

**Northern Social Work:  
How Are Northern Social Workers Creative?**

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## ABSTRACT

My research focus is twofold. First, I summarize concepts and discussions regarding creativity and its relevance to social work. Second, I explore how these creative concepts are lived out in the practice of six female social workers in northern British Columbia. The findings of the study show that social workers in the north engage in creative social work practice and that a scarcity of resources can create creative opportunities for social work as well as inhibit creativity. The findings also show that northern social workers engage in very creative, metaphoric, transdiscipline, and innovative social work practices. In addition the participants had “aha” moments of being aware of their own creative practice and the ripple effect that can occur with individual acts of social work. Lastly the findings show that self-disclosure is an important part of social work when working with Aboriginal populations.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Phenomena of Creativity

In this thesis the phenomena under study is creativity and northern social work. The reason this topic interested me is because I am a northern social worker myself of western European descent (non-Aboriginal). As a northern social worker I am aware of the struggles that come with northern living. Struggles such as sub zero weather, few resources, professional isolation, and few bodies doing the work to name a few. In rural, northern British Columbia (BC) social workers creativity becomes something of a necessity. As a northern social worker I began to become aware of how I practiced. I slowly saw that I practiced creative social work. I wondered how other northern social workers practiced creative social work. I also wondered if there were creative differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social workers. All of these wonderings brought me to my thesis topic which is a phenomenological study of creativity and northern social work practice. My research focus is “northern social worker and how northern social workers are creative”. When first undertaking this thesis, I asked myself a variety of questions...What is the phenomena of creativity? How does creativity look different for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people? What are the implications of creativity for social workers? How does creativity fit into northern social work? Once I began to ask myself these questions the thesis began to take shape. I then began to think about the purpose and goal of the research.

The purpose and goal of this research was to find and bring together the creative thoughts and voices of three northern Aboriginal women and three northern non-Aboriginal



women from the Peace Region (Appendix 5). As the researcher I explored with them their ideas and thoughts around creativity and how they saw themselves engaging in creative social work. My hope is that this research data will create insights and generate possible ideas about how female social workers engage in creative social work in the Peace Region.

In this research study I had a sample size of six women who were practicing northern social workers (three women were Aboriginal and three women were non-Aboriginal). Each of the women participated, over a six month period of time, in a semi-structured interview around the topic of creativity and I invited the women to define creativity for themselves. The interview questions were drawn from Turner's (1999) *Creativity – An Overview and Framework for the Social Work Practitioner*. I chose this framework of creativity because I felt it really resonated with me in terms of how social workers practiced social work in a creative way (framework will be explained in more detail in chapter two). After undertaking an extensive literature review it was also clear to me that there was little known about creativity and how it linked to social work. Turner's (1999) framework was the only information that I could find that clearly laid out a framework of creativity and how it linked to social work. This framework became the basis of how I developed the questions for my thesis (see Appendix 4 – Interview Questions). Once the data was collected I utilized thematic analysis to find the themes that emerged around northern social practice and creativity, while paying attention to the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices.

As a northern social worker myself I know what it is like to work in the north with very little but myself and my creative ideas. I believe that the work that northern social workers do is extremely important and there is little research that has been done on how northern social workers practice creatively. Therefore I felt very driven and passionate about

this topic and it has been such a pleasure to learn about practice ideas from these six women involved in the study. I would also like to point out that due to the fact that so little is known about the phenomena of creativity and how it is used in northern social work practice, I have written an extensive literature review which I believe was necessary to explore creativity fully.

To ensure clarity for the reader I will briefly describe how the chapters of this thesis are laid out. Chapter one briefly summarizes the thesis which also includes a definition of terms. Chapter two is an extensive literature review that is broken up into categories. In keeping with Turner's (1999) framework of creativity I have laid out the categories as follows a) creative expression, b) creative presentation of self, c) creative conceptualization at the direct practice level, d) creative conceptualization at the community practice level, and e) creative cosmology. Following this framework I then review the literature from an Aboriginal perspective that includes examining Turner's (1999) framework of creativity. Lastly I review literature on the lived realities of northern issues. This completes the literature review section of the thesis. Chapter three examines the research methods, chapter four examines the research, analysis, and findings. Lastly, chapter five examines future research and final thoughts.

I will now discuss the phenomena of creativity (the nature and extent of creativity). I will do this by first discussing why creativity is feared. Second, I will discuss why creativity is important and, third, how First Nation's culture utilizes creativity. Lastly I will explain the significance of creativity.

The definition of fear is a feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the presence or imminence of danger; a state or condition marked by this feeling

(<http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=fear>). Is this the response that a shift to a creative way of working receives? Social work has a strong connection to other professions, professions such as education, sociology, women studies, psychology, and so on. Professional education, like social work, seems to be governed by the status quo and educational correctness (Walz & Uematsu, 1997). Many teachers and parents are uneasy about emphasizing creativity in the classroom because it could mean encouraging unruly or naughty behavior (Cropley, 2001). McLeod and Cropley (1989) discuss how twenty-five years ago teachers had a strong preference for student behavior involving “learning by heart, reproducing, reapplying and placed little value on innovative activities like branching out, inventing, speculating and questioning” (p.175). This, however, was twenty-five years ago. Turner’s analytical framework pushes us into unfamiliar territory, the unknown (Cropley, 2001). Students learn more than they are taught: “students bring with them individual life histories that interact with what is taught and the meanings they construct from these interactions inevitably both exceed and fall short of our education aims” (Eisner, 2002, p.70).

There are rules to be followed in the status quo and educational correctness. Goffman, a creative sociologist, discusses how rules are subject to interpretation, to disagreement about what constitutes an occasion of rule-following, to exceptions, and to decisions not to abide by them (Manning, 1992). Eisner (2002) comments that to work in the arts and to be a creative person, one must be willing to invite the development of tolerating ambiguity. Helping students to understand the phenomena of creativity is a step within itself in understanding pedagogy of creativity. Teaching educators the importance of teaching creatively can help dispel the myth that a creative paradigm is something to be feared. Once educators understand creativity and its importance, it can help to shift the cycle of a

deterministic paradigm to that of a creative cosmology. As Hiltunen (2001) argues the true “transpersonal challenge for us as women or as men, is to know ourselves and overcome our fears of the unknown as well as of ourselves” (p.17).

A fellow classmate, explained to me that the social work class she was in was taught by way of basic rote memorization of information. The students were instructed to read the chapters; the classes were lecture style, without a chance for narrative dialogue or small group discussion, and there were tests on those chapters. What is the point then, of students attending the class? Hall (1983) described that many of the natural attributes of the psyche that are dissociated in childhood are actually necessary for healthy adult functioning. One of these attributes is creativity, which people seem to lose as their education proceeds.

Artists are willing to take more risks and are less afraid of chaos than the rest of us (Rasminsky, 2001). However being an artist or a poet is dangerous (hooks, 1995); creativity and originality are often associated with people who do not fit into their cultures. May (1975) discusses how poets (who are considered creative people) may be delightful creatures in the meadow or the garret, but they are menaces on the assembly line. In some people’s minds creativity equals chaos, which equals unpredictability, for example – “loose canon” comments, which equals danger -- a phenomenon which must be stopped. Society likes people who are creative, but only moderately so, and preferably at arm’s length.

In North American culture, creative people are perceived as desirable and dangerous and in social work it is much the same: “we speak in positive terms about creative practice but manage to limit its application” (Walz & Uematsu, 1997). It has been argued that creativity is by its own nature is “mysterious and unknowable and thus incapable of being promoted or fostered by mere mortals” (Cropley, 2001). Some see the fostering of creativity

as an abandonment of truth itself. Maintaining the status quo protects people from being grasped by the frightening and threatening aspects of irrational experience (May, 1975).

Being creative often means living your life your own way (Cropley, 2001) which challenges the typical status quo of social work. Fear not only stems from the elusiveness of creative practice but also in how creativity is measured in the field of social work. The BRSW “Code of Ethics” states that “a social worker shall have and maintain competency in the provision of social work services to a client” (Code 4, 2002), but how do we measure creative competency in the field? There is so little research done on how to measure creativity; there is a fear about practicing creatively because it is difficult to measure and difficult to track. This has real implications for social work practice. Who will practice creatively if there is no support and/or no way to measure it? This is why a research project such as this is so important. For the typical bureaucrat, there is an entrapping power that comes from the knowledge of set ways of doing things: “change becomes a threat to power and without a current baseline, change is hard to measure” (Walz & Uematsu, 1997). But why, we need to ask, is creativity a necessary component of social work?

Creativity is an important part of Jungian theory. Jung discusses the therapeutic effect as being almost magical, both during the creative process and again when the person looks at it afterwards (Chodorow, 1997). Understanding our inner psyche is a truly creative endeavor. Eisner (2002) comments that consciousness is a form of awareness and awareness is fed initially by our sensibility. As social workers, our sensibility and refinement of the senses will enable us to foster creativity within our work; however, creativity needs to be invited in. The mission statement for UNBC captures this creativity by stating how it is committed to serving a vast region through building partnerships, being innovative,

resourceful, and responsive to students and community (2002-2003). There is a widespread recognition of the importance for transdisciplinarity and creativity that represents a very new insight and a revolutionary change. The UNBC mission statement for Social Work also covers transdisciplinarity “by acknowledging the holistic, interdisciplinary and activist nature of social work” (2003-2004). The importance of creativity is that it attempts to link or hold together a complex array of knowledge specialties that are exploding outward (Somerville & Rapport, 2000).

Being creative is crucial to interviews, language, reflections of self and truth telling (Transken, Eyclon, Tilleckzek, Ripson Eyclon & B, 2001). We (as social workers) need these kinds of creative forms in our work, especially in northern and remote areas, to do our work well. Creative social work has implications for social work practice. One of the implications for social work is that northern social workers are creative because their “role is not seen as independent from the community, but rather, a part of it” (Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick, & Tranter, 1998, p.32). Creative culture becomes a shared set of values and knowledge belonging to a wider group of people than those subscribing to a single discipline (Somerville & Rapport, 2000). When there are limited resources, limited funding, few bodies doing the work and the weather is often below  $-25^{\circ}$ , creativity is not only a professional necessity... it is a vital way of life. In northern BC, Aboriginal culture is a significant part of community life. As I mentioned earlier I wondered about Aboriginal social workers and creativity, but how do Aboriginal cultures utilize creativity?

Aboriginal cultures have a way of seeing creativity that is intrinsically more responsive to a “natural” or “organic” creativity. Margaret Thomas discusses her healing journey as an Aboriginal woman as being encouraged to believe in the Creator, to believe he

is there when she needed him the most to help her heal through the pain and suffering (O'Connor, Krautter, Fischbuch, Bomberry, & Aziz, 1999). There exists among First Nations culture a strong sense of spirituality that is passed from generation to generation. The cultural genocide due to the residential schools came close to wiping out this spirituality and creativity. Thomas comments that because of the residential schools she never fully understood the meaning of the ceremonies because she never learned the Native language (O'Connor, Krautter, Fischbuch, Bomberry, & Aziz, 1999). Maracle (1999) discusses a sense of natural spiritual creativity in her novel *Sojourners and Sundogs* when she writes "our little feather, our pipe and drum are inside, snuck in by the cover of night by a woman who sweated us up, then risked our natural rage in order to give the warriors the things they believed in" (p.214). In First Nations culture there is a strong creative sense for stories and songs that affirm a place and mark the boundaries of loss and hope (Maracle, 1999). Today creativity is a necessity because Aboriginal women are at extremely high risk: this is a society that is founded upon, and continues to operate from, a non-Aboriginal, patriarchal value system where all women are oppressed and Aboriginal women are further oppressed (Baylis, Burton, Fraser, & Transken, 2002).

How to be with other people in their cultures that may be different from our own is the essence of social work. It becomes a means to building a collective culture, opening participants up to creativity and renewing commitment to organizing projects (Kahn, 1997). Whether creativity involves inviting God, Buddha, and the Creator into the therapy session (Griffith, 1995), taking the journey to a higher spiritual creativity or soothing our inner artist (Cameron, 1992), sharing words across borders of disciplines (in and outside academia) (hooks, 1994), or performing scripts involving actors, purposes, stories, stages, poetry, and

interactions (Denzin, 2003), it is powerful because it incorporates intense, difficult, and dissimilar emotions and events that are not readily integrated into everyday life (Winslow, 1990). The creative person is the one who is open to experience, which involves experiences within (Walz & Uematsu, 1997). Lewarne (1998) captures the significance of creativity as a move into the “revolutionary age of awareness of each other and connection with the ecosystems” (p.8).

In sum, I aim here to describe the significance of creativity. Part of the mission statement for the social work program of UNBC (2002-2003) states that “by acknowledging the holistic, *interdisciplinary* and activist nature of social work and its commitment to social justice, the curriculum and governance of social work education at UNBC will strive to provide a self-reflective balance between theory and practice; research, teaching and community service; and critical self-awareness and respect for the ideas of others.” I italicize “interdisciplinary” because this captures for me, the significance of creativity. Transken (2002) points out that our profession can become even more permeable with our boundaries and inclusions when our ethical activist visions can be shared. Persistent denial of transgressing boundaries and denial of inviting in other genres means that “we have been entranced; we live for years in a trance” (Bly, 1990, p.38). We cannot live in a trance any longer. We need other cultures and other disciplines to do our work as social workers. To be effective creative practitioners, the significance is that we must embrace and invite in an interdisciplinary way of working and making meaning. We must confront each other across differences and embrace all ideas and changes. I finish this discussion of the significance of creativity with an excerpt from the poem *Unfoolishness & Intersectionality*:

Sociology, narrative therapy, existentialism,  
expressive arts therapy, Jungian therapy,



socialism, feminism, poetry & creativity,  
 social work theory & social work fantasy –  
 unpredictably all this is squirming  
 squishing & squirting  
 together in me.  
 have mercy!  
 free me from my dull fragility  
 come home & help freely messy up  
 the yard of every falsely tidy university!

Transken

(Baylis, Burton, Fraser, & Transken, 2002, p.79)

### Definitions of Terms

There are a number of key themes and terms that are critical to this research. Part of the process of this research is that the women will be learning and defining for themselves what creativity and culture means and looks like. These terms will evolve as the study evolves, and may change and shift with each participant's experiences and cultural background. Cultural background is also an indefinable term, as it will be different for each person. In the Peace Region for example, there are approximately seven different First Nations bands all speaking different dialects of Beaver, Cree, French, and other languages. There are also many people that would describe themselves as Aboriginal. For the purpose of this thesis and research project I will be referring to the women in this study as Aboriginal. Cultural background is a term that will evolve as each person reflects on his or her family, culture, upbringing, traditions and rituals.

**Bias:** An inclination of temperament or outlook; for example a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgement (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bias>).

**Caucasian:** Of or being a major human racial classification traditionally distinguished by

physical characteristics such as very light to brown skin pigmentation and straight to wavy or curly hair, and including peoples indigenous to Europe, northern Africa, western Asia, and India (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Caucasian>).

Collaboration: act of working jointly; "they worked either in collaboration or independently" (<http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=collaboration>)

Community Development: is more than just economic development (although economic development is included). Community development is the process or effort of building communities on a local level with emphasis on building the economy, forging and strengthening social ties, and developing the non-profit sector ([http://www.google.ca/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:Community+Development&sa=X&oi=glossary\\_definition&ct=title](http://www.google.ca/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:Community+Development&sa=X&oi=glossary_definition&ct=title)).

Creative conceptualization at the community practice level: is defined as creativity of what needs to change at a structural level and the innovative methods to bring about the desired change (Turner, 1999).

Creative conceptualization at the direct practice level: is defined as creativity that leads to the identification of innovative solutions to clients' problems by encouraging the generation of alternatives (Turner, 1999).

Creative Cosmology: is defined as creativity that holds a central place in a paradigm that sees the world as neither all-chaotic nor strictly deterministic. Creative cosmology is a way that clients and workers can creatively engage in interactions that hold potential for various outcomes (Turner, 1999).

Creative expression: is defined as a tool in therapeutic intervention, including writing, painting and music (Turner, 1999).

Creative presentation of self: is defined as creativity which is evident in the social worker's style, which can include use of metaphor, spontaneity, flexibility and risk-taking (Turner, 1999).

Creativity: is the ability to solve problems that are worth solving. It is the ability to create knowledge. Creativity is subject-specific: it is the meta-knowledge of how to solve a specific class of problems. So there is no such thing as "raw," undifferentiated creativity ([http://www.google.ca/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:Creativity&sa=X&oi=glossary\\_definition&ct=title](http://www.google.ca/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:Creativity&sa=X&oi=glossary_definition&ct=title)).

Ecomap: An Ecomap is a pictorial representation of a family's connections to persons and/or systems in its environment. It can illustrate 3 separate dimensions for each connection (<http://www.ohiocla.com/Year%205%20Revisions/ecomap1.htm>).

**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS):** refers to a constellation of physical and mental birth defects that may develop in individuals whose mothers consumed alcohol during pregnancy. It is an organic brain disorder which is characterized by central nervous system involvement, growth retardation, and characteristic facial features. FAS is a medical diagnosis that can only be made when a child has signs of abnormalities in each of these three areas, plus known or suspected exposure to alcohol prenatally. Other physical defects caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol may include malformation of major organs (including heart, kidneys, liver) and other parts of the body (such as muscles, genitals, bones) (Stratton, Howe, & Battaglia, 1996).

**Genograms:** a diagram outlining the history of the behavior patterns (as of divorce, abortion, or suicide) of a family over several generations; *also* : a similar diagram detailing the medical history of a family in order to assess a family member's risk of developing disease (<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/genogram>).

**Humor:** The quality that makes something laughable or amusing; funniness: for example could not see the humor of the situation. That which is intended to induce laughter or amusement: a writer skilled at crafting humor. The ability to perceive, enjoy, or express what is amusing, comical, incongruous, or absurd (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/humor>).

**Privacy:** has no definite boundaries and it has different meanings for different people. It is the ability of an individual or group to keep their lives and personal affairs out of public view, or to control the flow of information about themselves. Privacy is sometimes related to anonymity although it is often most highly valued by people who are publicly known. Privacy can be seen as an aspect of security -- one in which trade-off between the interests of one group and another can become particularly clear (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privacy>).

