

PERSPECTIVES

THE COLONIAL MIND IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT. This article links my personal experience as a First Nations doctoral student to Paulo Freire's teachings on oppression. The spirit of his writing has inspired me to work toward transformational change. I also draw on other discussions of colonialism including the writings of Edward Said. I explore, in the Canadian context, what I refer to as the "colonial mind." The colonial mind is exhibited in relationships and produces polarized behaviours that result from superior – inferior stances. Oppressive attitudes and actions are often unconscious, unintentional, and trans-generational. The First Nations student must identify oppression within academic institutions and the cultural oppression that exists in both general society and academic institutions. Both forms of oppression, institutional and cultural, exhibit similar features and grow from the same root of superior - inferior dynamics. Freedom from oppression, both cultural and institutional, requires the individual to (a) identify the beliefs that support oppressor/oppressed dynamics; (b) identify the actions and attitudes that perpetuate oppression and; (c) exert the will to change personal behaviours in relationships with others. The perspective in this manuscript does not represent a voice for all First Nations people; rather, this is a personal perspective based on my experience as both a student and a teacher.

L'ESPRIT COLONIAL DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article établit un lien entre mon expérience personnelle d'étudiante autochtone de doctorat et les enseignements de Paulo Freire sur l'oppression. L'esprit de son ouvrage m'a incitée à vouloir des changements en profondeur. Je m'inspire également d'autres analyses du colonialisme, notamment des écrits d'Edward Said. Dans le contexte canadien, j'étudie ce que j'appelle « l'esprit colonial ». L'esprit colonial se manifeste dans les rapports humains et aboutit à des comportements polarisés découlant de positions de supériorité-infériorité. Les actes d'oppression sont souvent inconscients, involontaires et se transmettent de génération en génération. L'étudiant autochtone doit cerner l'oppression au sein du milieu universitaire et l'oppression culturelle qui existe à la fois dans la société en général et dans le milieu universitaire. Les deux formes d'oppression, institutionnelle et culturelle, présentent des caractéristiques analogues et découlent de la même

dynamique supériorité-infériorité. Pour se libérer de l'oppression, aussi bien culturelle qu'institutionnelle, l'individu doit a) préciser les croyances qui favorisent la dynamique oppresseur-opprimé; b) cerner les actes et les attitudes qui perpétuent l'oppression; et c) être animé du désir de modifier des comportements personnels par rapport aux autres.

Introduction

My purpose in writing this paper is to critically examine the impact of what I will call "the colonial mind" on post-secondary education and on First Nations people attempting to gain higher education in Canada. "Colonialism," in this paper, refers to the dehumanizing process in imperialism where those "new lands" and inhabitants were considered subjects of the Crown. Concerning both colonialism and imperialism, literary and cultural critic Edward W. Said (1993) states: "Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination. . ." I will suggest in this paper that the ideological formations were concepts founded on the delusion that the European race was superior to First Nations races in Canada. These acts of racial domination were oppressive acts and continue to impact the First Nations population in Canada today.

The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, (1996) presents the following disturbing statistics: 11% of Aboriginals achieved high school graduation as compared to 18.9% non-Aboriginal; 2.6% Aboriginals attained a university degree, as compared to 11.6% non-Aboriginal. These alarming statistics indicate that, although both First Nations and non-First Nations students struggle in the education system, First Nations students are not attaining the same education levels as other Canadian students. Cultural domination over First Nations culture in Canada through colonialism is not only evident in education but also in the socioeconomic rates of: 28.6% of the total Aboriginal population receiving social assistance (41.5% on-reserve) compared to 8.1% non-Aboriginals receiving social assistance (Report of the Royal Commission, 1996, p.168).

