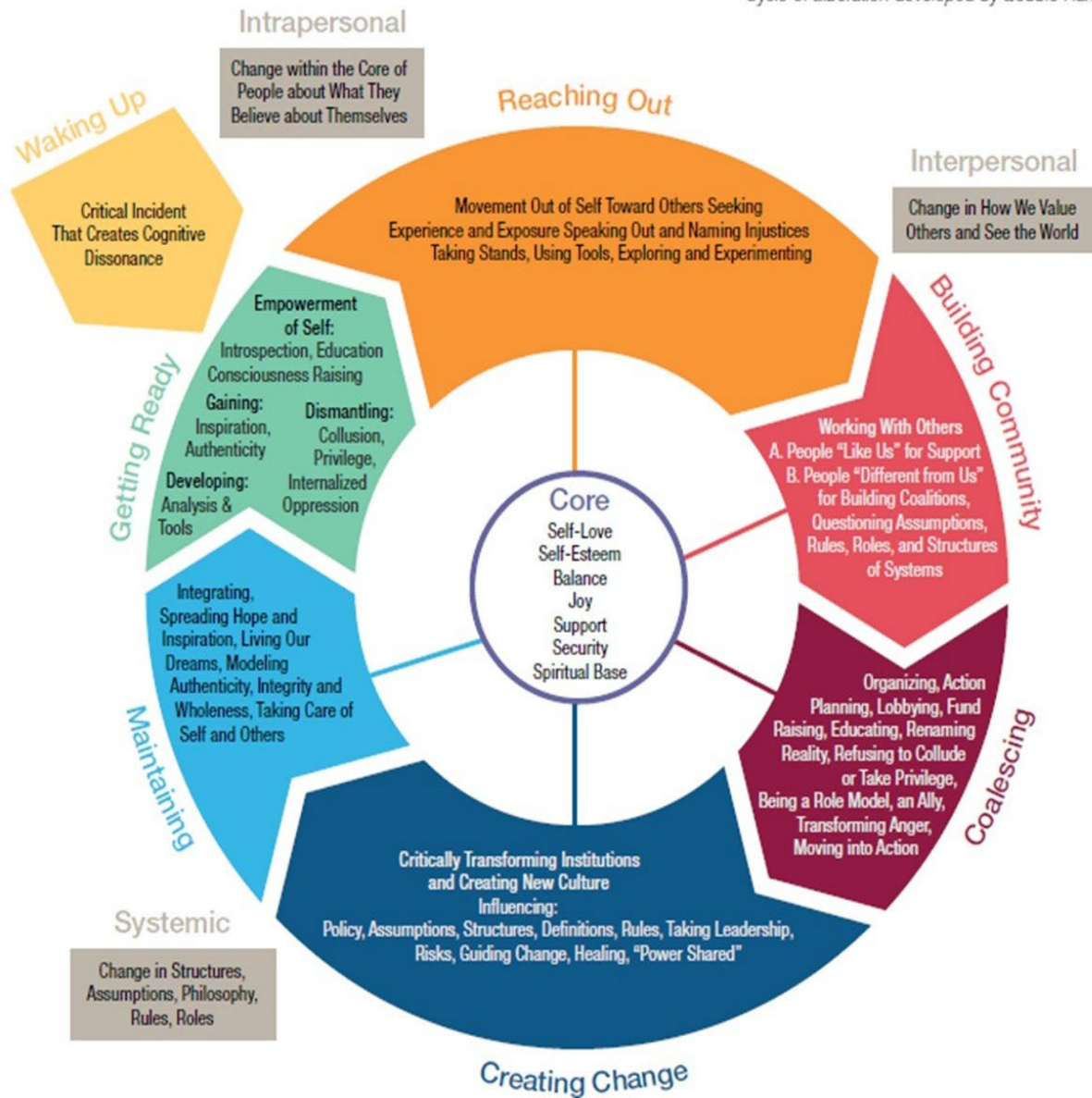
APPENDIX D

**Cycle of Socialization:**

(Harro, B. (2010). *The Cycle of Socialization*. Understanding Implicit Bias, Microaggressions, & Stereotypes THE CYCLE OF SOCIALIZATION1. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from [https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Cycle%20of%20Socialization%20HARR O.pdf](https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Cycle%20of%20Socialization%20HARR%20O.pdf))

Appendix E

CYCLE OF LIBERATION

Cycle of Liberation developed by Bobbie Harro

Cycle of Liberation

(Harro, B. (2008). *Cycle of Liberation*. Untitled. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from [https://geography.washington.edu/sites/geography/files/documents/harro-cycle-of-liberati on.pdf](https://geography.washington.edu/sites/geography/files/documents/harro-cycle-of-liberati%20on.pdf))

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