**Role-play:** In role-playing, participants adopt characters, or parts, that have personalities, motivations, and backgrounds different from their own. Role-playing is like being in an improvisational drama or free-form theatre, in which the participants are the actors who are playing parts ([http://www.google.ca/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:roleplay&sa=X&oi=glossary\\_definition&ct=title](http://www.google.ca/search?hl=en&defl=en&q=define:roleplay&sa=X&oi=glossary_definition&ct=title)).

**Snowball Sampling:** is a special nonprobability method used when the desired sample characteristic is rare. It may be extremely difficult or cost prohibitive to locate respondents in these situations. Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. While this technique can dramatically lower search costs, it comes at the expense of introducing bias because the technique itself reduces the likelihood that the sample will represent a good cross section from the population (<http://www.statpac.com/surveys/sampling.htm>).

**Transdisciplinary:** Of or combining the disciplines of many different branches of learning or research.([www.visionsurvey.net/SubNav/Glossary.htm](http://www.visionsurvey.net/SubNav/Glossary.htm)). Pertaining to or involving more than one discipline; interdisciplinary.  
(<http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=transdisciplinary>).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section of the thesis I will firstly give a brief overview of Turner (1999) *Creativity – An Overview and Framework for the Social Work Practitioner* and her analytical framework of creativity. Turner discusses five forms of creativity which are creative expression, creative presentation of self, creative conceptualization at the direct practice level, creative conceptualization at the community practice level, and creative cosmology. Turner has much experience with social work, both academically and clinically. She has practiced social work “in the fields of counseling, addictions, child welfare, and international development” (Turner, 1999, p.97). Turner has captured for me the “essence of creativity” and has helped to guide me toward creative work as a student and clinician. Turner’s framework first inspired me to develop my thesis on the topic of creativity and northern social work practice. Turner comments that, “practitioners who are engaged daily in social work are the best sources of information about how creativity fits their practice model” (1999, p.96). To me this is important, not only does Turner validate creativity, but she also validates the important work that clinicians do everyday and how we can look at our work in the moment and relate it to the analytical framework of creativity. Turner’s (1999) framework of creativity is as follows:

- 1.) **Creative Expression:** Creative expression as a tool in therapeutic intervention, including writing, painting and music.
- 2.) **Creative Presentation of Self by the Social Worker:** Creative presentation of self is evident in the social worker’s style, which includes use of metaphor, spontaneity, flexibility, and risk-taking.

### **3.) Creative Conceptualization at the Direct Practice Level: Creative**

conceptualization at the direct practice level is the identification of innovative solutions to clients' problems by encouraging the generation of alternatives.

### **4.) Creative Conceptualization at the Community Practice Level: Creative**

conceptualization at the community practice level facilitates the identification of what needs to change at a structural level (problem finding) and innovative methods to bring about the desired changes.

**5.) Creative Cosmology:** The creative cosmology holds a central place in a paradigm that sees the world as neither all-chaotic nor strictly deterministic. Clients and workers creatively engage in interactions that hold potential for various outcomes.

(Turner, 1999, p.92).

This chapter will use Turner's (1999) *Creativity - An Overview and Framework for the Social Work Practitioner* as a focus through which to examine articles, books, and relevant readings. Turner's (1999) framework is divided into five categories and therefore I will follow this format and divide the literature review into five categories (using the above framework as categories). Following the five categories will be further literature that I have reviewed on the topics of *Aboriginal Perspective and Northern Practice* and *Lived Reality of Northern Issues*. I will briefly describe the categories at the beginning of each section to ensure clarity for the reader. The reader should note that throughout the five categories are italicized sub-headings. The italicized sub-headings are the titles of the articles, books, and relevant readings, as discussed above. The emphasis will be on the reading and summarizing of articles and books and then linking these to Turner's five forms of creativity: creative expression, creative presentation of self, creative conceptualization at the direct practice

level, creative conceptualization at the community practice level, and creative cosmology. Throughout the literature review I draw on understandings of creativity from across disciplines.

### Creative Expression

In this category I will review two books by bell hooks *Wounds of Passion* and *Teaching to Transgress*. These books examine the use of poetry and language as well as creative methods of teaching and I attempt to link these back to creative expression. I then move to another book about language and poetry which is Cameron's (1998) *The Right to Write*. Following this book I review *Outlaw Social Work: (the unsecret poems and stories)*, *Composing a Self through Writing: The Ego and the Ink*, and *Performance Ethnography*. These books continue to discuss the use of poetry, writing, and interviewing, and how these are creative forms of expression. Lastly I discuss two articles regarding women's organizations and funding issues and how social workers need to be creative and use creative expression in navigating through this complicated web with funding bodies.

#### *Wounds of Passion*

For bell hooks, poems are a voice; poems help to take away the pain and "growing up, poetry had been the sanctuary, that space in words where longing could be spoken" (hooks, 1997, p.3). *Wounds of Passion* is a personal narrative of hooks' writing life. She writes intimately about the pleasure and the pain that documents the psychological and philosophical foundations of her life (hooks, 1997). Throughout this book she has chosen

memories that have nudged, pushed, nurtured and developed her “self” as a writer and she explores the impact of the mind/body split on her consciousness growing up.

*Wounds of Passion* relates to Turner’s creative expression because poems and writing are artistic expressions of feeling. Poetry is a powerful symbol system that seems to come in another language, a “tool to communicate with and change the external world” (Quattlebaum, 1988, p.20). The small details are meanings, shapes, images from our own subjective repertoire with a special language that allows others to form and make meaning from a creation that now exists in the objective world (Quattlebaum, 1988). Creative expression, in this case poetry, allows for a speaking of the truth. The poet insists that “language is a body of suffering and when you take up language you take up the suffering too” (hooks, 1997, p.208). Language and poetry is a potential voice for social workers, therapists, clients and students; it is an avenue of getting our point across no matter what pains we are dealing with. Social workers, therapists, clients, and students can use poetry to reach levels of emotion more adequately than with dialogue (Booker, 1999). Poetry is a form of re-storying our experiences that can promote client choice and empowerment. Mazza (2001) describes “pain in poetry as encouraging clients to express loss as a story, but not as a last story” (p.29). Often, pain that social workers, therapists, clients, and students harbor is buried deep within their unconscious selves. Poetry and writing are one of the keys to unlocking this unconscious. Bly and Woodman (1998) comment that “. . . just as the fish accidentally bites on the worm, so a life passion may rise from below our consciousness” (p.8).



### *Teaching to Transgress*

One of the ways that creative intervention can be encouraged is right at the beginning of the education process: "to teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin" (hooks, 1994, p.13). Undergraduate social work education generally prepares students to accept the status quo and to focus on helping clients adjust themselves to their environment while gender issues, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity are inadequately addressed and the spiritual and transpersonal dimensions are rarely even acknowledged (Morell, 1987). Pamperin (1987) argues that the schools of social work need to strengthen the creative models through research and share those findings with educational leadership. This is a paradigm shift or from Turner's analytical framework, a shift in the creative cosmology. With the embracing of change, there is an attendant difficulty in shifting individuals' paradigms. hooks (1994) describes this as an emergent "community" that must happen in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor. If this kind of paradigm shift can occur we can hope to see "individual liberation through collective activity, embracing both personal and social change" at the structural level (Morell, 1987, p.145). hooks comments on the recognition of a multicultural world and how, as a black feminist, she transgresses these boundaries within the classroom. The creative cosmology in this case is confronting one another across differences, changing ideas about how we learn; rather than fearing conflict we have to find ways to use it as a catalyst for new thinking and growth (hooks, 1994).

hooks also comments on language, which relates to Turner's creative expression. Beginning with dialogue as a means of creative expression is the simplest way to begin

crossing boundaries and barriers. Language is all about transgressing boundaries because, like desire, language disrupts and refuses to be contained within boundaries (hooks, 1994). The interpretation and use of words and writing involves a process of free creation (Chomsky, 1987), an artistic expression of our personal narratives of love, pain, and self.

### *The Right to Write*

Julia Cameron discusses in her book why writing is so important and how we should write, simply for the sake of writing. This book is meant to inspire, heal, initiate, and entice writers -- to encourage those that are “standing at the river’s edge, wanting to put a toe in” (Cameron, 1998, p.xvii). Cameron’s book discusses how to begin as a writer by giving yourself permission to write by inviting drama in, connecting with writing, giving writing a voice, dealing with procrastination, and having the right to write (to name a few). Cameron encourages writers to think of their writing life as part of their life as a whole that can not be separated or compartmentalized. Cameron (1998) hopes her “book will dismantle some of the negative mythology that surrounds the writing life in our culture” (p.xvi). Recent research suggests that writing is becoming an essential part of psychotherapy – even for those with compromised writing skills (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997; Leavitt & Pill, 1995; Oppawsky, 2001; Sloman & Pipitone, 1991). Writing is typically slower than speaking and the writer has more time to organize thoughts (Sloman & Pipitone, 1995). It is an act of listening and naming what we hear.

*The Right to Write* relates to Linda Turner’s creative expression because writing encourages clients to experience and compose a self with license to create new outcomes (Turner, 1999). Therapists and clients need creative expression like they need air to breathe

– “it’s possible to learn to do it well, but the point is to do it no matter what” (Cameron, 1998, p.1). Writing is a way for clients and therapists to enhance therapy, to help clients express themselves and help therapists understand clients better. Creative expression is a “natural self-help and self-healing tool and may be the only tool clients are able to use when working on severe traumas” (Oppawsky, 2001, p.37). Without the avenue of creative expression clients often find themselves unfocused, with increased anxiety and located in a state of random activity. Becker (2002) discusses the importance of creative expression with elderly people and how it “can be used to express emotion, re-create an event, tell a story, work out an idea, or simply create joy” (p.99). Writing is an act that expresses and quiets the self. Leavitt and Pill (1995) describe this as the mind roaming in an imaginative process where alternative solutions are present that do not exist in our everyday realities.

A personal example of working with creative expression would be when I worked with a young Aboriginal child. This child had been severely traumatized and neglected, was currently being adopted, was leaving the home he had known for the past four years, and had recently been separated from a brother. This child was not in any frame of mind to do “talk therapy.” I began to use a variety of expressive mediums using poetry and drawings with this child. For example, I might read a poem to him and ask him to draw pictures or to write words about what it brought up for him, or I may ask him to draw out or poetry out some of his feelings around the adoption. In the five months that I worked with this child, it was rare to actually hear him utter a word. But I have a stack of drawings, words, or poetry from him that solidifies for me the importance of creative expression.

*Outlaw Social Work : (the unsecret poems and stories)*

*None And All*  
 we are  
 mopping vigorously  
 this dirt from cool mud floors:  
 stumbling & dancing while  
 doing undo-ables somewhat well;  
 being with those who aren't even within themselves. . .

Transken

(Baylis, Burton, Fraser & Transken, 2002, p.67)

"A case can be made that poetry/creative writing is a natural manifestation of social work and vice versa" (Transken, 2002, p.50). The excerpt from the poem *None And All* is a small taste of creative expression that gently steams from the pages of the book *Outlaw Social Work*. The authors have spent much time reflecting, thinking, and challenging ideas about life and social work.

When viewed alongside Turner's analytical framework, the book itself is a form of creative expression, an art form, a medium of self-expression, and a tool to influence social change (Baylis, Burton, Fraser & Transken, 2002). Creative expression for these authors comes in the form of prose, poetry, creative writing, letters, political statements, and questions. Creative expression is an "underlying, in-dwelling creative force infusing all of life -- including ourselves" (Cameron, 1992, p.3). This creative force is what encourages social workers to continue getting up in the morning while attempting to resist women's oppression, being poorly paid, having no benefit packages, having crowded and sparsely-resourced working environments, and being hired only part-time or on contract (Transken, 1994). Social workers need creative expression as survival and coping skills to be empathic, self-aware, interpersonally attuned, compassionate, and inquiring (Mahoney, 1998). To

accomplish empathy, we must imagine the world from another standpoint. Without imagination it would be impossible to have sincere empathy. These creative survival and coping skills are important and significant in allowing social workers to be able to approach clients' different levels of needs, which are often mixed, changeable and hugely diverse (Mahoney, 1998).

*Composing a Self Through Writing: The Ego and the Ink*

*Composing a Self Through Writing: The Ego and the Ink* describes the power of expressive writing and how to encourage clients to use writing to gain a greater sense of self. The authors also encourage clinicians to bring writing into the therapy session as it is a "crucial dynamic in the therapeutic process" (Siporin, 1988, p.181). The authors discuss how writing is an outlet, providing a setting for contemplation and an opportunity to create a narrative. When clients write for themselves, they express their innermost thoughts and feelings, often in disguised, metaphoric form (Hosekins & Leseho, 1996). Many clients (particularly adults) will at first feel self-conscious when writing. Becker (2002) describes this as a "shyness or barrier to try anything in the arts or use any creative efforts, thinking that as adults, we have no talent for such things" (p.103). When using the medium of writing to compose the self, this process can "provide catharsis and insight, self-awareness and awareness of the contradictory, paradoxical nature of the world" (Siporin, 1988, p.178). Leavitt and Pill (1995) discuss how people can get in touch with their innermost feelings through writing such as grief, loss, trauma and victimization. The authors discuss a case study of a man (dealing with grief and loss after his wife died) and emphasize how the act of

writing empowered him and made him more accountable for pursuing his ideas and making his goals more attainable (Leavitt & Pill, 1995).

This article relates to Turner's form of creative expression because writing is a true form of experiencing feelings and thoughts through a different medium than talk therapy. As therapists we understand that clients often need guidance in finding their sense of self. Clients typically have the tools they need, but sometimes have become lost in a fog and may have difficulty locating these tools. Creative expression and metaphor enables clients to invent new stories, frequently feeling unbounded by principles of rationality and logic. One client commented, "You've helped me cope with the past and look forward to the future. Something I never thought possible a year ago" (Oppawsky, 2001, p.39).

Creative expression can also be a tool of accountability in therapy, "a tangible product of what really goes on in therapy, as well as a measure of the outcome" (Oppawsky, 2001, p.39). This is just one way of examining positive or negative outcomes of therapy.

### *Performance Ethnography*

The world is a performance, not a text, and therefore we need a model of social science that is performative. Denzin (2003) discusses how to rethink performance ethnography in regards to the formation of critical performative cultural politics and what happens when everything is already performative, when the dividing line between performativity and performance disappears. Denzin (2003) discusses performance-based social science and describes how "this version of doing social science attempts to do more than just show how biography, history, gender, race, ethnicity, family and history interact and shape one another in concrete situations" (p.xi). Denzin also pays particular attention to the

performance across disciplines where researchers are exploring nontraditional presentational formats. This will enable them and their research participants, in participatory inquiry settings, to co-construct meaning through action research (Denzin, 2003).

There is much that Denzin covers in his writings and therefore I have decided to focus on Turner's creative expression and how that relates to Denzin's work toward a performative social science. Denzin discusses the use of a new kind of interview called the performative interview, which is a tool of creativity: "Doing interviews is a privilege granted to us, not a right that we have. Interviews are living things that belong to everyone" (Denzin, 2003, p.79). Interviews contain words and language and are part of the social worker's creative expression that can be used for therapeutic intervention. Interviews are also mostly face-to-face language interactions: "Face engagements comprise all those instances of two or more participants in a situation joining each other openly in maintaining a single focus of cognitive and visual attention" (Goffman, 1963). Both Chomsky (1987) and hooks (1994) discuss language as a system of generative processes that is rooted in the nature of the human mind but does not determine the free creations of normal intelligence or of the great writer or thinker. Language is a powerful tool for social workers to use to help connect the worker and client to the "larger moral community" (Denzin, 2003, p.79). Interviews can invite a sense of narrative and storytelling that allows people to be participants in their own experience. Narrative, as coined by Michael White and David Epston, implies listening to and telling or retelling stories about people and the problems in their lives (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997): "Neither person is in control; instead each is enlarged and feels empowered, energized and more real" (Surrey, 1991, p.168). Clients have the opportunity to tell and perform their story according to its own version of truth and logic. This creative expression

will invite more openness and less marginalization of our clients. But how can creative expression be used in a very “concrete” sense such as dealing with funders and chronic underfunding in agencies?

*"Dwarfed Wolves Stealing Scraps From Our Master's Tables: Women's Groups and the Funding Process" and "The Doors are Shut and the Organization's Closed: Notes Exploring how this Story Unfolded"*

The impact of funding processes is significant, whether the women working within these societies are "conscious of the impact of funding on their relationships with each other, with the organization, and with other organizations" (Transken, 1997, p.64). The funding process is a pendulum. One side of the pendulum "squashes" hope and empowerment, while the other side of the pendulum is a swirling ground for creativity. In the end the pendulum must swing to the creative side because otherwise the doors will shut and the organization will be closed (Transken, 1997). An organization's thoughts about funding are much like the lines from a poem called *Budget Announcements*:

... but there's never been enough  
of everything needed  
for me to afford  
a daughter or a coyote  
& how could I downsize  
from where I've always lived  
small & at a rockbottom?

Transken

(Baylis, Burton, Fraser & Transken, 2002, p.81)

The funding process engages social workers to think in a creative way because we have to. When the agency has little money, few resources, and front line workers stretched to their limits, there is no choice but to be creative. To relate the funding process to Turner's



analytical framework is really to encompass several of the forms. To deal with the funding process one uses creative expression, which may include writing, painting, and music. We use these because of self-care and the necessity to deal with the struggles that funding processes present to us. We must be creative and practice self-care methods throughout this or we will burn out from the exhaustion of thinking about whether or not the agency will be around tomorrow.