The colonial mind is based upon historic and Eurocentric beliefs of superiority that subjugated First Nations people and made them wards of the government. The colonial mind justified appropriating First Nations hereditary lands and resources for the colonialists' material gain with the resulting social and economic crisis in the First Nations population in Canada today. Colonialist thought rationalized annihilation of such people as the Beothuk and deemed the inhabitants of the land 'savages,' 'heathens' and 'pagans' in need of domination with the intent of 'civilizing' the uncivilized. Indeed it was only in 1949 that First Nations were recognized as provincial citizens and gained the right to vote in British Columbia

elections compared to “white” women receiving the vote in 1917 (Mathias & Yabsley, 1996). Such colonialist assertions of superiority justified the appropriation of lands, and legislation determining jurisdictional authority over an entire people, exiling them and their future generations to dependency, low socio-economic and sub-human status.

These colonialist dynamics are, however, not only a historical fact; their effects are still with us today. Threads of colonialist values and beliefs are woven into our current education system. Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire (1995) describes oppressive education in the dominant society as a banking concept where:

The interests of the oppressors lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them; for the more the oppressed can be lead to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated. (p.55)

Like all students, First Nations people struggle with oppressive structures in education, but they must also struggle with cultural oppression, as evident in such legislation as the *Indian Act* of 1867.

My own childhood life experience consisted of attempting to reconcile what I understood to be cultural differences between my mother and father. Although cultural differences certainly existed between my parents, today I understand that my English mother and Tsimshian father were trapped in colonialist beliefs. In Canadian society my mother, with her European inheritance, was considered superior to my First Nations father.

My purpose in developing a critical analysis of behaviours associated with the dynamics of colonialist thought or the colonial mind have arisen out of my experience in a family of differing cultures and many childhood attempts to reconcile those parental differences. My experience as an academic in a society that perpetuates colonialist thinking, albeit unintentionally and unconsciously, has also provided an abundance of patterned behaviours to examine.

The existence of colonialist thought in education is not a new concept. I hope to build on the works of writers such as Legal Council land claims expert, Thomas Berger (1991), Lakota academic and critic, Vine Deloria Jr. (1997), literary and cultural critic, Edward Said (1993), and historian Paul Tennant (1990). In particular I will examine the following components of the colonial mind in education: (a) the underlying philosophy of colonialist thought; (b) the colonial mind and First Nations; (c) the academy and the colonial mind; and (d) freedom from the colonial mind. The first factor identifies the nature of the colonial mind in the colonization of Canada, the second, the double bind of oppression experienced by Aboriginals in the

academy. The third examines the colonial mind in educational structures and methods, and the fourth is a proposed framework for implementing change which includes "other" ways of knowing and educating.

It is my hope that identifying oppressive, self-defeating, and violent behaviours will provide a bridge to understanding in order to facilitate transformational change.

1. The philosophy of the colonial mind

The definition of colonialist thinking used in this paper comes from Edward Said (1994), who connects colonialism with imperialism when he states "the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with words and concepts like 'inferior' or 'subject races,' 'subordinate peoples,' 'dependency,' 'expansion,' and 'authority.' Colonialist thought, which Said (1994) refers to as "imperialist culture"(p.9), was obvious or overt, as cited in the above nineteenth-century vocabulary, as well as covert, in the sense that the prejudice and racism were veiled in presumed good deeds by Europeans expecting "savages" who required domination to become "civilized" savages. Both well-intentioned acts and acts of domination have been founded on the delusional belief that the European race was and is superior to the indigenous nations of Canada. The belief of superiority is termed delusional because history indicates that assumed racial superiority is used to justify annihilation, war, and acts of violence rather than to promote enlightenment and inclusion. The prejudiced belief of superiority over First Nations peoples was, as Berger (1991), Fisher (1992), and Tennant (1990) suggest, connected to the appropriation of lands and jurisdiction over these lands. For example, Thomas Berger (1991) quotes Trutch, Governor James Douglas' successor:

The Indians have really no right to the lands they claim, nor are they of any actual value or utility to them, and I cannot see why they should either retain these lands to the prejudice of the general interests of the colony, or be allowed to make a market of them either to the Government or to Individuals. (p. 143)

Trutch's conclusion here, that First Nations people have 'no right to the lands they claim, nor are they of any actual value or utility to them' was based upon the belief that First Nations people were of inferior, sub-human status in relation to Europeans, as amplified here in Robin Fisher's (1992) writings:

Some colonists, like the journalist Donald Fraser, may have found that they had 'taken a fancy to these Indians'; but more would have agreed with John Coles, a rancher, who wrote that jailing an Indian for being a vagabond was absurd since they were 'all vagabonds with a very very few exceptions.' For the prejudiced individual among the colonists every aspect of the Indians and their society seemed to confirm their inferiority. (p.89)

Paul Tennant (1990) also reveals the prejudice toward First Nations people:

By the late 1880's there was unanimity among provincial politicians concerning the Indian question. Regardless of their faction or federal party loyalties, they believed the white myth that Indians had been primitive peoples without land and ownership, and they accepted the white doctrine that extension of British sovereignty had transformed an empty land into unencumbered crown land. In the provincial view, the surviving Indians were *mere remnants of an irrelevant past* with neither the right nor the means to influence their own unhappy future. (p.52) (My italics)

Finally, Edward Said (1996), in his paper on decolonizing the mind, writes the following:

All writers, intellectuals, and citizens necessarily confront the question of how as people living and working in one culture they relate to other cultures. Never has this been more of a challenge than during the post-imperial period when the rise of nationalism has stimulated a more acute sense of ethnic difference and particularity. So long as England ruled India, for instance, the native elites in Delhi and Calcutta who were educated in British schools were taught that the English language, European culture, and the white race were inherently superior to anything that the Orient might produce by way of languages, cultures, or human species. (p. 92)

These early authors clearly outline core attitudes and beliefs that still exist today in First Nations/non-First Nations relations in Canadian society. For example, Andrew Coyne writes the following in his Commentary in the *National Post*: "But when the whole [the entire First Nations land question argument] is based on a legal and historical fiction – that aboriginal people were and are sovereign nations – it is long since time for a rethink" (March 8/2000). Coyne's rejection of the existence of First Nations as a people with distinct social and political structures who maintained sovereignty over their hereditary lands is an example of colonialist thought, as outlined previously by Tennant (1990) and Berger (1991). In fact, the European demonstration of power, authority and control over First Nations culture based on the belief of inherent superiority was exerted through warfare, larger numbers, a new technology that increased the pace of social evolution, and eventually government policies and legislation over First Nations peoples and their hereditary lands.

The current debate among politicians, academics and the media provides an abundance of examples of the colonial mind in process in the new millennium. For example, the current opposition to the Nisga'a treaty perpetuates the historical message that First Nations people were nomadic hunters and savages, without fixed territories and a formalized government and therefore having no jurisdictional rights over ancestral lands.

This argument has been presented by lawyer, Melvin H. Smith, journalist Andrew Coyne, federal opposition leader, Preston Manning, and the current Liberal provincial leader Gordon Campbell, all who have argued against the Nisga'a Treaty. These cases and positions reveal justification of appropriation of First Nations lands and resources. For if the land was unencumbered, vast, and available, and if there were no governments other than provincial and federal, then there is no need for treaties or resolution or reconciliation for lost land and culture, and there was no injustice in the first place. The colonial mind repeatedly demonstrates the inability to extend the self beyond rigid, narrow, egotistical bias and inherited prejudices. The colonial collective self, that is, the unified belief of inherent superiority, remains of utmost importance and the colonial collective self remains the supreme icon for an advanced people. This inability to move out of the self and into another way of perceiving the world is similar to infant development, where the child perceives himself as the centre of the universe. This immature mind requires developing beyond materialism to co-existence and co-operation. To move from immaturity toward maturity requires education, teaching through dialogue, the desire to change, as well as application of the will to learn, and, most importantly, to change transgenerational oppressive behaviours.