We have a creative presentation of self by using metaphor, spontaneity, flexibility, and risktaking (Turner, 1999). For example, not too long ago in the agency that in which I was working in, there was a funding crisis and to make it through this difficult time I learned how to use metaphor for myself. I was travelling several hours through snowstorms to see clients on an outreach basis and did not know whether or not I would have a job the following week. I began to invite and embrace metaphors into my everyday professional life. One memorable metaphor that helped *me* through that time was to constantly visualize an image of myself and the clients walking together along a forested path. There may have been obstacles along this path but for the time being I was leading the group and holding the flashlight. At some point I would pass the flashlight to the clients because they had all of the tools needed to continue their journey. This image manifested and cultivated my faith in my strength, role, and path. Reading Viktor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*, I gained new insights into the meaning of life and how we, as social workers/therapists do our work continually while dealing with systemic challenges. Frankl (1959) discusses this meaning as "each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible" (p.111). The meaning of life always changes but it never ceases to exist. Some of the ways we can find meaning are through

deeds, experiencing values, or by suffering (Frankl, 1959). Therefore, the professional example of driving through snowstorms to see clients was when I needed to examine what was life asking from me. Frankl (1959) answers this question: each person must find out for herself and accept the responsibility that her answer prescribes (1959). By believing in this metaphor I could continue my work as a clinician and feel that there was hope for the clients should the agency fold.

Typically, there is a chronic lack of assured funding for organizations that do not allow for many permanent staff. Chronic underfunding inhibits women's ability to commit deeply to the organization's long-term future (Transken, 1997). If there is a lack of commitment from the staff, there is going to be limited creative conceptualization at the direct practice level. When thinking of the funding process as a creative form, "we are learning to make our differences into strengths and we are learning to insist that we be recognized and validated" (Transken, 1994, p.58). Throughout this process it is also important that as social workers and therapists we are reminding ourselves to continue to engage our playful, insightful, curious, and adventurous selves.

#### Creative Presentation of Self by the Social Worker

In this category I will start with the reviewing of an article *Research Students in Education and Psychology: Diversity and Empowerment*. The article explores creativity and academia and I link the ideas back to creative presentation of self and describe how students must often be creative, flexible, and spontaneous to navigate through the world of academia. Following this I examine *Opening Therapy to Conversations with a Personal God and Battle Chant*. This book and article examine creativity and social work by encouraging creativity in

the client to reconstruct their identities and lives (risktaking and flexibility). Following this I review *Stress (Full) Sister (Hood)*, *Reel to Real*, *Outlaw Culture*, and *Art on my Mind*. In these books creativity is examined as restorying, sharing narratives, sharing experiences, and challenging ideas. I then link the ideas back to creative presentation of self and describe how the social worker uses a sense of self and creativity to move forward with social work and clients.

*Research Students in Education and Psychology: Diversity and Empowerment*

The article *Research Students in Education and Psychology: Diversity and Empowerment* examines research students in psychology and education departments in Britain. Results from this study suggest that there are several different ways to “present oneself as a student, some more in continuity than others with the requisites for academic success” (Acker, Transken, Hill & Black, 1994, p.229). The different student typologies that emerged from this study were a) rugged individualist, b) academic, c) supported, d) taking charge, and e) buffeted about.

The student style or typology might best be regarded as a coping strategy at a particular point in time. It became clear in this study that individualism is an important factor in reproducing the academic profession in Britain and that “graduate students are the poor relations of the university community, rather than – as in the United States – its principal source of pride” (Acker, Transken, Hill & Black, 1994, p.247). Collective support is often challenging to attain for graduate students in Britain, even if a student is on a research team.

It is my belief that students need support in their academic lives to feel assured, to feel confidence, to debrief with their supervisor so that when they make it to the professional world, academia has not squashed out all hope and sense of selfhood. Creative presentation of self needs to be nurtured by our supervisors, teachers, professors, and mentors because we as students are similar to children that are learning...we learn what we see, what is modeled. If the requirements are creativity, flexibility, risktaking, and spontaneity, these need to be modeled for us. Students can also struggle in academia with creative presentation of self because it may not always be safe to toy with the bold ideas of creativity when the professor prefers the status quo. The teacher may demand the status quo and nothing else before giving out the "A" that the student wants. An excerpt from the poem titled *Surrendering to Self-Crippling* captures this thought:

better to have the dulldreary of something/someone  
 than be our selves  
 in quivering fullness & questing growth.  
 pathetically, obsessively, tragically  
 we fear the riskriskrisk of  
 spending on our education,  
 investing cash in our creativity,  
 rewarding our curiosity,  
 writing cheques for our boldwhimsy  
 dollaring at our playfulness.

(Transken, 2003, p.88)

Academic institutions need to learn how to nurture their students to give birth to a strong creative presentation of self. Academia can only do this by transgressing boundaries: "I must push against to go forward" (hooks, 1995, p. 132). Nothing will change in the world of academia if no one is willing to make this movement (hooks, 1995; hooks, 1994; Pamperin, 1987; Walz & Uematsu, 1997). It would mean generating new ideas,

brainstorming, finding alternatives, meditating, engaging in spirituality/religious thoughts, in a word, being creative.

*Opening Therapy to Conversations with a Personal God*

In the article *Opening Therapy to Conversations with a Personal God* Griffith (1995), who is a systemic therapist, attempts to open the door to "prescriptive constraints - that God can and should be spoken here" (p.124). Most therapists realize and recognize the significance of their clients' spiritual experiences and wish their clients could speak about them. The challenge is to develop a broader comprehensive understanding of religion and to create an enlarged definition of feminism that highlights this freedom of choice (Taylor & Daly, 1995). McMillan (1995) describes some of the differences between Christianity and First Nations spirituality as First Nations spirituality involves the universe being filled with supernatural beings, each having power to help or harm. Myths and stories around spirituality enliven cold winter evenings, while the younger generation sit and listen to the elders recount the ancient stories (McMillan, 1995).

This relates to Turner's creative presentation of self by the social worker. The author ponders four "stories of certainty" that she has found with her research, which lure us into "already knowingness" and away from curiosity and creativity:

- 1.) I know what God is like for you because I know your religious denomination.
- 2.) I know what God is like for you because I know what your language about God means.
- 3.) I know what God is like for you because your image of God is a reflection of your early attachment figures.

4.) I know what God is like and you need to know God as I do.

(Griffith, 1995)

Griffith (1995) points out how the stories of certainty intrude into, oppress, and constrain the possibilities for conversations with God in therapy. The creativity (and curiosity) of bringing God, Buddha, and Spirituality into the therapy session can be feared in professional practice and some say that they intentionally avoid discussing any religious topics with their clients, as "that is the business of the priest, not the psychotherapist" (Griffith, 1995, p.124). But, without this risk-taking and flexibility of creativity, clients (and their therapists) would not have the freedom to discuss spiritual journeys and listen "for that which has not been heard, negotiating together the limits and the possibilities" (Griffith, 1995, p.124).

### *Battle Chant*

Couldn't we speak, together, now as women, in a circle, knee to knee to knee? We could nod once the words had stopped, and say "Oh, now I see. Now, I understand." In a circle . . . (Bryant, Dahl, Lane, Marttila, Transken & Trepanier, 1999). *Battle Chant* is a book that reflects individual battlegrounds of tension, thought, emotion, spirit, and body. It was through the sharing, or consciousness-raising, of these six women's voices that this book emerged. Saulnier (1996) comments on how important it is for women to meet in small consciousness-raising groups to discuss personal experiences and to draw connections between their daily lives. The authors quested to capture something of the intangible on the page and give it pause for a moment in words before setting it free again by sharing it with others (Bryant, Dahl, Lane, Marttila, Transken & Trepanier, 1999). These stories, poems,

narratives, truths, and experiences are about surviving, triumphing, and changing. Transken (2002) describes this process as “people touching the troubles of the whole world; and all those worlds of troubles touch the insides of us” (p.33). *Battle Chant* is first and foremost creative metaphor. This metaphor seems to “transport us closer to a world of absolute understanding that is more real than reality” (Talerico, 1986, p.229). Through metaphor, in this case that of a battle chant, we can examine women’s pain, hardship, excitement, and beauty.

*Battle Chant* relates to Turner’s creative presentation of self because of the powerful link between the creative process and therapy: “Like many therapeutic approaches, creativity encourages expression of feelings, confidence through risk-taking, communication with the unconscious, development of new insights, resolution of conflict, reduction of anxiety, and rechanneling of psychic energy for problem-solving purposes” (Talerico, 1986, p.231). As social workers and therapists we need creative presentation of self to heighten our awareness when working with clients. Our culture has been steadily producing what we might call unconscious men and women, people that have been so concretized that they block symbolic energy (Bly & Woodman, 1998). When working with clients, we need to help others reclaim their powerful essence through artistic expression (Bryant, Dahl, Lane, Marttila, Transken & Trepanier, 1999).

Bryant (1999) comments on this reclaiming of powerful essence in an excerpt from *Wet Paint*:

I was like wet paint  
and you drew your fingers through me  
rearranged my head and thought about Picassos  
moved my nose if I got out of line  
hung me in a closet  
kept my beauty to yourself...

...I won't let you paint me anymore  
 and your face is shocked to find  
 there are patterns in me that you created  
 when you didn't think you touched me at all.

(Bryant, Dahl, Lane, Marttila, Transken & Trepanier, 1999, p.9)

As social workers and therapists, we need to help clients see that they can be flexible, spontaneous, metaphorical, and welcoming of risk by modeling that we can do these things, whether that is through writing poetry, restorying, dancing, listening, or simply having coffee together. Creative presentation of self allows us to knowledge share with our clients and integrate insights instead of generating them (Somerville & Rapport, 2000). Integrating insights is like making the intimate connection between fairy tales and dreams that are told as bedtime stories. They're told just before we fall asleep, as if to prepare us for...to guide us slowly into it (Bly & Woodman, 1998).

### *Stress (Full) Sister (Hood)*

In the book *Stress (Full) Sister (Hood)* Transken, Eyelon, Tilleczek, Ripson Eyelon & B (2001) describe that the mediums of poetry and prose examine a variety of topics around women's relationships. The authors comment that they have experienced stress, truthfulness and discovered new ways of personal and political growth. These women have confronted scarcity of material and emotional supports, they crave abundance for themselves and all women (Transken, Eyelon, Tilleczek, Ripson Eyelon & B, 2001). These stories of prose and poetry are narratives that enable these women to heal and continue the work they do. These authors have been able to "create memorable characters, and leave us with images that are seared into our consciousness, some of the core meanings we have drawn from the book may



remain with us for years as touchstones and reference points on our journeys through life" (MacDevitt, 2001, p.143).

Re-storying, sharing narratives and experiences are mediums that can become a true female experience that both empowers and promotes growth (Booker, 1999; O'Connor, Krautter, Fischbuch, Bomberry & Aziz, 1999; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991; Saulnier, 1996). *Stress (Full) Sister (Hood)* relates to Turner's creative presentation of self as a form of offering a personal sense of self that is, metaphor or risk-taking, in working with the client. It's a way of saying "I am a person, too, and I am here to listen to your story." The BRSW Code of Ethics (2002) examines this as respecting and facilitating self-determination and demonstrating acceptance of each client's uniqueness. It is a way of shifting the power balance that is set up so often between social workers and clients in a patriarchal/hierarchical fashion. In sharing a sense of self the power balance is nudged to equilibrium. Soni B (2001) has captured for me the essence of sharing a sense of self in her poem *BINGO*:

Magdalene doesn't realize that her feeling of helplessness feeds on  
itself. Magdalene doesn't realize that her feeling of uselessness is  
passed on to her daughters every time she tells them,  
I'm not the one who didn't want you when you  
were born. You're the ones who don't want me  
now. I've done all I can now it's up to you.

(Transken, Eyclon, Tilleczech, Ripson Eyclon & B)

The reason I chose this particular excerpt is because I felt it had a powerful sense of feeling and truth to it. Soni B may not have been the person in the poem; however, she shows a sense of passion that is a mirror into her sense of self. Creative presentation of self is about not being afraid to share yourself and showing some of the passion that we as social workers and therapists possess. It is unfortunate that the concept of self has often come

down to us as a series of processes leading to a sense of psychological separation from others (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991). May (1975) describes this as having professional courage and how “we shall surely have to create with others” (p.12). The social worker/therapist is similar to that of an artisan, seeking to influence and change and realize and understand potential and to do so in experiential relationships with other people and things (Siporin, 1988). Sharing ourselves, asking critical questions, analyzing culture and the roles that we play are just some of the ways that we can live and work creatively with social work.

### *Reel to Real and Outlaw Culture*

Movies take the real and make it into something else right before our very eyes (hooks, 1996). They give a reimagined, reinvented version of the real that may look like something familiar, but in actuality is a different universe from the world of the real (hooks, 1996). hooks discusses in her book how cinema plays a pedagogical role in the lives of people today and in her teachings how students can use cinema as a vehicle to discuss race, culture, sex, and class. Many people (our clients included) use television and movies as a main influence and identity shaper of how the world functions and how in turn they should function in the world. Movies, like Denzin’s (2003) interviews, provide a narrative for shared experiences and a starting point that can transgress boundaries across diversity and disciplines. When teaching about critical culture and using film as a vehicle “suddenly students would be engaged in an animated discussion deploying the very theoretical concepts that they had previously claimed they just did not understand” (hooks, 1996, p.3).

People then begin to ask critical questions about race, class, culture, and sex and can have conversations about these cosmologies in and outside academia. The critical questions asked at the paradigm level are what make good social workers. Social workers need to have experience with critical thinking, cultural critiquing, and the creativity to see that things are not always as they appear. Judgements can be faulty, for nothing is ever the way it seems and everything is always changing (hooks, 1996). Films, like social work, are a testimony to that power in that they compel us to think, to reflect, and to engage the work fully (hooks, 1996). To compare filmmakers and social workers would be to compare two very passionate groups of people. So how can we as social workers put this passion to use in a practical, yet creative, way?

I choose love. By choosing love, we choose to live in community, and that means that we do not have to change by ourselves: “We can count on critical affirmation and dialogue with comrades walking a similar path” (hooks, 1994, p.248). Choosing to live in community relates to Turner’s creative presentation of self by the social worker. If social workers work in the style of a love-ethic this will help us move towards freedom and to act in potentially liberating ways. A personal example of the love-ethic is the push in the community where I live for building a homeless shelter (there are many homeless people and there is a risk of them freezing to death in the  $-40^{\circ}$  winters). This love-ethic relates to the BRSW Code of Ethics (2002) in that a social worker shall advocate change in the best interest of the client, and for the overall benefit of society. For the past two years there has been a group of passionate people who have a love for community and who look to benefit the overall society. This group attends meetings and rallies; they report to the newspaper and bring blankets and hot tea to the homeless individuals. At this point winter is not far off and

the shelter has not yet been built but that does not stop this group of people from loving others and caring about the community. To work within a community like this we are able to experience some joy in the struggle that each day we get closer to attaining. However, as in Peile's (1993) description of slow and fast timeframes, we may be closer than we were but the time frame may be long.

As a group we rally around to find out how we can continue our push for service and love for the community. hooks (1994) describes the love ethic as an important service to others. This "service strengthens our capacity to know compassion and deepens our insight" (p.249). Without an ethic of love shaping the direction of our political visions and our radical aspirations, we are often seduced, in one way or the other, into continued allegiance to systems of domination – imperialism, sexism, racism and classism (hooks, 1994).

### *Art on My Mind*

*Art on My Mind* (hooks, 1995) is a book that responds to the ongoing dialogues about producing, exhibiting and criticizing art and aesthetics in an art world increasingly concerned with identity politics (hooks, 1995). hooks comments on always being drawn to visual art and visual politics and therefore her book focuses on these mediums and on black women artists. In her book, hooks is able to look at the world of art from a critical cultural perspective: "resisting oppression means more than just reacting against one's oppressors – it means envisioning new habits of being, different ways to live in the world" (Acker, et al., 1991, p.78). In this collection hooks includes interviews, dialogues, essays, and poetry describing how art can be empowering and an evolutionary force within the black community. Visual and political art is viewed as a place where acts of transcendence can

begin to take place and hooks further discusses how “art can enhance our understanding of what it means to live as free subjects in an unfree world” (hooks, 1995, p.9). The poet Linda Beth comments on the importance of the arts: “if a canvas were not present it would naturally flow into the room and become part of the air and atmosphere of the room” (Woodman & Dickson, 1996, p.177).

Being an artist is dangerous. Art disrupts boundaries; it challenges us to acknowledge in public all that we have been encouraged to reveal only in private (hooks, 1997). This idea relates to Turner’s (1999) form of creative presentation of self. As social workers/therapists we often have to disrupt systemic boundaries and challenge the status quo through our ways of being that is, style, metaphor, spontaneity, flexibility, and risk taking. A professional in the field states that “often I have felt exiled from – or felt that I have needed to choose to go outside of the laws of allegedly polite society” (Baylis, Burton, Fraser & Transken, 2002, p.40). Social workers and therapists often need to push the boundaries to have our voices heard. Being creative can become an act of swimming against the current tide of technical rationalism (Philipson, 2002). Social workers need to continue to question, challenge, nudge, push, and examine the boundaries (or box) that we are limited to in terms of working, and reenvision this space. hooks (1995) describes this as creating a kind of critical culture where we can confront the radical traditions of resistance as well as the newly invented self, the decolonized subject. This style of pushing the boundaries is of particular importance in rural northern social work. Many of the ideologies of how to practice social work in British Columbia are dictated from a southern region. These approaches are “espoused by people who may not understand the north, yet have the power to define northern problems, northern opportunities, and northern futures” (Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick & Tranter, 1998, p.45).

This is why creative presentation of self is so important for northern clinicians. If we do not question, challenge, nudge, push and examine the boundaries for ourselves we will only continue to experience the frustration of social service systems that do not fit with our vision or expectations of how we can work with our clients (Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick & Tranter, 1998). Somerville and Rapport (2000) explain this as disturbing the logic of instrumental reason. This is not an easy road to venture down; however, it is a necessary one. An excerpt from the poem *Changes* describes this road well:

There's a time when everything begins to change  
Looking around, you find nothing familiar  
just strange  
Things aren't the way they used to be  
and the road ahead becomes difficult  
to see...

Franklin

(O'Connor, Krautter, Fischbuch, Bomberry & Aziz, 1999, p.37)

### Creative Conceptualization at the Direct Practice Level

In this category I will start with two articles, *Postmodernism, Spirituality, and the Creative Writing Process: Implications for Social Work Practice* and *The Use of Ritual in Incest Healing*. Both of these articles discuss social workers listening to their intuition, which links to creative conceptualization at the direct practice level because it involves using creative approaches to find creative solutions to work with clients. The next article that I review, *The Implications of Contemporary Feminist Theories of Development for the Treatment of Male Victims of Sexual Abuse*, explains how working with men in therapy can be very different from working with women in therapy. The idea of this difference links to creative conceptualization at the direct practice level because it again examines how social

workers must be aware and attuned to their own practice to be aware of working creatively with clients to find innovative solutions.

*Postmodernism, Spirituality, and the Creative Writing Process: Implications for Social Work Practice*

There have existed historical tensions between modernity and postmodernity and how they revolve around differences in the ways that power/knowledge and objectivity and subjectivity are viewed (Damianakis, 2001). This article suggests that while postmodernism, spirituality, and creative writing have the potential to open social work to a more creative and meaningful practice, the social work profession is ill prepared to deal with these three influences. Power is linked to the notion of power over others and power is believed to be in the hands of experts, who possess certain forms of knowledge (Taylor & Daly, 1995): “Thus, both power and knowledge have become embedded in the social workers role, as defined by a modernist perspective” (Damianakis, 2001, p.24).

The relationship between knowledge and power is derived through either intuitive or rational means – “a distinction that has implications for social work practice” (Damianakis, 2001, p.24). Focusing on the intuitive means relates to Turner’s creative conceptualization at the direct practice level because “through empathy and intuition, the social worker and client, for example can reach ideas and use intuition to find ideas” (Damianakis, 2001, p.25). Empathy is described as a complex process, relying on a high level of psychological development and ego strength: “The capacity to engage in an open, mutually empathic relational process rests on the maintenance of fluid ego boundaries and the capacity to be responsive and moved by the thoughts, perceptions, and feeling states of the other person

(Surrey, 1991, p.167). Both hooks (1994) and Damianakis (2001) further comment on the importance in the sharing of one's story to reflect on personal experience, empathy, ego, and the use of language to facilitate self-knowledge and growth.

Creative conceptualization at a direct practice level requires social workers to calmly listen calmly to their intuition both. In a sense the relationship that is formed between the social worker and the client is a creative team; creative teams are sensitive to one another and to their environments and are composed of self-motivated, fulfilled individuals (Damianakis, 2001). Monk (1999) comments, however, that when working with men "it is important for social workers to recognize that "rational approaches may initially be the most effective method for achieving this goal" (p.125). He goes on further to say that while emotional work is important, the literature suggests that men are generally more comfortable with and receptive to cognitive forms of communication (Monk, 1999). Hepburn (1994) comments that males more than females tend to respond to anxiety (feelings that can be stirred up through therapy) with aggression and counterphobic responses to vulnerability. This may be why Monk has found cognitive forms of therapy to work better with men than emotional work. However, Monk needs to elaborate further on the type of man he is referring to, that is age, culture, training, and sexual orientation. In conclusion, the more opportunity for involvement that individuals most affected by the anticipated change have, the greater the chance will be that the change can be effectively implemented (Gelfand, 2002).

### *The Use of Ritual in Incest Healing*

Winslow (1990) comments on how incest survivors have utilized ritual within their healing processes. The author also offers suggestions for clinicians on how to use ritual



within the therapy session. Rituals link past, present, and future experiences and roles, and works towards stability and change simultaneously (Winslow, 1990). Rituals seem to have the metaphoric ability to reduce anxiety, incorporate hope and, facilitate self-soothing. In using rituals with families the authors comment on the importance of employing sequences of action and objects which symbolize meaning to the family members (O'Connor & Hoorwitz, 1991). Creating new rituals within therapy can be effective as a vehicle for healing. A survivor mentioned in the article comments that “creativity” (the ritual) made it possible for her to adapt to her situation so that she could survive (Winslow, 1990). Winslow (1990) comments that creative activities can be focused on the stage of healing currently being addressed by the survivor as well as serving to rework past issues and stages.

Winslow's (1990) article around rituals relates to Turner's (1999) creative conceptualization at the direct practice level because rituals can occur through the generating of ideas with clients. It is important as clinicians that we involve our clients in decision making within therapy every step of the way. Therapy is about the clients, who are experts on their own lives. Therefore it is important that they have a voice in how creative therapy can become. Ritual is like a cocktail mix of tangible objects, metaphors, and concepts; the evidence of this preparation and spontaneity are often illuminating and provocative (Philipson, 2002).

A personal example of how I have used creative conceptualization at the direct practice level (in this case ritual) in my work with children who have been sexually abused, is with wishes. I worked with Mary, who was seven-years-old, for approximately a year. After one month into therapy we had a discussion about wishes. Mary asked if she could make a wish at the end of that session. We decided together that the wishes were to revolve

around hopes, dreams, and feelings, and not material things such as a new bicycle. I had a bag of seashells in my office and encouraged Mary to think about what her wish looked like. She then chose a seashell that represented her wish. I lit a candle and she held her seashell tightly in her hand, made her wish and then blew out the candle. This became a weekly ritual, of which I was quickly reminded at the end of each session. Mary could use her seashells as tangible reminders of her safe, protecting, strong feelings when facing scary memories or even in one case when she had to see the offender. This ritual offered Mary a new way of being in the world. Mary was able to understand the meaning and function of the ritual to acknowledge losses and affirm her healing (Winslow, 1990).

*The Implications of Contemporary Feminist Theories of Development for the Treatment of Male Victims of Sexual Abuse*

...Raising your voice in anger or frustration is not exclusive to a gender role.  
And neither is being a prick even if you don't have a phallic power pole.  
I have a penis and a soul, a mind and sometimes I am emotional.  
So I profess to be non-compromising and yet accused of being conditional.

Morin  
(Transken, 2002, p.198)

I chose this excerpt from the poem *I am a Man* because I found it interesting to hear these words from the perspective of a man. I felt that it tied in to the article because the article focuses on gender differences in the treatment of male victims of sexual abuse.

There is an underidentified and underserved population of men that are victims of sexual abuse (Hepburn, 1994). The author comments on establishing three criteria when working with males in the therapeutic milieu:

- 1.) Prepare clients for the emergence of disruptive or aggressive behaviors.

- 2.) Recognize, validate and contain these feelings.
- 3.) Achieve a balance between intimacy and independence.

(Hepburn, 1994)

Hepburn (1994) discusses how victims of child sexual abuse must overcome the effects of traumatic sexualization, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization; males must also deal with sexual identity confusion and conflicts concerning aggressive and antisocial behavior. Woodman and Dickson (1996) describe these men as having not been able to escape patriarchy's bludgeoning. Men and women often have different styles of resolving conflict. To ask a male child to enter into a therapeutic relationship in which he is again expected to become vulnerable works against the momentum of male development (Hepburn, 1995).

The idea of the male responding to therapy with aggression and disruptive activity solidifies for me Turner's creative conceptualization at the direct practice level. Men are conditioned in our society to "suck it up" and "be a man." "Men are no less at risk than women" (Woodman & Dickson, 1996, p.88). Bly (1990) comments that men and boys often enter the (metaphoric) garden to escape from the rain of blows offered by the world and find a temporary shelter. To be creative at the direct practice level means taking gender difference into consideration within the realms of therapy. As a social worker I need to be aware that how I work with females may not be the most effective way of working with males. Hepburn (1994) comments that men are socially conditioned to respond to conflict through the assertion of strength and power and work to preserve their self-work through creative displays of initiative and will (1994). As a therapist, I openly converse with families about how they would like to work and how to be creative in our work. For example we

have acted out Grimm's fairy tales, parachuted toy army men off the upper stairwell, and engaged in tea parties and family picnics in my office. I view my work with families as part of a creative team. We take the therapeutic journey together, and creative conceptualization at the direct practice level means that I will strive to engage the family in having a voice in what works for them (by conversing, consciousness-raising, playing, singing, dancing, sculpting and generating ideas). Hoekstra (2003) comments that children often are "holding on with their fingertips with the minimum of control, the occasional wince and shutdown, eyes closed tight" (p.17); they need to be engaged in what their therapy process will look like for them. As social workers, how do we transfer engaging our clients and ourselves to that of a community practice level?

#### Creative Conceptualization at the Community Practice Level

In this category I will review two articles *Fostering Innovation in a Large Human Services Bureaucracy* and *Community Support Programs in Rural Areas Developing Programs Without Walls*. Both of these articles discuss how to create changes within a bureaucracy and how to create innovation within a bureaucracy. I link the articles back to creative conceptualization at the community practice level by examining how social workers need to look at what has to happen at a structural level to make change, particularly in northern communities. I then move on to review *The Creative Practitioner* and *Leadership: Realizing Concepts Through Creative Process*. Both this book and article discuss problem solving techniques and I attempt to link these ideas back to creative conceptualization at the community practice level by looking at innovative methods to create change and the importance of transdisciplinarity. Lastly I briefly review *American Indian Families: An*

*Overview.* In the article I examine some of the struggles that North American Aboriginal people have gone through and again attempt to link it back to creative conceptualization at the community practice level by discussing the structural level (systems) that impacts Aboriginal people.

*Fostering Innovation in a large Human Services Bureaucracy*

Cohen (1999) describes human service bureaucracies as highly centralized, hierarchical organizations, where activities are carried out by standardized routines, communication is tightly prescribed, and most decisions are made at the top. This over-bureaucratized workplace can lead to low job satisfaction and burnout (Cohen, 1999). The challenge then is to create change from within, to redesign large human services organizations so that they can foster innovation from within and be more responsive to both their workers and the clients they serve (Cohen, 1999). The article describes a "change from within" that was designed to encourage innovation and to empower staff within a bureaucratic setting. The idea was called the New Ideas Fund and its purpose was to encourage and support the participation of front line workers and front line supervisors in the development of new ideas that would improve their ability to serve clients (Cohen, 1999).

Innovative ideas, such as the New Ideas Fund, relates to Turner's creative conceptualization at the community practice level. There is a need to empower social workers within the agency so that a creative compatible group can be formed for which analysis, strategy for resistance and democratic change can be created (Morell, 1987). These movements help bring together groups and focus the resources and attention on central goals. It is through such movements that "social work may contribute to the achievement of its

goals" (Morell, 1987, p.153). Cohen (1999) notes that to make changes at the structural level individual worker-initiated efforts were seen as part of a larger agenda in transforming the agency's culture and way of doing business. However, for this to happen, a better understanding is needed of how to support innovation at the individual and small group level, as well as an examination of the design of the internal processes for managing the innovation (Cohen, 1999). With a better understanding comes a commitment of resources, either internal or external, or both (Cohen, 1999). In this current political climate how do northern, remote communities deal with struggles around maintaining and initiating programs for clients?

*Community Support Programs in Rural Areas Developing Programs Without Walls*

Sullivan (1989) discusses the meaning of the concept of "programs without walls." Central to this concept is the recruitment of community members and the redesign of traditional programs to find the most effective use of personnel and services for clients and their families (Sullivan, 1989). Some of the issues that arise as rural and remote challenges are transportation, lack of concentration of clients in one area, poverty, difficulty in retaining staff (social workers), and a lack of specific resources (Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick & Tranter, 1998). Creativity and innovation are then critical to developing a successful program in a rural area. Sullivan (1989) comments that the barriers require programs to devise innovative and creative strategies to deliver services.

This relates to Turner's idea of creative conceptualization at the community practice level because it requires structural changes that need to happen at the community level. Sullivan (1989) states that, because of the lack of specific resources in rural areas, we are

forced to engage in creative thinking and have an accurate assessment of what our clients can do. If programs are going to happen in the north, then they have to happen at the community level in a sort of “jigsaw approach.” The jigsaw approach begins by allowing a person to fantasize about all the types of programs, equipment and personnel that would be needed to create the ideal program (Sullivan, 1989). Creative conceptualization means that we have a voice in our community and can make things happen. It is not too futuristic to imagine practitioners communicating with psychiatrists by way of car telephones or a medication clinic on wheels (Sullivan, 1989). What about volunteers going into people’s homes to teach them recipes or to prepare a meal? The reality is that all of the northern challenges we face today will be here tomorrow. We will continue to face struggles and therefore we must be creative problem-solvers as individuals and community members to be successful with our programs. hooks (1994) describes this kind of creative action as decolonizing our minds and imaginations; we learn to think differently, to see everything with new eyes.

### *The Creative Practitioner*

Problem solving is a model of helping that involves thinking that must be infused with creativity. Gelfand (1988) discusses what the creative problem solving (CPS) model is and how to go about using it. The author goes on to describe the blocks of CPS, the importance of finding the problem and strategies and techniques of idea finding. The benefits of thinking creatively are related to developing the ability to think fluently, which is valuable for the production of social intervention. Gelfand’s writings finish with creative decision making, planning, monitoring and evaluating solutions.

Initially I felt I would focus on how the CPS model relates to Turner's creative conceptualization at the direct practice level, because of the amount of time Gelfand spends explaining the model. After some reflection, however, I decided to focus on creative conceptualization at the community practice level. I made this decision because I wanted to express how I felt about how social work is typically taught in educational institutions. On looking up problem solving in Barker's *The Social Work Dictionary* I found the following definition:

Problem-solving casework: A form of social casework, that draws on concepts in ego psychology, role theory and implicitly on a consolidation of the diagnostic school in social work and the functional school in social work. Among the most important practice methods this model stress are *clear delineation's* of the goals of the casework intervention, *focused and time-limited intervention*, and concern for the environmental and social forces that influence and are influenced by the client (1999).

In the above definition I italicized several words. The reason for this was the contradiction of everything I have recently learned about the shifting of paradigms and how with creativity, people proceed in each case at different speeds which reflect different time frames (Peile, 1993). At the structural level schools typically are interested in teaching and rewarding conceptual-logical intelligence, a critical attitude that is characterized by skepticism and a reluctance to believe (Gelfand, 1988). Classroom instruction has traditionally and typically aimed at helping children and students to find the single-best, correct answer to a problem. Lewarne (1998) describes how social work needs to move with the spirit of the times and stress science less and creativity more. Creative conceptualization at the community practice level means that teachers need to show their students how it is possible to reapply, transform, and reshape techniques or pieces of information which can then be applied to new situations for which they were not originally intended (McLeod &



Cropley, 1989). This could be coined as “transdisciplinarity, a recreating of integrated knowledge” (Somerville & Rapport, 2000). With the emergence of the creative paradigm teachers can offer the direct practice worker a way to develop multiple perspectives on the social situation of the client system (Gelfand, 1988). Our clients in turn could have an expanded life management process which is creatively ongoing. These multiple perspectives can open up communities of culture, storytelling, knowledge and transdisciplinarity.

*Leadership: Realizing Concepts Through Creative Process*

Kahn (1997) presents a brief history, context and theory for community organizing, and provides discussion of major concepts of culture, community and power. Kahn discusses small and large group processes, social change methods, race, gender, class, power, and culture, to name a few. She concludes the article with an exercise that she facilitates called “I am a leader because....” This is an exercise that works in group settings, incorporates consciousness-raising, and involves poetry and metaphor. Kahn (1997) mentions that the creative process becomes a means to build collective culture, opens participants to creativity and renews commitment to organizing projects. In building collective culture the self is opened up. Self is perceived as being part of a larger cultural story (Hosekins & Leseho, 1996) that occurs through consciousness-raising. Consciousness-raising works well as it is based on a number of traditional forms, particularly storytelling (Freeman, Epston & Lobovits, 1997). Kahn (1997) concludes that what is important within community organizing is not to tell people how they should feel about themselves but to accept their way of looking at the world and to help them build power based on their own analysis.

Many people and organizations have begun to see a need to work together across lines that divide them (hooks, 1994). The mission statement of the Social Work Program at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) also focuses on transdisciplinarity by including critical social thinking of aboriginal and cross-cultural issues, women and human services, and community practice research (2003-2004). This idea relates to Turner's creative conceptualization at the community practice level because it analyzes what needs to change at the structural level. Kahn (1997) discusses how traditional educational methods, which are fundamentally intellectual, are not always adequate to deal with a transformative process, particularly one that challenges racism, sexism, and homophobia (1997). The profession of social work requires some creative courage to make the leap to transdisciplinarity. Creative conceptualization at the community practice level means that our horizons need to be broadened: "Transdisciplinarity requires transcendence, the giving up of sovereignty on the part of any one of the contributing disciplines, and the formation, out of the diverse mix of new insight by way of emergent properties" (Somerville & Rapport, 2000, p.xv). hooks (1994) comments that there appears to be a contemporary focus on multiculturalism in our society but there still is not nearly enough practical discussion of ways classroom settings can be transformed so that the learning experience is inclusive. There is a "community" that must occur between students, professors, social workers, and therapists in order for the climate to open up to transdisciplinarity. The following is an excerpt from a poem titled *To New Social Work Students* which I feel concludes this section well. This poem sums up for me where education, social work, and society at large is at:

...welcome to our con  
fusing profession. Some of us do  
infiltrate, break rules, defy  
masters & monsters

if only for moments  
 between lean pay cheques  
 --notice that attempting to  
 redo this strange status quo *us*  
 takes precise premeditated  
 incremental courage. well come  
 to our profession but please remain alert  
 to the pros and cons.

(Tranksen, 2002, p.43-44)

### *American Indian Families: An Overview*

Since the time of Columbus, the dominant culture's concept of American Indians has been characterized by inaccurate and conflicting images (Sutton & Broken Nose, 1996). There existed depictions of both, a people living in a primitive paradise as well as a people that existed as bloodthirsty savages. This chapter attempts to peel back some of the layers of these myths and expose the real "people" underneath. Several of the topics covered in this section are traits within family therapy, the impact of cultural genocide, tribal identity, family structure and obligations, communication, and cultural orientation.

Sutton and Broken Nose (1996) mention the importance of being aware of the impact of the cultural genocide that has occurred for Aboriginal people. Residential schools came close to wiping out strong nations of spirituality and creativity. The author Thomas (1999) comments that because of residential schooling she never fully understood the meaning of the ceremonies because she never learned her Native language. The following excerpt is from a poem called *We Write in Other Ways* and I believe that it emphasizes the point of spirituality/creativity and the sadness involved in the cultural genocide:

Things they see as art.  
 Our chiefs robes and crest poles,  
 our lodge covers and quilled clothing  
 record messages plain to us.