2. The colonial mind and First Nations

Colonialist thought includes both covert and overt behaviour. Both share the belief that the European race is superior to the First Nations of Canada, and so contribute to the continuation of colonialist thought in Canada. It is covert functioning of colonialist thought that I am most concerned with in this paper. Covert in this article means veiled unintentional or involuntary concealment of oppressive, offensive, or abusive behaviours. These offensive or abusive behaviours are not easily distinguished or differentiated from good intentions. Covert, with reference to my paper, means the veiling or concealment of colonialist thoughts and beliefs that First Nations are an inferior culture. Another meaning that supports and enhances the meaning of covert functioning is cited in Paul Pedersen's (1995) article regarding unintentional racism. The term "covert colonialist thought" parallels Pedersen's term 'unintentional racism,' unintentional because the individual is unaware or not conscious of the socially and culturally learned assumptions that motivate racist behaviour. For example, covert racist behaviour in the academy could include First Nations liaison and coordinator positions that do not have the authority to effect change in the curriculum content or policy procedures of the university or college. These positions are often short term, low funded positions and commonly labeled "token positions" initiated as a political move to appease the minority. Overt racism is less prevalent but does exist. For example, in my experience

of several lectures in Canadian History in 1974, the professor claimed that the Indians were dirty savages in need of change. Although this is an example of extreme racism that left me stunned and ashamed, similar cases exist for other First Nations students.

Colonialist thought, then, consists of intentional and unintentional racism. There is, however, a third behaviour that perpetuates colonialist thought in Canada, and that is the behaviour of the passive observer. The passive observer is defined by S. Bhikkhu (1997) when he describes the subtle arrogance of “what can I do?” This attitude is connected to “thinking that “I” can do something alone, a terrible illusion that cripples [many Buddhists.]” The passive observer in the colonial collective is bonded to the belief of superiority and is unable to initiate work with others to create social change. To be a passive observer is in effect to support the continuation of the coloniser/colonised relationship: if one is passively observing injustice, then one is not confronting the offensive and oftentimes destructive behaviours inherent in colonialist thought.

The experience of oppression for First Nations students is a double bind: they must fight the oppression that other students struggle against – the superior position of the professor over the student – as well as the dominance of “white” culture over the First Nations’ culture. The projection of the belief of European superiority over First Nations students was practised in the residential schools in particular. In these schools, children were raised by the school, in partnership with the Christian church in and the federal government. Students’ language and customs were prohibited and they were often forced to speak English only, an extreme example of cultural domination.

These attitudes, however, continue to exist today in the academy. For example, Vine Deloria Jr. (1997) writes concerning anthropology, “It is, and continues to be, a deeply colonial academic discipline, founded in the days when it was doctrine that the coloured races of the world would be enslaved by Europeans, and the tribal peoples would vanish from the planet” (p.211). In academic society more than any other society, the racism that Deloria writes about is often unconscious. For the integrity of the academy is in investigating with an objective mind; however, the student and the academic institute develop within larger society. The mind is conditioned throughout generations to believe that the Eurocentric educational process is superior to any other educational process, and this delusional belief of inherent superiority in turn perpetuates oppressive behaviours in institutes where learning and open-mindedness should occur. Academic society in Canada is rooted in a colonial history of cultural oppression of First Nations peoples in the appropriation of lands and resources. Thus, the struggle for

First Nations students involves identifying oppression in the education system and oppression in the larger society.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) states "there is a gap between the culture of the home and that of the school" (p. 438). This gap is created by the belief of inherent superiority of European descendants over First Nations descendants which resulted in "eurocentric educational practices ignor[ing] or reject[ing] the world-views, languages, and values of Aboriginal parents in the education of their children" (M. Battiste, 1995, p.viii). The Report goes on to state, "What we find most disturbing is that the issues raised at our hearings and in interveners' briefs are the same concerns that Aboriginal people have been bringing forward since the first studies were done" (p. 440). Lack of desire to change academic curriculum and attitudes toward First Nations in terms of methods of education for First Nations people is an example perpetuating the ignorance connected to the oftentimes unconscious and unintentional but nevertheless damaging belief of First Nations inferiority. The documented lack of response evident in the numerous studies listed in the Report (p. 568) would indicate that change in academic society is not a simple matter of revision. It is one of ongoing dialogue between cultures which will support both the understanding required for change, and the direction for ongoing change.