Maybe we couldn't read their written words  
 when they first came.  
 But neither could they read ours.  
 We read their writings now.  
 Can they read ours?

(Harris, 1999, p.68-69)

"It has only been within the last two decades that historians have begun to detail the legacy of oppressive and racist federal policies that were aimed at forcibly and nonnegotiable assimilating and/or annihilating the indigenous peoples of the North American continent" (Tafoya & Del Vecchio, 1996, p.47). Turner's (1999) definition of creative conceptualization at the community practice level is important when working with First Nations families. Brown (1994) discusses confirming the client's power to determine goals and outcomes and the right to know about the therapist's assumptions and techniques. It appears that within the province, at this time, there is a push towards having Aboriginal services as well as the existing services. I believe that this is important and necessary, as long as these disciplines are talking, corresponding, sharing, and connecting. All too often "new" organizations are initiated, but the missing link is in the lack of knowledge sharing. Within the realm of social work there is a strong need for transdisciplinarity. Brown (1994) suggests that instead of placing an emphasis on changing those institutions of patriarchal cultures that promulgate the status quo, such as the family, educational institutions and the justice system, we develop an integrated analysis of transdisciplinarity. Only through these avenues will issues such as cultural genocide be analyzed and discussed enough to begin healing. It was a dominant culture that caused the cultural genocide; however, pain is often the price we pay to speak the truth (hooks, 1997). As social workers we must embrace and invite in an interdisciplinary way of working and making meaning. We must confront each other across differences and embrace the offering of ideas and changes.

### The Creative Cosmology

In this category I will review three books which are *Creativity in Education and Learning*, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, and *Creativity in Social Work Practice: A Pedagogy*. These three books examine how to be creative (such as what is creativity? And how does creativity work?) and what does a creative paradigm look like. I then link these ideas back to Turner's (1999) creative cosmology by discussing what is a creative paradigm and how can social workers work in a creative paradigm. I then move on to review two articles which are *Determinism versus Creativity: Which way for Social Work?* and *Determinism versus Creativity: A Response to Peile*. These two articles discuss creativity in terms of timeframes and how all creative processes are constantly moving, whether that be slow or fast. I attempt to link these ideas back to Turner's (1999) creative cosmology by examining what is a creative paradigm and how is a creative paradigm measured. I then moved on to review an article, *The Female Hero: A Quest for Healing and Wholeness*, and three books, *The Artist's Way*, *The Courage to Create* and *Vein of Gold*. This article and three books all examine ideas of how working in a creative paradigm can push the status quo and create new ways of thinking. I then attempt to link the ideas back to Turner's (1999) creative cosmology by examining how to be comfortable within a creative paradigm because it pushes people from a familiar world into an unfamiliar one.

### *Creativity in Education and Learning and The Arts and the Creation of Mind*

Creativity has been seen by some as the only area where technology such as microelectronics cannot go (Crompton, 2001). The emphasis in this book is on creativity and the potential in people to behave creatively as well as the environmental aspects that promote

turning potential into creative behavior. Cropley (2001) looks in detail at the roles of thinking, personality, motivation, and social factors, as well as the study of creativity. He asks and analyzes important questions: What is creativity? How does creativity work? And how can creativity be fostered? Cropley examines how to teach children in a creative fashion and attempts to explain why teachers often do not teach creatively.

Cropley's work relates to that of Eisner's (2002) *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*. Eisner (2002) explains how schools see their mission as promoting the development of the intellect and "hard" subjects such as mathematics and science that are regarded as primary sources for development. Eisner's (2002) book is meant to dispel the belief that the arts are somehow intellectually undemanding, emotive rather than reflective operations done with the hand somehow unattached to the head. Humans are meaning making creatures and need imagination, culture, and in a way "permission" to use this imagination by our teachers and mentors. The arts provide an avenue for creative forms such as dance, poetry, performance, and writing through which meanings are made. These forms allow us to construct our own meanings that are non-redundant; each form of representation we employ confers its own features upon the meanings we make or interpret (Eisner, 2002).

Both Eisner (2002) and Cropley (2001) write about creativity in the education and arts system in great depth. I will focus on creativity from a creative cosmology perspective and examine the implications for social work. Social work is much like that of the arts; there is a heightening of awareness. For example, in an art gallery one needs to stand back to take a different look, or see a different perspective of the painting, like a dance in the service of sight (Eisner, 2002). Creative cosmology means that as social workers we need to be able to "play" with ideas and be invited to use our imaginations to see things other than the way

they are. As mentioned previously, social workers/therapists need to look beyond the traditional boundaries and have the ability to recognize a solution even if it falls outside of the status quo (Transken, 2002). Cropley (2001) explains that when there is a high level of familiarity with a field and with the existing solution strategies, we can preorganize thinking so effectively that it leads only to production of orthodoxy. As a paradigm shift, fostering creativity is an important part of education and should be a guiding principle for teaching (Cropley, 2001). The arts need more of an emphasis in social work education to teach us that personal signature is important and that answers need not be identical (Eisner, 2002).

Imagination, creativity, and “eureka” experiences are some of the “art” or (creative cosmologies) of social work practice. Creativity involves the whole person, all aspects of personal development as well as all phases of the creative process. Kaschak (1992) describes this total personal involvement as “seeing is believing and knowing for oneself, often for the first time” (p.225).

### *Creativity in Social Work Practice: A Pedagogy*

"Creativity in social work practice is a necessity" (Walz & Uematsu, 1997, p.17).

Walz and Uematsu (1997) argue that, in a pedagogy of creativity, the first step must be to challenge the existing educational conventions, a key aspect of Turner's (1999) paradigm shift toward creative cosmology. The paradigm shift in this article is based on four concepts: a) uniqueness of the human being, b) cultural diversity, c) overcoming boredom, and d) resource limits. These four concepts force social workers to explore and design creative approaches to practice because creative social work is "not just a theory driven practice, but a multi-theory driven practice" (Walz & Uematsu, 1997, p.23). Social workers need a large

reservoir of knowledge and experience as well as the energy and commitment to go along with creating innovative interventions. The gradual shifting of paradigms is to push the opposites apart with our imaginations so as to create space and enjoy the fantastic music coming from each side (Bly, 1990).

At this point "professional education seems to be governed by orthodoxy and educational correctness" (Walz & Uematsu, 1997, p.24) and social work is no different. Gelfand (1998) describes creativity as not being actualized in education because a culture may not have progressed technologically to the point where it can suit or fill the needs of the creatively advanced individual. However if educators can allow their pedagogy to be radically changed by the recognition of a multicultural world, students can be given the education they desire and deserve (hooks, 1994). With the shifting of paradigms there appears to be a fear about the creative approach, fear that the concept of creativity in itself is an elusive concept. There is no formula for producing creative outcomes or assuring creative behaviors in the field that contain elements of discovery and insight. Every life and every life crisis is unique; only a creative "gaze" can encompass that truth and respond fully. Walz and Uematsu (1997) close with the statement that "the pedagogy is planned and mapped, but with an element of destination unknown" (p.31).

*Determinism versus Creativity: Which way for Social Work? and Determinism versus Creativity: a Response to Peile*

The following two articles take what Walz and Uematsu have to say about a creative paradigm to another level. Peile (1993) discusses how "cosmology is concerned with the universe as a totality of phenomena, attempting to combine metaphysical speculation and



scientific evidence within a coherent framework" (p.127). Peile (1993) is suggesting that human affairs are much more complex than physical events and that "different parts of the universe interact with each other in causal and predictable ways" (p.128).

These insights extend to Turner's (1999) view of creative cosmology as a shift in social work paradigms. At this point social work appears to accept the dominant cosmology, "a cosmology that drew strength from the past successes of the physical sciences" (Peile, 1993, p.127). Peile's point is to view all things as creative in terms of time frames. All creative processes must therefore be understood within the context of fast and slow time frames: "The existence of different time frames for creativity makes it possible for everything to be in a continual creative process without unsustainable chaos" (Peile, 1993, p.131).

For example, a social worker has a client whose goals are to improve parenting capacity within a six-month period. There is very little change over the six month period in regards to parenting capacity but if viewed from a time span of five years, there may be a significant change in parenting capacity. From a deterministic model, the social worker may have difficulty seeing the change over the five-year period because she may be focused on the six-month time frame. Her perspective does not fit with the clients' creative processes. The creative cosmology is that creativity is the fundamental nature of all processes and that everything is involved in a creative process.

Grigsby (1995) points out that as in the 1930's the importance of the relative nature of time is emphasized as essential to the process of social work intervention. As Peile "rediscovers" the creative paradigm, Grigsby discusses some of the fears that may face creative cosmology. The creative paradigm threatens the stability and security of existing

relationships among people and the social structure as a whole (Grigsby, 1993). Often the job that social workers have is dominated by bureaucratic prescriptions and heavily supervised interventions (Walz & Uematsu, 1997) which may not leave much breathing space for creativity. There arises such questions as, how do we supervise creativity? How can we look at giving someone his or her children back in terms of slow and fast time frames? And finally, why change the way that we have always done things? Creative cosmology disrupts the status quo, which leaves people feeling fearful of how to measure outcomes and work. However, the cost of a creative social worker is no greater than other alternative approaches. And while creative work requires energy and commitment, repetitive interventions require little energy and can lead to a lazy kind of orthodoxy in practice (Walz & Uematsu, 1997).

A further note to point out is that "the concept of determinism is in fact dangerous because it encourages the exploitation of both the environment and people" (Peile, 1993, p.129). It is not power that corrupts but simply the idea of power. It is the belief in a deterministic world that enables and justifies the dominance of one person over another and of people over the environment, regardless of whether that dominance or control has a benevolent or exploitive intention (Peile, 1993). An excerpt from *Outlaw Social Work* describes the disproportion of power between the worker, client, and system as follows,

My comment that the historic involvement of the ministry in Aboriginal people's lives needed to be considered here today, fell on deaf ears. He didn't seem to understand that Zoe's anger was her only way of handling her lack of privilege and the powerlessness she felt at being caught in a system that could take her children away from her in an instant. She felt anger toward this system that had taken away so much for so long . . .

Baylis

(Baylis, Burton, Fraser & Transken, 2002, p.10)

By exploring the relationships of power and creativity through a transdisciplinary lens it becomes clear that we as social workers can facilitate creative and transpersonal levels of communication between the social worker and the client.

*The Female Hero: A Quest for Healing and Wholeness*

Noble (1990) explores how women conceptualize healing and wholeness, and suggests ways that feminist therapists may incorporate metaphor into their practice and research. Noble (1990) coins the term "heroism" to describe how women credit themselves for having recognized and attempted to realize their abilities in healing and wholeness. Noble (1990) is convinced that women need a new mythology (paradigm), a new way of thinking about who they really are, what they can become, and the tasks they confront in a world overwhelmed with escalating social, political and environmental crises.

In Turner's (1999) framework "Creativity holds a central place in a paradigm that sees the world as neither all-chaotic nor strictly deterministic" (p.4). The new mythology according to Noble (1990) would empower us to claim, not suppress, our femininity, to perceive ourselves as the heroes of our own lives and the authors of our own stories and to apprehend our life journey as heroic quests. Creative cosmology pushes us from a familiar world, into an unfamiliar, mysterious, unconscious world (Noble, 1990), something like getting past the outer, protective layers of an artichoke to the fragility of the core (Hoskins & Leseho, 1996). The core is creative cosmology and the layers are the historical ways of doing social work/therapy. This perspective/quest encourages women "to reclaim those parts

of ourselves that were lost or hidden along the way, and offer ourselves our own love, respect, and attention" (Noble, 1990, p.18).

*The Artist's Way and The Courage to Create*

Cameron (1992) describes the spiritual path of higher creativity as "oxygen for our souls. Cutting off our creativity makes us savage" (p.181). Cameron and May's (1975) writings of creativity have a significant impact on social work and are interwoven throughout Turner's (1999) entire analytical framework of the forms of creativity. My argument is that without first feeling as though we are creative beings it would be challenging to practice social work in a creative manner. Cameron's book discusses a series of twelve steps to take us to the path to higher creativity. That creativity is an experience, a spiritual experience, of which there is an ebb and flow to recovering your creative self (Cameron, 1992). Since job satisfaction/job burnout among social workers is a concern to both the individual and the employing agency, the suggestion that the social work profession should produce creative professionals has considerable intuitive and logical appeal (Pamperin, 1987).

Cameron's work relates to that of May's (1975), the author of *The Courage to Create*. May discusses how we are "living at a time when one age is dying and the new age is not yet born" (p.10). May is a renowned therapist and inspiring guide and examines how creativity is not just the frosting on life but the fountainhead for human experiences. The author looks at the relationship of the unconscious self and how it relates to creativity. The unconscious seems to take delight in breaking through – and breaking up – exactly what we cling to most rigidly in our conscious thinking (May, 1975).

In keeping with the analytical framework of creativity, Turner (1999) comments on how "social workers are being called upon to practice creatively in the diverse domain where they apply skills and knowledge" (p.91). If we are being called to practice creatively then we must open ourselves up to the force of creativity. Every profession requires a strong sense of creative courage. The organic aspect of creativity causes it to grow on its own; it speaks down to us through the ages revealing new meaning to each generation (May, 1975). These powerful changes are important for social workers because they allow creativity in their practice and the bureaucracies within which they work. The social worker, as an artisan, seeks to influence and change, to shape the material and realize its creative potential (Siporin, 1988).

### *Vein of Gold*

Cameron also discusses the importance of starting off with baby steps which is difficult to deal with in a culture that focuses on the results and not on the rewards of risk. I believe that Cameron is suggesting to look at all your options, acknowledge your existing creativity, and encompass the spirituality that lingers nearby. Transken (2003) adds to this by pointing out that "inspirations come to us from a variety of locations and directions" (p.xi). Being creative sometimes means going beyond what is considered the status quo. Several lines from the poem *None and All* describe for me, within the field of social work and therapy, all that is creative:

striving for what we know won't be  
during our thin lives;  
inquiring about & artfully  
documenting the absurd;  
pushing even ourselves,  
boundaries & other un-evens;

wearing bold masks, vigour, humour, & more  
for vital tasks & vital days;

Transken

(Baylis, Burton, Fraser & Transken, 2002, p.67)

Cameron's book *Vein of Gold* relates to Turner's creative cosmology because creative cosmology is ever evolving and subjective. *Vein of Gold* requires someone to be open to new ideas, new ways of thinking, and the push to challenge those ideas that are pre-existing. This can create some fear "although I do believe, I am afraid of believing" (Cameron, 1996, p.292). As a social worker/therapist I believe there is a shift that is occurring within the realm of therapy in that professionals are acknowledging the widespread need for creativity and new insights, particularly within a northern context. One of the purposes of creative cosmology is to "disturb the logic of instrumental reason" (Somerville & Rapport, 2000, p.7).

In the work that I have done as a therapist there has been an increased push to learn a multicultural cosmology – to learn and be sensitive about cultures, how they work and how they function. There is an acknowledgement that other cultures exist in our community, which I believe for a long time has been ignored. There is money being spent within the province to acknowledge the need for cultural sensitivity and professionals are being encouraged to attend these functions. Bly and Woodman (1998) comment that there is a need in our culture to have a wider mythology, one not so restricted by the typical patriarchal obsessions. I believe this means the creative cosmology is "catching on," the dominant culture is finally paying attention to the oppressed and marginalized peoples of our communities. Granted, we have a long way to go. However, by having conversations such as these, which challenge existing schools of thought and push the envelope within our

agencies, the creative cosmology will continue to create a paradigm shift. Kaschak (1992) describes this as “seeing is believing and knowing oneself for the first time” (p.225). I complete this section with words from the poem *Stained Glass*. I believe these words are encouraging and helpful to envision what it could be like to live in a social work/therapy world where creative cosmology has shifted and people look about in wonderment at the shift:

And I,  
shocked,  
I turn and take another step  
and I trip and the momentum carries me forward  
I almost long for it, for the end  
but again  
the steadying hand holds me  
for a moment  
until I can stand  
he smiles and I whisper in my head:  
Do people live like this?  
do some people really get to live like this?

Bryant

(Bryant, Dahl, Lane, Marttila, Transken & Trepanier, 1999, p.7)

### Aboriginal Perspectives and Northern Practice

In this section of the literature review I will first discuss and examine the process of decolonization and my role within that process. This role is fraught with a range of ethical, personal, professional, historical, cultural, and systemic challenges. I will interweave reflections and thoughts on these throughout this section. Second, I will discuss why an Aboriginal perspective is important and significant in northern social work practice. Lastly, I will discuss how an Aboriginal perspective links to Turner’s (1999) analytical framework of creativity.

*Decolonization*

As I begin to learn about Aboriginal history I find myself experiencing feelings of depression, anger, and hopelessness. There are so many complexities, so many layers, and so much pain. How can I, as a Caucasian, privileged woman, begin to know and understand the pain that this group of people has experienced? Sometimes I feel as though I am an imposter, pretending that I know the issues as a white woman, a white woman who is part of the dominant culture. I reflect that I can not expect to fully understand and know the kind of loss, pain, and trauma that Aboriginal people have gone through. As I sit on these thoughts and reflections I begin to think about my role in decolonization. I believe that Hart (2002) explains the role of the colonizer well when he describes that while decolonization must come from Aboriginal people, colonizers must develop awareness of how they maintain colonization, including awareness of the relationship between colonization and the helping professions, processes and institutions. Ethically, I stand behind the social work code of ethics and believe in the social work values and how, as social workers, we strive for social justice, equality and attempt to challenge systemic issues. The code offers a set of values, principles, and standards to guide decision making and conduct when ethical issues arise (<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>, July 15, 2007). The code also summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession's core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards that should be used to guide social work practice (<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>, July 15, 2007). Ethically, I am beginning to understand my responsibility as a social worker. I am beginning to understand how inappropriate and unethical it would be for me to seek employment in a job that is titled



“Aboriginal Support Worker.” How could I ethically take a job that is meant for a person of Aboriginal ancestry and expect that I will be appropriate to work with this group of people? How appropriate is it for a person of the dominant culture to be working with an oppressed group trying to understand their lens/their worldview? Perhaps I can understand, but I am becoming aware of how inappropriate and unethical it would feel to me personally. This is a personal viewpoint and perhaps others feel differently.

I think about professional/personal challenges of being a Caucasian social worker working with Aboriginal people and am beginning to understand that this is where reflection of Aboriginal healing, traditions, rights, and rituals are important. To develop this understanding, helpers must listen to the life story of each individual. They also must develop an awareness of each individual’s emotional, physical, mental and spiritual wellness as seen by the individual (Hart, 2002). Personally and professionally, I know that I have a responsibility for advocacy – advocating for Aboriginal clients, advocating for Aboriginal rights and simply raising awareness/consciousness about language/racism. Both personally and professionally I understand that I have privilege. I have privilege because I am Caucasian, I have an education, I am married, I own real estate, I am financially secure, and I have a strong supportive family. While I understand that I am a female living in a patriarchal world I do not experience the sort of oppression/marginalization that occurs for Aboriginal people on a daily basis. In feminist ideology the personal is political. This is a way in which we can examine the myths and structures of oppression: “We change our world by changing our selves as we change the world” (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986, p. 13). As a feminist practitioner I can attempt to raise awareness/consciousness around decolonization. I can bring attention to the fact that colonizers’ actions against Aboriginal people have left

them in such a state of cultural disarray. Hart (2002) describes his experience with colonization and the loss of his language:

When I was an adult and before my mother lost her ability to speak – due to a burst aneurysm and stroke – she was teaching me Cree. It was during one our “lessons” that she explained how much she and others were put down for speaking Cree. One story was about her witnessing a teacher putting a clothespin on a fellow student’s tongue for speaking Cree. She also believed that the best start she could give us in life was to teach us English. Besides, she would say “you kids never wanted to learn” (p.15).

Seven Generations worth of pain, difficulty, trauma, and hardship and it will take another seven generations to heal and get back to a place of self-actualization. I do not think that Aboriginal people will be able to get to a place of pre-colonization. I think that the world has changed or shifted too much for this to happen: “People who have undergone colonization are inevitably suffering from concepts of inferiority in relation to their historical cultural/social background” (Laenui, 2000, p.152). Through discussions and reading regarding the history of the residential school system I have continued to understand the huge sense of cultural loss, trauma, or grief. The following is an excerpt from the story *No Time to Say Goodbye*. This is a fictional story based on truth that exemplifies the lack of choice that Aboriginal people faced when dealing with residential schools:

It has been decided that Thomas and Wilson will attend the Kuper Island Residential School. And if you stand in my way, I will see to it that you and your wife are put in jail. You know the penalty for obstructing me, Abraham. I wouldn’t suggest you try it. If you contact us and make the arrangements, your children can be returned to you for ten days at Christmas. Otherwise you will see them next summer (Olsen, Morris & Sam, 2001, p.28).

Systemically Aboriginal people have the cards stacked against them. Less access to health care, less access to services, and no real attachment to land/homes due to appropriation. This has tremendous implications for a people, “especially for a people trying to survive as a people” (Wilkinson, 1980, p.452). Too frequently, I hear comments that suggest that Aboriginal people have it easy such as not having to pay taxes and receiving funding for different programs. I think to myself “you just do not know...you just do not have any idea.”

Overall decolonization is an ongoing process. I believe that as social workers we are responsible for understanding this and reflecting on this in practice continually. I will end this section with the words from Laenui (2000): “the process of colonization and decolonization deserves closer consideration in attempting to refashion societies. Otherwise, we may find that we are merely entrenching ourselves deeper in the systems, values, and controls put in place by the colonizer” (p.159).

### *Significance and Importance of an Aboriginal Perspective on Northern Practice*

Why is an Aboriginal perspective important for northern British Columbia? I believe there are a number of reasons. The first reason is simply demographics. The further north, remote, and isolated in the province a person gets, the Aboriginal population increases. Therefore, as a social worker, it just makes sense that there is a need to have an understanding of Aboriginal culture, traditions, history, food, and community. I believe that as a result of colonization, and in particular residential schooling, there is a huge trust issue that exists for Aboriginal people when dealing with social workers, and rightly so. This is

why it is so important that social workers integrate and learn about an Aboriginal perspective. Hart (2002) explains that helpers recognize that they need to develop an understanding of each individual they are working with, including that person's personal, family, community, and national history, and how that history affects the present. If most of the potential client base is Aboriginal, does it not make sense to have some understanding of Aboriginal worldviews so that the work can be effective? Hart (2002) comments on the differences that exist between Aboriginal peoples' and non-Aboriginal peoples' worldviews values and practices. He comments that these differences are real and can challenge the helping relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

A second factor that increases the importance and significance of having an Aboriginal perspective revolves around the very limited amount of resources, and lack of bodies doing the work in the northern reaches of the province. If the Aboriginal population increases the further north you go, and the amount of resources decreases, then it becomes very important to be working from an Aboriginal perspective.

As a worker myself in the north, I recall how challenging it can be with few resources and immense caseloads. There is a real need and importance for organizations to ensure that the work they are providing is culturally sensitive and appropriate for Aboriginal people. Otherwise, there is a huge group of people in high need and high crisis that just are not accessing the service. In summary, I believe that an Aboriginal perspective is both an important and significant part of being a creative social worker in the north.

## Framework of Creativity

As I have previously described Turner's (1999) framework of creativity by breaking the categories up into five sections I will continue with this format for consistency purposes. I will start with Turner's (1999) creative expression, followed by creative presentation of self, followed by creative conceptualization at the direct practice level, followed by creative conceptualization at the community practice level, and then lastly creative cosmology. I will describe each of these categories and examine and link them to an Aboriginal perspective.

### *Creative Expression*

Turner (1999) discusses creative expression – including writing, painting, and music – as a tool in therapeutic intervention. This tool relates to an Aboriginal perspective in a number of ways. It can be facilitated through Aboriginal teachings, ceremonies, music, culture, and food to name a few. For the purpose of this section, I will attempt to discuss how Aboriginal people use story telling and language to share their oral history as well as pass along important teachings. Ridington (1982) explains that storytelling is more than entertainment; it is a way of communicating important information from one person to another and from one generation to another. Storytelling is a way for families and communities to connect. Storytelling is a way for important lessons to be learned and a way to publicly share information without singling people out: "Stories are interpretations of experience through which subjective information is organized and communicated intersubjectively" (Ridington, 1982, p.214). In western culture, there appears to be an emphasis on individual-centered philosophy, where people strive to better themselves. This is very different for Aboriginal cultures, where it is important to have more of a collectivist approach. People strive for the good of the community and not for the good of just

themselves. Cajete (2000) discusses that through Aboriginal art forms and the ways that Aboriginals create themselves into a community, they come to recognize the important things that embody people.

I believe that Turner's creative expression is embodied in the Aboriginal perspectives because so much of the personal experience is storied/re-storied and communicated through the use of language, tales, and narratives. Ridington (1982) discusses how in any small-scale society where every life is known to others as a story, transformation of personal experience into culturally recognized knowledge is a powerful medium for bonding people to one another with meaning. In sum, I believe that in Aboriginal culture there is a constant connecting occurring through stories and language. This brings me Turner's creative presentation of self.

### *Creative Presentation of Self*

Turner (1999) defines creative presentation of self as creativity that is evident in the social worker's style, which includes use of metaphor, spontaneity, flexibility and risk-taking. Greene, Jensen, and Harper Jones (1996) explain that the clinician's awareness of the different ways to use self ultimately allows the clients, rather than the clinician, to construct reality or repair their stories, and thus increase their sense of empowerment in a valued ethnic context. There is so much that I could discuss in this particular section; however, I will focus on the use of risk-taking by workers. In this particular explanation I define risk-taking to mean the use of sharing self with clients (self-disclosure). This creative presentation of self relates to an Aboriginal perspective. Hart (2002) explains that individuals utilizing an Aboriginal approach reflect upon their own lives and must be willing to share their life

experience to support the healing of others. I think that this connection between creative presentation of self and use of self-disclosure and risk-taking is an important component of creative northern practice. I believe that Hart (2002) explains this well when he comments that the helper understands that his or her life is a journey and that, within the helping relationship, the journey is in relation to the journey of each person helped. I will now move on to explain creative conceptualization at the direct practice level.

### *Creative Conceptualization at the Direct Practice Level*

Turner (1999) describes creative conceptualization at the direct practice level as creativity that leads to the identification of innovative solutions to clients' problems by encouraging the generation of alternatives. Two examples of this definition's relationship to an Aboriginal perspective come in the form of healing circles and ceremonies. Healing circles are an important part of culture and an important, creative way of examining people's issues and/or problems. A healing circle has an immense amount of energy that can engage the individual to look at problems or issues in a different way. Duran and Duran (2000) discuss how cultural practices provide a symbolic system that can steer and guide the transformation of psychic energy for that particular culture. I believe the healing circle to be such a practice. Hart (2002) discusses how a healing circle can lead to various results including emotional validation and healing. I have learned that healing circles can be empowering experiences that can facilitate self-actualization and a feeling of being centered or grounded. Creative conceptualization at the direct practice level is a way for creativity to emerge and an opportunity for social workers to play with that creativity in more of a group format. Schneider Corey and Corey (1997) discuss how facilitators need to have a deep

confidence in the value of the group process and facilitators need to believe in what they are doing and trust the therapeutic process in the group. Hart (2002) also discusses how some situations may call for the helper to share experiential stories that directly relate to the situation being addressed. This is another way in which the healing circle can be creative in looking at client's issues or problems in an innovative way.

Another way creative conceptualization at the direct practice level relates to an Aboriginal perspective is through ceremonies or rituals. Hart (2002) describes how ceremonies can provide and facilitate healing for people. Ellison Williams and Ellison (1996) describe how social workers should use ceremony and ritual, as they are two important aspects of healing in an intervention. I think this is an amazing example of creative conceptualization at the direct practice level from an Aboriginal perspective because it is all about finding a creative energy and solution and helping the client to heal. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) describes how creating is about channeling collective creativity in order to produce solutions to indigenous problems. Aboriginal worldviews are about balance and harmony, viewing the world as being in flux and ever changing. This is also what Turner's framework of creativity speaks to: "Understanding life forms and how together they create and sustain a sacred, delicate balance is the foundation of Aboriginal worldviews and languages" (Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p.260). I will now move on to discuss Turner's creative conceptualization at the community practice level.

#### *Creative Conceptualization at the Community Practice Level*

Turner (1999) describes creative conceptualization at the community practice level as creativity that facilitates the identification of what needs to change at a structural level



(problem finding) and posits innovative methods to bring about the desired changes. I believe this can be negotiated with an Aboriginal perspective by including community members, traditional healers, and Elders in the planning of the new system of care, as it emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural or traditional ways and resources (Duclos, Phillips & LeMaster, 2004). Stiegelbauer discusses the important role that Elders play in the community:

Elders should be role models for everyone else. Elders should be teachers to the grandchildren and all young people because of their wisdom. Elders should be advisors, law-givers, dispensers of justice. Elders should be open to everyone. Elders should be knowledgeable in all aspects of Innu culture. Elders should be teachers for everyone of the past history of Innu people. Elders should be recorders of history, not only orally but to be preserved in print. Elders should be teachers of values important to Innu to be passed on from generation to generation. Elders should be teachers of language and oral history. Elders should be teachers of Innu medicine (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p.39).

Creative conceptualization at the community practice level is more of a structurally based concept in that you are looking at what needs to change at the community level in more of a systemic way. I believe that there is importance in involving Aboriginal communities, members, and Elders in this process, as they are an integral part of the process, particularly because they have the historical knowledge and wisdom with regards to colonization. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) discusses how throughout the period of colonization indigenous peoples survived because of their imaginative spirit, their ability to adapt and their ability to think around a problem. I believe that Aboriginal communities have an immense amount of knowledge to share with the non-Aboriginal world: "Elders give back their wisdom to the community, they work from a base in their experience, they model the best of tradition, and they use tradition and belief to support their work" (Stiegelbauer, 1996, p.53). Involving the Aboriginal community in structural changes is an important part of

creative conceptualization at the community practice level. An Elder is more than just a person. An Elder represents traditional teachings, wisdom and age old knowledge. I believe that it is only with the addition of this kind of wisdom that structural changes and community changes can take place.

Creative conceptualization at the community practice level is an important part of social work. I believe that this is where the larger systemic changes occur. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains that the project of creating is about transcending the basic survival mode through using a resource or capability which every indigenous community has retained throughout colonization – the ability to create and to be creative. I will now move on to discuss Turner's last key point in the analytical framework of creativity – creative cosmology.

### *Creative Cosmology*

Turner (1999) explains that creative cosmology is creativity that holds a central place in a paradigm that sees the world as neither all-chaotic nor strictly deterministic. Clients and workers creatively engage in interactions that hold potential for various outcomes. What this definition entails for me is sort of stepping back and looking at the entire picture, looking at social work in its entirety. I believe that this relates to an Aboriginal perspective that emphasizes a holistic, balanced approach. Hart (2002) explains that an Aboriginal perspective addresses the concepts of holism, balance, connection between all parts, harmony, growth, and healing, as well as the values of sharing, respect, and spirituality. Youngblood Henderson (2000) argues that Aboriginal worldviews are empirical relationships with local ecosystems and that Aboriginal languages are an expression of these

relationships. By living in an ecological space for millennia, Aboriginal people have established a worldview that sees the order of life as a state of flux.

Creative cosmology is seeing the world as well as social work practice as ever-changing, shifting, and evolving. It is being able to step back and see the larger picture of how social work practice is interconnected with the rest of the world as well as all aspects of practice. Youngblood Henderson (2000) goes on further to say that Aboriginal people are but one strand in the web of life and in the circle of which all life forms a part, humans are dependent upon all other forces for survival.

Aboriginal worldviews are about balance and harmony, the world being in flux and ever changing. This is also what the creative cosmology speaks to: “Understanding life forms and how together they create and sustain a sacred, delicate balance is the foundation of Aboriginal worldviews and languages” (Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p.260). In summary of this section, I believe that Turner’s analytical framework of creativity is closely linked and related to an Aboriginal perspective on social work. I will now move on to discuss the lived realities of the northern social worker.

### Realities of the Northern Social Worker

In this section I would like to focus my discussion on the lived realities of the northern social worker. I will do this by discussing several key points. First, I will discuss the reasons I believe that northern non-Aboriginal social workers need to have an understanding of an Aboriginal perspective to work in a northern context. Second, I will discuss some of the challenges that the typical northern social worker faces. These are things such as a lack of resources, a lack of bodies doing social work, the issue of privacy (or fish-

bowl affect), and the feelings of being overworked and overwhelmed as a social worker. Throughout this section I will be using the term north or northern. This concept is a difficult one to define as it can mean something different to each person depending on experience and geographic location. Delaney (1995) describes the far north as vastly different from the normal rural areas and somewhat different than Canada's provincial versions of north, where the same conditions exist, but less dramatically and on a smaller scale. Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick, and Tranter (1997) explain how Canada's far north provides a unique practice context that raises challenging questions in the application of social work.

### *Aboriginal Perspective*

In writing and reflecting on the topics of an Aboriginal perspective and northern practice there are a few key points that I would like to make. Firstly I would like to comment on what an Aboriginal perspective is and means. In this section, I am explaining an Aboriginal perspective from that of a non-Aboriginal person. This means that throughout this section of the thesis I will attempt to explain how a non-Aboriginal person can develop social work practice using an Aboriginal perspective. Battiste (2000) explains that by harmonizing Indigenous knowledge with Eurocentric knowledge there are attempts to heal Aboriginal people, restore dignity, and apply fundamental rights to Aboriginal communities. Hart (2002) comments how, in his experience, helping professionals have not successfully addressed the needs of Aboriginal people and this is due to their limited attempts to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their helping. I believe that there is importance in non-Aboriginal social workers learning how to practice in an Aboriginal context because in the north there are large populations of Aboriginal people. Therefore, as a social worker, it

just makes sense that there is a need to have an understanding of Aboriginal worldviews. Hornosty and Doherty (2004) explain that those who live and work in these rural communities are best placed to know what works and what is needed. Hart (2002) explains that helpers recognize that they need to develop an understanding of each individual they are working with, including that person's family, community, and national history, and how these factors affect the present.

If social workers are to have some influence over future development in this part of the world then they must make efforts to understand its people and the structure of their social, political, cultural, and economic environments (McKay, 1987). Hart (2002) explains that there are differences that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worldviews, values, and practices. He points out that these differences are real and can challenge the helping relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Hart (2002) goes on further to say that Aboriginal people recognized long ago the need for fundamental changes to social work practices within Aboriginal communities and have been calling for these changes for many years. Hart (2002) explains how these differences can challenge helping relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people since the ability to make strong connections can be difficult as a result. Little Bear (2000) comments that while no one has a pure worldview that is completely Indigenous or Eurocentric, it is this clash of worldviews that is at the heart of many current difficulties with effective means of social control in postcolonial North America. I believe that having an Aboriginal perspective opens the door to discussions and broader ideas of cross-cultural practice. I will now move on to discuss some of the challenges that a northern social worker could face.

*Lack of Resources*

I believe that for many social workers the north is still something of a stranger. Schmidt and Klein (2004) explain how the north is often associated with limitation and includes characteristics like remoteness, isolation, lack of services, and personal hardship. Graham (1990) describes how people tend to define the north for themselves based on peculiar mental constructs that often bear little relation to that of reality. This is a reason that northern social work is so important. The illusions and disillusion that people have about the north need to be clearly defined and discussed both within the realm of social work and outside the realm of social work. Zapf (2002) comments how power, control, and the ability to innovate are located in the heartland or core urban regions in southern Canada; the northern hinterland is dependent upon this southern heartland for investment capital, technical expertise, markets, information, and general well-being. I believe that one of the real issues of the northern social worker is that the south makes all of the decisions for the north; as a result, in the north we are continually dealing with a lack of resources and lack of bodies doing the work. Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick, and Tranter (1997) explain that southern ideologies are espoused by people who may not understand the north; they have the power to not only define northern problems but also define northern opportunities and northern futures. Delaney (1995) comments that social workers in the north are often called upon to do a variety of tasks with limited resources.