3. *The academy and the colonial mind*

Paulo Freire (1995) defines the beliefs and behaviours that exist within the dominant education system as oppressive. Education, a component of society that we all encounter and one in which society's values are perpetuated, is a vehicle where change and transformation can occur and then have an impact on the governing bodies of society such as law, politics, business, and social interaction. In pursuit of identifying and supporting an educational system that respects cultural diversity, it is necessary to examine how the colonial mind functions in the academy.

Freire (1995) identifies conventional education as a banking concept where the teacher possesses supreme authority and knowledge and the student is an empty vessel waiting to be filled with knowledge by the teacher, where the teacher gives and the student receives. This relationship between educator and student is evident in the general implementation of courses at the college and university level. For example, my eldest son is registered in a Canadian university department of engineering. He explained his frustration with one course where he understood the goal of a particular lesson but, based on his experience with computers, he suggested an alternative method of reaching that goal. His suggestion was refused on the grounds that the course outline designated specific methods for accomplishing the goals and these methods did not include his suggestion. Perhaps the instructor was

unfamiliar with the alternative method my son was suggesting and was not willing to disclose his lack of knowledge, or perhaps the instructor was simply not willing to accept alternative methods. Whatever the reason, the rigid format of the teacher being the supreme authority is oftentimes presented in unconscious and conscious ways and is typical of the superior/inferior relationship that dominates university relationships. Freire (1995) suggests that in this relationship both the student and the teacher are oppressed. The teacher is not encouraged to disclose his or her lack of knowledge in different areas, because a lack of knowledge would seem to weaken the credibility of authority in this particular system. The teacher is then conditioned into a position of being the authority on the subject and therefore restricted in his or her relationship with the student. For example, the teacher loses credibility if he or she discusses lack of knowledge in an area of subject expertise, and is therefore restricted in how he or she discusses the subject matter.

Attitudes of superiority/inferiority are not limited to the professor/student relationship. These dynamics also occur between faculty members where, for example, one professor may have instructed a specific course for a number of years and then be unable to go on with it. The temporary instructor is often expected to continue presenting the class with the same focus as the full-time instructor rather than redesigning the course in a way that is congruent with the substitute's beliefs and strengths. Tensions also exist where faculty members do not openly support each other's particular interests as instructors but sometimes openly criticize colleagues, even implying that their colleagues use inferior teaching methods. This adversarial behaviour unconsciously conforms to the superior /inferior relationship dynamic characteristic of an oppressive system.

Tensions also exist between students when they divide themselves into specific groups. These groups usually represent those who conform to those values and beliefs that are oppressive in academic society, those who rebel against it or display non-conformity, and minority groups who attempt to learn outside of these two major groups.

Generally, academic society functions in ways similar to the colonial history of Canada in that the behaviours all originate and function within the delusional belief of superiority. The beliefs focused around the projection of superiority often prevent the instructor from extending beyond a limited world view and into a broader understanding of the realities of the student, other cultural systems, and historical perspectives in order to assist the student in reaching beyond a limited understanding. The projection of superiority connects with S. Bhikkhu's (1997) discussion on power when he identifies coercive power and influential power in relation to coercion and violence. Bhikkhu (1997) states:

If we look deeply into our own urges and habits of using power over others, which we can observe fairly easily, it comes down to a desire to control. That desire comes from a sense of a self that wants something from others. Out of that wanting we project and create self, and that self is an inner tool for control . . . structural violence has its roots in this attempt to control – individually, interpersonally, in groups such as families, and in larger social structures. (p. 39)