Mackenzie (2006) discusses some of her thoughts on being a northern social worker; she emphasizes creativity and flexibility in dealing with a lack of resources and lack of professionals doing the work. She discusses how critical it is to be flexible in effectively

integrating pertinent policies and procedures of diverse social services to try and meet the needs of the clients:

The challenges of trying to learn a whole bunch of program areas. I think flexibility, so being able to jump from one program area to the other was another attribute I would think. Being creative because when you're doing social work there's never a set answer to each of their areas or problems that you're dealing with, with people. It's coming up with a solution that's going to work for that particular family in that particular community (Mackenzie, 2006, p.85).

I believe that as a northern social worker you have to accept the fact that there is going to be a lack of professionals doing the work, and a lack of resources. That is the reality and the challenge. Lohmann and Lohmann (2005) discuss how good northern social work practice is first and foremost good social work practice. They go on further to comment that "limited resources, in fact, present a challenge to social workers to identify innovative solutions to problems" (Lohmann & Lohmann, 2005, p.317). I believe that anyone who has worked as a social worker north of Prince George, in British Columbia can relate to the challenges of northern social work. Not only are there the challenges of a lack of resources and a lack of professionals doing the work but many other conditions. The northern social worker has harsh weather conditions to deal with, isolation, a lack of supervision, and feelings (at times) of being overwhelmed with the magnitude of the demands of the job. Bridget Moran has some interesting comments to make about practicing social work in the north:

Starting in Prince George, my region extended sixty miles across dirt roads to Vanderhoof located in the exact centre of the province. West of Vanderhoof I travelled fifty miles and more to the settlements of Fort Fraser, Fraser Lake, Endako, and beyond. I drove south from those settlements over logging roads to reach a number of homes. North from Vanderhoof, I covered the forty miles to Fort St. James, again on dirt roads, and to any settlement beyond there that could be reached by logging

roads. In that huge wooded territory which I reckoned to be about the size of Holland, I was responsible for the elderly, children, the poor, people of all ages with mental and social problems, and the infirm. My area included one Indian residential school, Lejac on Fraser Lake, and five Indian reservations, every one of them textbook study in poverty, disease, and despair (Moran, 1992, p.27).

The next challenge that I will discuss as a reality for northern social workers is the issue of privacy, or the fishbowl affect.

### *Privacy, or the Fishbowl*

Working in the north as a social worker is something that is not effectively taught in most social work education programs. Delaney (1995) explains that much of what is written about rural areas does not apply to the northern parts of Canada's provinces. Delaney (1995) goes on further to say that northern social workers require a solid academic and professional background if they are to continue their search for excellence. One quickly learns about the "fishbowl affect" when immersed in a northern community. Delaney (1995) explains that a critical aspect of northern environments is isolation and that social workers are as a result often highly visible. This is where everything you do is on display. Schmidt and Klein (2004) explain that limitations of geographic location and challenges of high personal visibility were felt most strongly by northern social workers. Schmidt and Klein (2004) go on further to say that life in a small isolated community limits privacy and raises personal accessibility to clients as well as other community members. "Social workers in remote isolated communities experience high visibility and often feel that they are living in a fish bowl where each and every aspect of their behavior is observed, recorded, and measured by a critical community" (Schmidt, 2000, p. 344).



Spellman Olson (1988) explains further how social workers in northern areas experience a considerable amount of stress as a result of their isolation. I believe that this can lead to unnerving feelings for the social worker. These could be feelings such as self-doubt, scrutiny by community members, and stress. Collier (2006) has some interesting ideas around managing the complexities of being a northern social worker and explains that while you are learning you are also unlearning. Collier (2006) goes on further to suggest that “living in the same community as your clients is important. Living in the same part of the community allows social workers and community members to work together, carry on traditional activities together, share food and drink, and face problems together” (p.51). I believe that Collier is suggesting that while there are challenges in being a northern social worker the rewards are great and that there are ways to overcome some of the challenges.

Mackenzie (2006) explains that in many small Yukon communities, regional social workers have daily contact with clients during regular work hours and after-work hours. This may be at the ball park, in a restaurant, or just around town. Mackenzie (2006) goes on further to say that, while many northern social workers have to think about the challenges of privacy and boundaries with clients on a daily basis, social workers in large cities likely do not have to think about maintaining these kinds of boundaries because encountering their clients is much less likely.

I recall a personal example while working as a northern social worker in the north where I realized that a client I had just begun to work with worked at the carpet cleaners. (Note: all details have been changed to protect those that are involved). After several therapy sessions I learned that not only was this the only carpet cleaning business in town but the client’s family owned the business. I thought to myself, “just one more place in town that

I can not go.” Hornosty and Doherty (2004) explain that a common attribute of northern, rural communities is the lack of individual privacy and anonymity. “Service providers noted how hard it is to have a secret in rural communities since everyone knows everyone else” (Hornosty & Doherty, 2004, p.112). I believe that many times the northern social worker can become overwhelmed by the challenges she faces daily. The initial feelings of optimism and challenge give way to frustration and confusion as the person is unable to interact in a meaningful way in the new setting (Zapf, 1993). I believe that the privacy or the fishbowl affect can be challenging because social workers may feel that while “off-duty” many personal behaviors will be scrutinized. Schmidt and Klein (2004) describe that findings from their study on northern social workers indicate that worker visibility is a concern that is almost non-existent in the urban setting. As a northern social worker I recall feeling embarrassed and guilty going to the liquor store on a Friday after work and seeing clients. Or perhaps not even seeing clients, but reflecting on questions such as what will people think if they see me here? How will my behavior and actions impact my job and reputation? I found that this privacy concern typically guided my behavior while in the community of Fort St. John. It guided my behavior in such a way that I stayed away from businesses where I knew that clients worked, I stayed out of the pubs on busy nights, and never went to the community “dance bar.” This brings me to the last section that I will discuss in this paper, which deals with feelings of being overwhelmed and overworked as a northern social worker.

### *Overwhelmed and Overworked*

Feelings of being overwhelmed and overworked are typical among the northern social worker and often leads to the high turnover that occurs in the north. When I use

“overwhelmed and overworked” I am describing social workers who have high caseloads, and who are effective workers but are going down the path to eventual burnout resulting from the extreme intensity that working in the north involves. Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick, and Tranter (1997) describe how staff turnover in rural and northern areas is an historic problem. Ingebrigtsen (1985) explains that some of the negative features of the north include limited access to urban areas, high transportation costs, and the mental hazards of being “bushed” or having “cabin fever.” Ingebrigtsen (1985) explains that remote areas can present problems for human adaptation, especially for those unaccustomed to its physical, social, and political environments. I believe that the feelings of being overwhelmed and overworked result from a culmination of all of the challenges that come with being a worker in the north. Delaney, Brownlee, Sellick, and Tranter (1997) explain that some of the reasons that social workers face feelings of being overwhelmed and overworked: working with limited supervision, few professional resources, and agencies with constrained budgets, the northern social worker is often faced with substantial personal expenses just to maintain his or her professional competence. Zapf (1993) further comments that a common observation from empirical studies is the intense stress reported by social workers after moving to remote northern settlements. Ingebrigtsen (1985) explains that northern areas have a high turnover of staff which suggests that professionals have not been adequately prepared for providing services or making satisfactory personal adjustments.

I believe that there is a lack of infrastructure in small communities to deal with the crises that can occur for clients. I recall an experience with a client having a psychotic episode and having to wait in the isolation room of the hospital for close to a week until a bed opened up at a regional hospital that had the infrastructure to deal with psychosis and

medication management. This was a personal experience that left me feeling completely overwhelmed and overworked. I believe that some of these feelings of being overwhelmed and overworked can stem from the fact that the north is often forgotten provincially. Coates and Morrison (1992) discuss how the northern parts of provinces share common characteristics: their land is generally cold and does not support commercial agriculture; they have little political power at either the provincial or federal level; their economy is heavily resource-based and therefore subject to extreme fluctuations; there are very few people scattered across vast lands; the non-Natives are typically restricted to a small number of regional centers; there is a large Aboriginal population that is generally relegated to a few specific sectors in the resource economy; and the non-Native population is notable for its mobility.

In summary, it is interesting that even though the north can create many challenges for social workers there are still social workers that want to work in the north. What is it about the north that is attractive? I believe that the north conjures up all sorts of images for those who are interested in doing northern social work. There is a certain wilderness and romanticism that accompanies the adventure of working in the north. However, I believe that the typical social worker is unprepared for some of the challenges that can present themselves in the north. Collier (2006) describes how northern social workers must actually refashion the way they do their job, rejecting old ways of ordering information and rethinking their assumptions about how society works. As Coates and Morrison put it, "Northernness is to a considerable degree in the eye of the beholder" (Coates & Morrison, 1992, p.9). Ingebrigtsen (1985) also comments that remote northern environments have

alluring qualities for individuals who are attracted by the beautiful scenery, the outdoor life, the employment opportunities, and the northern lifestyle.

### Conclusion

In concluding this literature review I would like to say a few words about several theories that have a strong base in social work and are also, in essence, creative. The groundwork for the social work profession to be creative exists; it is simply up to individual social workers, agencies, and the profession at large to embrace it. Numerous social work theories appear to be based on Rogerian theory (person-centered therapy), feminist theory, systems theory, and Jungian theory. These theories all have creative aspects to them. Carl Rogers believed that people in general were good and trustworthy and that the basic drive to fulfillment implies that people will move towards health if the way seems open for them to do so (Corey, 1996). Therefore, in creative language, the therapeutic relationship is a vehicle for clients to explore and experience the areas of their life where they are struggling. This therapy is creative in nature as it gives opportunity for the client and therapist to co-create alternatives and avenues for exploring issues. There is no recipe to follow with this therapy as it mainly consists of warmth, genuineness, and authenticity. A second theory that is creative in nature and underpins the social work profession is feminist theory.

Feminist theory is organic and constantly in flux. There are many definitions of feminist theory, as it can mean different things to different people. However, there are some key themes of feminist theory that stand out. These themes are an end to patriarchy, empowerment, process, the fact that the personal is political, unity-diversity, validation of the non-rational, and consciousness-raising praxis (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986). I

believe that feminist theory is in itself creative. It is creative in the sense that it is ever-changing, fluid and in flux. It is creative in the sense that feminist practitioners seek change. It is creative in the sense that “the task of feminists is to demystify and make available the knowledge and skills that people must have to solve problems and meet their needs” (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986, p.9). A third theory that I believe is creative in nature is systems theory.

Systems theory focuses on individuals as part of and incorporating other systems and these systems are all interconnected and woven together. Systems theory is creative because it examines how interconnections work together for the client. The value of systems theory is that it deals with wholes rather than with parts of human or social behavior as other theories do (Payne, 2005). Systems theory also discusses how everything is constantly in a state of change and always evolving, which is similar to feminist thought: “Change is going on all the time, but knowing how we can make a difference is an important part of having agency, that is, an impact on things as they change” (Payne, 2005, p.174). Systems theory is creative because of all of the interconnections that occur among all of the systems and relationships that people are involved with.

Jungian theory is another base of social work practice. He writes about dreams, the unconscious and conscious, imagination, and fantasy to name a few. Jung “turned his curiosity toward the inner world of the imagination” (Chodorow, 1997, p.2). Jung’s work revolved around being creative, examining dreams and interpreting play and fantasy. He describes how active imagination takes place mainly inside the mind while other times the imagination is given form through painting, drawing, sculpting, dancing, and writing (Chodorow, 1997). Jungian theory was the birth of expressive therapies. I believe that much

of social work is based on these creative constructs. These are things such as role-playing, dream-work, art therapy, drama therapy and letter writing to name a few: “Active imagination is not so much a technique as it is a natural process” (Chodorow, 1997, p.13). In summary, these are just a few of the theories that I believe are grounded in the social work that we see and do today. I felt it was important to mention some of these theories and suggest that they are not only an important base of social work but also based in creativity.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Qualitative Research

“When qualitative information is collected, the number of subjects in the study is often small, because the focus is on collecting in-depth information from each subject so as to understand the subject’s subjective experience of the phenomena under study” (Marlow, 2001, p.10). The exploratory nature of this research project necessitates a qualitative, methodological approach. Together the researcher and the subject are going to create a reality through their interaction. It is the interaction between researcher and informants that is a critical aspect of qualitative research. Denzin (2003) describes this as an interpretive event, a way of projecting understanding about the self and its situations and experiences. This process will be giving women the space to question and critically assess their creative experiences, as defined by their cultural backgrounds (Morris, 2002). Understanding women’s experiences from their own point of view will provide data that is genuine, authentic, respectful, and will help the social work profession understand more about the phenomena of creativity in northern social work.

#### *Phenomenology*

In this section I will explain why I believe this study is based in phenomenology. I will also discuss the strengths that I see in this study. This study will use descriptive strategies to find out more about the phenomena of creativity among northern women social workers. In phenomenology there is an emphasis on understanding the lived experience. Patton (2002) explains that in phenomenological research there is a focus on exploring how



humans make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness both as an individual and as shared meaning. Thus phenomenology involves the description of things as one experiences them or of one's experiences of things (Hammond, Howarth, & Keat, 1991). Phenomenology is integrated by many researchers and scholars who also practice in other avenues of methodology. Norman Denzin is one of these scholars. Denzin (2003) is an authority on qualitative research and is well known for his work in the fields of both phenomenology and ethnography. Thomas (1993) explains that phenomenology expands our horizons for choice and widens our experiential capacity to see, hear, and feel. In this study I will be exploring with the six women how they work creatively in the field of social work. I will do this by asking questions and exploring with the women how creative social work can be done in the north. The phenomenon of creativity is an area where there has been little research done in the field of social work. This research study will shed some light on how northern women social workers practice creatively. In phenomenology the researcher is interested in the lived experiences and the researcher may not always know how these lived experiences are going to be described and explained by participants and people. Therefore the choice of research practice depends upon the questions that are asked, their context, what is available in the context, and what the researcher can do in that setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The strengths that appear in this study are the topic and framework "learning about creative social work in a northern environment" and the use of semi-structured interviews. There is strength in learning about creative social work in the Peace Region of British Columbia. The Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people work, live, and have relationships with each other. Knowing more about how the two cultures practice creative social work

may open the door to a more culturally sensitive way of working. In this study I have interviewed three non-Aboriginal social workers and three Aboriginal social workers. In the research chapter I discuss in greater detail how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social workers practice creative social work in different ways. Thomas (1993) discusses that changes in cognition resulting from new ways of thinking are an important step toward recognizing alternatives as well as the fact that new ways of thinking can be contagious. I see this as a strength, an ethical responsibility, and as creating an alliance between two cultural groups that will continue to live side by side in a community.

The second strength that I see in this study is the use of semi-structured interviews. When a woman shares her story, thoughts, reflections, and narratives, she is sharing a piece of her inner soul. There is a richness that emerges from a subject's experience. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) discuss that we can use what people say as evidence about their perspectives and about the larger subcultures and cultures to which they belong. I believe this is just one of the reasons that people are drawn to the field of social work, the curiosity and interest in sharing with others' their journeys through life. I am hopeful that this process creates consciousness-raising for the research participants and will give the opportunity for the women to critically look at their ways of practice and question the status quo (Morris, 2002). This is what I hope to capture by engaging the participants in semi-structured interviews and therefore it is an advantage that the sample size is small. "Interviewing can be an extremely important source of data: it may allow one to generate information that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise – both about events described and about perspectives and discursive strategies" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.131). I am encouraged to do this research because I believe it can be used to challenge the status

quo, document truths, and to create knowledge about creativity between Aboriginal women and Caucasian women for the Peace Region. Gilchrist (1997) adds that, “it may not be a shortage of research that hampers, but a shortage of research that is useful from Indian points of view” (p.70).

### *Identity-Pegs – Self-Identification*

Henning (2005) discusses that in order to conduct minimally unbiased research it is important that the researcher have critical awareness of her own biases, stereotypes, race, morals, values, and social beliefs; therefore, the researcher must first acknowledge her identity pegs. I am female, white, heterosexual, educated, middle-class, and privileged - these are my identity pegs. I am researching creativity and how northern female social workers practice. My identity pegs will of course impact how I engage in my research. In phenomenology the researcher is interested in the lived experiences and the researcher may not always know how these lived experiences are going to be described and explained by participants/people. Therefore the choice of research practice depends upon the questions that are asked, their context, what is available in the context, and what the researcher can do in that setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This is how the researcher becomes the bricoleur.

The bricoleur is seen as a creative quilt-maker and open to many new and alternative possibilities. Patton (2002) explains that a bricolage combines old things in new ways including alternative and emergent forms of data collection, transformed observer-observed relations, and reframed interviewer-interviewee interconnections. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) go on further to explain the interpretive bricoleur produces a bricolage – that is a pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation. I

believe that the bricolage is important to the field of phenomenology because it speaks to the many layers that exist when trying to understand and research people's lived experiences.

The legacy of the sociologist Erving Goffman shows us how the fragility of day-to-day life is lent solidity and orders by small gestures and ritual offerings (Manning, 1992). I believe that this means that however small an action and inaction we make it can impact the other person. This is valuable and important information to a researcher. Goffman also suggests that background assumptions are the syntax of everyday behaviour, without which the language of behaviour is incomprehensible (Manning, 1992). Therefore I believe it is essential that I engage in critical thinking and am constantly aware of my own values, feelings, and beliefs while conducting this research. Inner self-reflection is a necessary process if we are to be valuable feminist researchers (Henning, 2005).