The desire to have power over another, or coerce, is stated here as the symptom of the desire to gain control. This power is currently exhibited in First Nations relations with larger society in the attempt to settle the land question and in the relationship of the professor and the student. In both larger society and academic society, individuals are conditioned into this toxic and delusional definition of power and authority. This conditioned oppressive behaviour does not have the ability to extend beyond the designated boundaries of authority as discussed previously, and therefore lacks flexibility in observing the world from other cultural perspectives. Current understanding in the academy about other ways of knowing and demonstrating knowledge is at an elementary level. Dilthey (1976) writes, "In this elementary understanding we do not go back to the whole context of life which forms the permanent subject of expressions. Neither are we conscious of any inference from which this understanding could have arisen." The primary belief in the superiority of the schooling framework and content prohibits instructors from examining learning from another cultural perspective. The instructor is unable to analyze the academy in the whole context of the world learning; rather, he or she is confined to Eurocentric philosophies and learning methods.

The professor, having been conditioned to the values and beliefs of the academic system of superior/inferior, is now in the position of oppressor. Herein lies difficulties not only for the First Nations students but for all students attempting to attain higher or deeper levels of understanding in their particular areas of interest. For if the objective in an oppressive system is to dominate and control through exercised superiority, then the student becomes the object of oppression, colleagues become competitors, and learning for the student is competitive, complex, chaotic, and confusing. The student must struggle against the oppression or conform to the belief that the academic framework is superior to other methods of learning, and to value this framework above any other framework. Any models that do not support or conform to the academic model are rationalized as inferior, primitive, illegitimate knowledge. For example, if the information is not written, it is not valid; if an individual does not have a degree, his or her methodologies are questionable.

4. Freedom from the colonial mind: Freedom from oppression

Freedom from the colonial mind is simultaneously freedom from oppression, for the acts of colonization in Canada were oppressive acts. They can also be defined as violent acts, according to Pilisuk and Tennant (1997), Femi and Rothberg (1997), and Sivaraksa, Bhikkhu and Rothberg (1997). These authors connect violence to what Buddhists name the three poisons: greed, hatred, and delusion. As discussed previously, the will to gain coercive power is oftentimes a desire for control, which in the colonial mind is historically based upon the delusion of superiority which justifies greed and gaining control over First Nations peoples and their hereditary land base. According to Paulo Freire (1995), the act of oppression is similar to projection where:

the oppressed are regarded as the pathology of the healthy society, which must therefore adjust these 'incompetent and lazy' folk to its own patterns by changing their mentality. These marginals need to be 'integrated,' 'incorporated,' into the healthy society that they have 'forsaken.' (p. 55)

In psychotherapy, projection is defined as a defense mechanism protecting the oppressed from their powerlessness to change others. From a Buddhist perspective, projection protects the delusion of superiority and control. The understanding of academic society in relation to First Nations was outlined by Dilthey (1976) as elementary in that the colonial mind is an egocentric mind that needs to extend outward, beyond the known to the unknown, toward the uncertainty of relationship with another world view.

In academic society, acquisition of knowledge is for personal gain, for initiation into academic society, and for perpetuating rather than transforming self-defeating behaviours in the superior/inferior relationships. Once a student has demonstrated conformity to the written, verbal, and non-verbal communication standards of the academy, he or she is initiated into the society, and having completed the highest degree, is then qualified to become a professor, one who then professes the values and beliefs of the system and of their particular area of study.

Freedom from the oppressive behaviours within the systemic framework of the academy, however, requires individual professors and students to acknowledge cultural and social differences and their personal response to those differences. Ultimately, it is in differences in world view and in the controversy regarding those differences that one is able to seize the opportunity to clarify personal and cultural perspectives, and ideally, to broaden personal knowledge by viewing the world from another cultural perspective.

The outlined defensive mechanisms, such as projection, denial, delusion, and the will to coerce and control would indicate in the psychotherapeutic model that the journey to change is not a simple, easy journey; where there are strong, generational defenses, there is great vulnerability in the admis-

sion of a generational delusion. If an individual has been raised and conditioned in the delusion of superiority and has faithfully upheld the generational delusion, to come out of the delusion is an act of loss, as well as betrayal of the generations before. Initially, people conditioned in the delusion of superiority may believe, upon enlightenment, that they have wasted their years living a lie; therefore, the cost of emerging from the delusion may be too high for some and they may choose to hear but not change. Others may examine the cost of turning upon oppression and although the cost is high, the desire for freedom is stronger. Others may choose to remain in the delusion that oppression creates because they are not willing to risk a new definition of power and authority. The outcome of transformation from oppression to freedom is ultimately the decision of the individual.

The belief of superiority over the other that exists in colonialist and academic society is transgenerational in that the behaviours continue from one generation to the next without analysis, evaluation, and transformation at the personal and institutional level. Family therapist, Virginia Satir (1988) outlines closed family systems and relates these systems to beliefs related to behaviours that are passed from generation to generation.

These beliefs include:

- People are basically evil and must be continually controlled to be good.
- Relationships have to be regulated by force or by fear of punishment.
- There is one right way, and the person with most power has it.
- There is always someone who knows what is best for you (p. 132).

Satir (1988) goes on to state that these beliefs “reflect the [closed] family’s perception of reality” (p.132). She outlines the rules to support these beliefs as: (a) “Self-worth is secondary to power and performance”; (b) “Actions are subject to the whims of the boss” and; (c) “Change is resisted” (p. 132). This definition of a closed family system is applicable to academic society and to the colonialist mind in Canada for in both societies there is the will to control the other for the benefit of self. The self in this system is not in a place of peace or rest; indeed, the self in the closed or oppressive system is always in need of improvement.

Satir (1988) goes on to define the open system: (a) “Self-worth is primary; power and performance, secondary”; (b) “Actions represent one’s beliefs”; (c) “communication, the system, and the rules all relate to each other” (pp. 132-133). The shift from a closed system to an open system requires a change process. In this educated change process, defining the earlier relationships as dysfunctional, self-defeating, closed, imbalanced, delusional, disrespectful, or whatever term is appropriate, comes before working towards

new relationships that will lead to personal enlightenment, respect for the other, and transformation.

In family psychotherapy, the first step to an open family system is to pay attention to the conflict and the beliefs and values that support that conflict, to identify and accept emotions as an integral part of the self, to recognize that emotions are an important dynamic in self-analysis, to dialogue with the other in a respectful way regarding conflicting realities, to examine beliefs in relation to behaviours and finally to exercise the will to change.

Freedom from oppression in academic society is similar to family therapy in the transformation of generational patterns that are oppressive and offensive. Transformation requires education concerning the dynamics of oppression so that individuals can: (a) acknowledge that the system is closed and oppressive; (b) identify the behaviours that support oppression, that is, their personal contribution to the continuation of oppression through their behaviour with self and others; (c) evaluate their belief concerning personal worth in relation to self, others, and work; (d) evaluate their belief concerning power, and (e) access spiritual and psychological teachings that support personal transformation. Only through bringing to consciousness the unconscious beliefs that support oppression can change and transformation begin; also, only through practise of immediacy and the will to change and connection with others in the will to emerge from oppression to freedom can individual transformation begin.

My own desire for freedom from oppression in post-secondary education comes, first, from my personal experience of oppression as a student, and, second, from my experience as the oppressed First Nations in Canada. The third factor is my desire to emerge from victimization to the freedom of exploring self in relationship with others and the will to exercise respect in relationship with self and others. From my father's Tsimshian heritage, I understand that oppression is due to spiritual imbalance and requires the assistance of the healer to retrieve those lost, fragmented parts of self so that balance will be restored. From my mother's Christian teachings, I understand that oppression is about lack of faith in the Supreme Creator of the Universe and the existence of that power in my life and in the lives of others; it is also about the self-deification delusion that I alone possess the powers to create change around me.

Oppression is a very complex and widespread dynamic in human societies; acknowledgment of the destructive powers of oppression is the first step to transformation from a closed, oppressive system to an open, respectful system. The transformation of oppression in post-secondary education takes place when individuals have a will to change in relationship with others, and hold a belief in the power of freedom within self first, and in others second.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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