### Sample Collection

In this section of the thesis I will discuss the sample size and composition. "Sampling implies that a researcher is choosing informants because those informants might have something to say about an experience they share with others" (Steeves, 2000, p.45). In this study I want to be sure that the data is information rich and have therefore decided on a smaller number of participants. For the purpose of this study there were six women selected. The women who were selected were women from whom I could learn about the issues of creative northern social work. Marlow (2001) discusses how the element is the item under study in the population and sample. The elements in this research study are six women who practice northern social work with the cultural backgrounds of either Aboriginal non-Aboriginal. All six of the women had different Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural

backgrounds and language groups and because of this I decided to describe the women as being either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. Hart (2005) describes that on the other hand, Aboriginal people face common challenges – colonial oppression being one of the greatest – which encourage the identification of commonalities among us. This type of sampling is purposive sampling, or nonprobability sampling. This enables me to sample according to the nature of the research problem and the phenomenon under study (Marlow, 2001), which in this case is creative northern social work. I used both criterion sampling and snowball sampling. Criterion sampling involves picking those who meet an eligibility criterion of three women being Aboriginal and three women being non-Aboriginal. Secondly, the women must have a social work degree. Snowball sampling involves identifying some members of the population and then having those individuals contact others in the population (Marlow, 2001). The sample size is small however Marlow (2001) states that “it is the information-richness of the cases that is important” (p.145). The Aboriginal women in this study are not representing their First Nations Bands.

### Data Collection

In this section of the thesis I will discuss the data collection through semi-structured interviews. “Qualitative researchers expect reciprocal influence to occur between themselves and the participants through the use of open ended processes rather than standardized instruments” (Gilchrist, 1997, p.72). This is of particular importance when working with Aboriginal cultures because of the age-old use of storytelling and sharing of experiences. In this study the data collection that was utilized was semi-structured interviews. Three weeks before the interview occurred I mailed Turner’s (1999) article *Creativity - An Overview and*

*Framework for the Social Work Practitioner* to each participant. In this article Turner clearly defines the five forms of creativity. The rationale for providing the interviewees with this article was so that they would be familiar with the terminology of the questions that I would be using in the interview. Once the interviews were completed, I was able to analyze the data. As the researcher I completed the transcription. Once the interviews had been transcribed I gave the transcripts back to the interviewees and gave the women several weeks to read them over. This was to give the women an opportunity to view the transcripts and to change or add pieces. This review also helped to reduce any possible researcher bias. Kahn (2000) describes that informants often reflect on their experience after being interviewed the first time, which leads to enriched data. Also this review was done to also ensure that the entire journey of the research project was done with the utmost respect. I decided to employ the method of semi-structured interviews due to the fact that I was more interested in the richness of the story and experience by each participant. That kind of information is difficult to capture in a survey or questionnaire format. Furthermore, the Aboriginal voice is minimal or effectively eliminated when survey or questionnaire research is done (Gilchrist, 1997). Marlow (2001) discusses how interviews are applicable if you are interested in a high response rate, a gathering of in-depth information and if anonymity is not of primary importance.

Due to the fact that there were only two identified groups (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) involved in this study there were key pieces of information that I needed to be aware of when the interviews were conducted. Some of these were differences in cultural backgrounds between the interviewer and interviewee and the interviewee responding differently due to factors such as race, gender, and age. These points will be explained in

further detail in the sections that cover ethics, weaknesses, and strengths of the research study. As it was my intention to encourage as much free flow conversation as possible with the participants I utilized a semi-structured interview format to guide this process. For this purpose I developed the following questions as prompts:

1.) Please describe for me your role as a social worker.

2.) *Creative expression* is defined by Linda Turner (1999) *as a tool in therapeutic intervention, including writing, painting and music*. Please describe for me how you might use creative expression in your work.

3.) *Creative presentation of self* is defined by Linda Turner (1999) *as creativity, which is evident in the social worker's style, which can include use of metaphor, spontaneity, flexibility, and risk-taking*. Please describe for me how you might use creative presentation of self in your social work.

4.) Linda Turner (1999) defines *creative conceptualization (at the direct practice level)* *as creativity that leads to the identification of innovative solutions to clients' problems by encouraging the generation of alternatives*. Please describe for me how you might practice this in your social work.

5.) Linda Turner (1999) defines *creative conceptualization (at the community practice level)* *as creativity of what needs to change at a structural level and the innovative methods to bring about the desired change*. Please describe for me how you might practice this form of creativity.

6.) *Creative Cosmology* by Linda Turner (1999) *as creativity that holds a central place in a paradigm that sees the world as neither all chaotic nor strictly deterministic*.

*Clients and workers creatively engage in interactions that hold potential for various outcomes.* What does creative cosmology mean for you and how do you practice this?

7.) What is the lived reality of a social worker in the Peace Region?

8.) Are there any other things you would like to say to me or to the social work profession about creativity?

A driving force of human consciousness is to make sense of experience. In other words the understanding people have of their world and life situation and the meaning they have made of this is usually contained in the narratives or stories they tell (Kahn, 2000). This thesis is intended to explore the linkages of northern social workers experiences and creativity. It has been my experience, as a northern social worker, that northern social workers work differently than social workers in urbanized settings. I believe this is because it is a necessity. When the weather is -30, there are transportation issues, social workers are possibly the only resource within an hours drive; there is a trauma history...social workers find a way to work creatively with this.

### Ethical Considerations

In this section I will discuss ethical considerations that I anticipated in the use of semi-structured interviews. This included issues around confidentiality and including First Nation's women in this study. Ethical issues must be considered when discussing topics that have a high level of personal involvement. The interviewees have self-disclosed for the purpose of this thesis, how they practice creative social work and as a result of this feeling, emotions may come up for the interviewees. Therefore interviewees were provided with the contact information of a counselor if there was a need to debrief the interview.



Confidentiality was a top priority and was respected throughout the semi-structured interview as well as throughout the study. I adhered to the ethical codes of conduct found in the social work code of ethics handbook. As a researcher, informed consent is important and the Tri-Council policy statement (1998) explains that “free and informed consent lies at the heart of ethical research involving human subjects” (2.1). Consent was freely given and could have been withdrawn at any point the participant wished. I explained to the participants what the research entailed, how the interviews would take place, how the research would be written up, and that no harm would come to them by participating in the research. I provided consent forms for the participants to sign, as well as explained the process of the research study and how they would be participating (see Appendix 3). All interviewees received an oath of confidentiality. The interviewees provided me with fictitious names in order to maintain anonymity.

I recorded the semi-structured interviews via audiotape. The duration of each interview was approximately an hour. The data was analyzed through transcription. The researcher, myself, completed the transcription. Once the tapes were transcribed I used content analysis to select statements to explore my thesis themes. Marlow (2001) comments that content analysis involves written coding and oral communications and then making inferences based on the incidence of these codes. All interviewees signed a consent form that allowed me to use their thoughts, ideas, and narratives for the purpose of my thesis research. The audiotapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the privacy and safety of my home for two years and then they will be destroyed. All participants in this study were given my home phone number in case they had questions that arose around the research or their involvement in the research study. Each participant was informed that if they had any

complaints about how the research was conducted those were to be directed to the Office of Research at UNBC. Once the research is completed the participants are welcome to have copies of the research results.

The other ethical issue I will discuss is how the research involves Aboriginal women. The Tri-Council policy statement (1998) discusses that when conducting research with Aboriginal people it is “good practice” to respect culture, tradition, knowledge, and ritual. I feel that there is an importance and necessity to hear their stories and rich experiences and develop that into a research study. As a researcher I need to be aware of myself as a non-Aboriginal woman and how my identity affects the participant’s response to the questions. Marlow (2001) also discusses how, when working with diverse populations, the respondent may interpret certain words or phrases in a different way from that intended by the researcher.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH

From the interviews that I engaged in with the research participants, I have drawn together the ideas that emerged ideas to articulate themes. Finding the themes within the data is called thematic analysis. I use thematic analysis as Erving Goffman (as cited in Manning, 1992) describes it as an analysis of a strip of interaction that must “unpeel” the different laminations of a frame in order to discover its meanings. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to focus on the identifiable patterns and themes of behaviour and living. For this project six participants agreed to be involved in semi-structured interviews based on eight questions. All the women involved in this study had a social work degree and were all social workers in the Peace Region (see Appendix 5). The Peace River Regional District and Hospital District serve the Peace River region of British Columbia, south of the 58th parallel and east of the Rocky Mountains. Its boundaries encompass approximately 12 million hectares (46,000 square miles). The population resides in seven incorporated municipalities and four rural electoral areas (<http://www.prrd.bc.ca/home.php>). Some of the cities and towns included in this area are Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd, Taylor, and Hudson’s Hope to name a few. All of the interviews were conducted over the telephone or in person. The conversations were taped and later transcribed for the purposes of data collection and thematic analysis.

The way that I have described the themes are as follows: I have analyzed the themes that have emerged from each question because the questions are based on Turner’s (1999) five categories in her framework of creativity. I looked at themes for each of these specific questions because I was interested in finding out what creativity looked like for each of the

social workers in each of these categories (see Appendix 4 for interview questions). The theme that emerged for the question on creative expression was metaphor. The themes that emerged for the question on creative presentation of self was spontaneity – humour and metaphor. The theme that emerged for the question on creative conceptualization at the direct practice level was collaborative process. The theme that emerged from the question on creative conceptualization at the community practice level was community development. The themes that emerged from the question on creative cosmology was big picture and surprises. Lastly, the theme that emerged from the question on the lived realities of working as a northern social worker was northern issues.

The first question in the interview was simply for the women to describe their role as social workers. The following are their roles as they described them. Betty, is a non-Aboriginal woman and is a social worker on a health team. Molly is an Aboriginal woman and felt that her social work role was to never do harm, look out for the children who cannot speak, and treat all with dignity and respect. Angela is a non-Aboriginal woman and described her social work role as case management and group facilitator. Marie is also a non-Aboriginal woman and described her social work role as that of many roles: “I think basically it’s not just a role, it’s many roles and it’s trying to take in as much information throughout your training and career, working with people, working with systems to try and make humanity a betterment as a whole” (personal communication, March 1, 2007). Mary is an Aboriginal woman and described her social work role as working as a counsellor with adults, one-on-one, and groups. Lola is also an Aboriginal woman and described her social work role as raising awareness about societal issues that are impacting the people that she

works with: “Like poverty, racism, multiple things. That’s my biggest, where I feel like somewhere I can make a difference” (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

### *Creative Expression: Metaphor*

All the research participants were asked the question *creative expression is defined by Linda Turner as a tool in therapeutic intervention, including writing, painting, and music. Describe for my how you might use this kind of creative expression in your social work?* The theme that emerged from this question was the use of metaphor. All of the research participants identified metaphor as being a part of their social work practice as a northern social worker. Metaphor is creative and can take many different shapes and forms. Betty shared that she used metaphor in terms of storytelling:

You talk about childhood, you talk about life experiences, school, vocation, health, family relationships and how they dealt with different situations growing up and how their experiences affects who they were then and as a person and who they are today (personal communication, January 14, 2007).

Marie, described that she likes to use metaphor when trying to engage new clients.

I really try hard...to find out and define what are their interests. What gets them excited? What brings a sparkle to their eye? And try to utilize what their interests are and use it as part of therapy and working with them. For example if I had a kid that was really into cars and fixing old cars. I’ll try to use examples of cars and working on an engine and use it as a metaphor for other things. I use a lot of metaphor (personal communication, March 1, 2007).

Lola, an Aboriginal social worker, described that she really liked to use metaphor through quotes because of the way that it impacts you and makes you think: “One of my favorite quotes is from Mother Teresa...if you spend your time judging you have no time to love” (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

Mary described how she uses metaphor in group situations:

We do group puzzle. And again that's another group activity. You know you can go and purchase a puzzle that's blank. And we give a piece to each one of the group members and they write things, draw, and color on the puzzle that represents whatever their healing has meant to them and that at the end of it we put it all together. It's a very powerful technique for them, for the group (personal communication, February 10, 2007).

Most of the women explained that they used music as a metaphor in their work with clients.

Music was used by the women in both one-on-one settings and in group settings. Music was often used to inquire into emotions, feelings, and self-reflection work: "I would probably ask them what type of music do you play when you feel like you're angry? And when you're sad and happy? Those are the types of questions. So I would use music" (Molly, personal communication, February 20, 2007). Marie described how she would ask a client if he liked music and then present a challenge: "You like writing songs? You know then write me a song about your life" (personal communication, March 1, 2007).

All of the women interviewed had engaging, creative ideas on how to use creative expression in their work as northern social workers. A difference between social workers seeing their own work in terms of a metaphor such as storytelling, or a quote, or music is that social workers are asking clients to use metaphor in creative expression to describe their lives. The theme of metaphor that has emerged links back to the literature that I have reviewed because it shows how social workers use creative expression to stay empathic, self-aware, interpersonally attuned, compassionate, and inquiring (Mahoney, 1998). Creative expression and metaphor enables clients to invent stories and re-write their narratives and this can help clients in finding their sense of self (Cameron, 1998). Also a difference between social workers seeing their own work in terms of a metaphor and social workers asking clients to use metaphor in creative expression can be used to help them to describe

their lives. Metaphor and creative expression is a form of restorying experiences that can promote client choice and empowerment. This leads me to the next interview question, which revolves around creative presentation of self.

*Creative Presentation of Self: Spontaneity – Humor and Metaphor*

The research participants were asked the question *creative presentation of self is defined by Linda Turner as creativity which is evident in the social worker's style, which can include use of metaphor, spontaneity, flexibility, and risk-taking. Please describe for me how you might use creative presentation of self in your social work?* The themes that emerged in this question were the use of spontaneity – humor and metaphor. Most of the women interviewed shared that the use of humor was something that was useful in many situations. When used in the right circumstance, and at the appropriate time, humor was important and significant for these social workers in their creative presentation of self:

Actually any of the teens that I have worked with, using a lot of humor and being really flexible has really built that rapport. And I have been able to build those kinds of longer-term relationships you know with kids who really don't want to have those relationships. As long as they feel that you can be funny and that they are comfortable around you and that you can make jokes, they'll come back and talk to you about the more serious issues (Angela, personal communication, March 18, 2007).

Marie comments that "a bit of humor loosens it up a little. And even for the adults..., I think people, by poking fun at myself or at the system, allows them to see me, as hey I'm human too" (personal communication, March 1, 2007). Betty shared that she would use humor when she felt the moment was appropriate and when the situation called for it.

Use of humor, I think comes and goes. And when I think about my practice and bringing in humor, I think that whenever it was appropriate depending on how receptive it might be to the person, that's when humor

might come in and it would go at different times. It also depended on the type of situation. For example, when I was working in child welfare working with children I found that I used humor more often in trying to connect with the children and that it worked well. Try and lighten the mood as you're dealing with generally difficult situations (Betty, personal communication, January 14, 2007).

Lola, an Aboriginal social worker, commented on her use of spontaneity – humor and how it depended on the rapport that she had built up with a client.

If it's a parent that I have been working with for like two years and we get along great then it's a lot easier. I'm more comfortable using my humor that way because they would already know me and know that is part of my style (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

Spontaneity – humor relates to the literature on creative presentation of self because it speaks to the importance of spontaneity, humor, risk-taking, and flexibility. Without this creative presentation of self clients would not have the freedom to discuss and listen for those thoughts and stories which have not yet been heard, negotiating together the limits and possibilities (Griffith, 1995). Talerico (1986,) also explains that creativity encourages the expression of feelings through risk-taking, communication, new insights, and the resolution of conflict. Social workers can help clients to see that they can be flexible, spontaneous, have humor, and welcoming of risk by role modeling these same attributes. Creative presentation of self is about not being afraid to show and share yourself as a social worker. The second theme that emerged in creative presentation of self was the use of metaphor.

Most of the women commented that they utilized some form of metaphor in response to the question creative presentation of self. The women all had very insightful, creative, and useful metaphors that they practiced with the clientele they had worked with. Mary, an Aboriginal social worker, explained that,

I talk to them about when they're growing up and their childhood and whatever skills are modeled for them end up going into a tool box and



that's what they end up taking into their adult lives. And often there's only a couple of tools in there. Like maybe a hammer and a screwdriver and then they try and fix everything with those two tools. It's not going to work right? So then we will set about filling that toolbox for them (personal communication, February 10, 2007).

This example combines the social worker seeing her role in terms of a metaphor, that is, as someone who helps clients fill their toolbox, and also helps clients use a similar metaphor to describe their own activity in the relationship. Marie found that she utilized metaphor through role-plays. For her, these took the form of actually standing up and role-playing in scenarios and situations, as well as rehearsing situations such as confronting someone or even writing letters:

When it's done carefully and with forethought it can be hugely powerful... You can have a role-play in a person's head by rehearsing a situation... say you're going to confront somebody, you know by rehearsing something or writing letters... because you're opening yourself up and you're getting more raw in that way (Marie, personal communication, March 1, 2007).

Both Lola and Betty discussed that they utilized metaphor in the sense of using genograms or ecomaps. While genograms or ecomaps are a visual representation they are also metaphoric because they can provide an avenue to view the clients life in a different form. For example the genogram may visually show all of the homes that a child has lived in but it may also be the vehicle to discuss life cycle changes (such as becoming a teenager or perhaps one particular home became the springboard to new hopes and thoughts for a client). These genograms or ecomaps hold many metaphors for rewriting the clients story or narrative. The genogram becomes not as much about content but about process. Bryant, Dahl, Lane, Marttila, Transken, and Trepanier (1999) explain that when working with clients social workers need to help clients to reclaim their powerful essence through artistic expression. Sommerville and Rapport (2000) explain that this is integrating insights instead

of generating them. Genograms or ecomaps can provide a narrative to organize, predict, and understand the complexities of our lived experiences (Freeman, Epston, & Lobovits, 1997).

Betty comments that using a genogram or ecomap is a process that can be done together, between the client (in this case a child or youth) and worker:

So you would do that together, draw a map of all of the homes the child had lived in while in care and you talk about their time at those houses. It would bring out their thoughts and feelings and reflections about what they might have been going through, or what they were involved with in their life at that time. For example, trying to capture memories of maybe when she first started walking or riding a bike and the people that were involved in their life at the time. All of a sudden they realize they've been in ten homes and that can be quite overwhelming. And loss and grief is all a part of that. With all the losses that kids' in care have, it is devastating. So I thought it was a real powerful tool with families and the children (personal communication, January 14, 2007).

Lola explained that genograms can be used as opportunities to discuss tough issues with clients.

It really opens your eyes when you're looking at significant issues with the client such as addiction, or domestic violence, or suicide. It really paints a good picture for you. I know it's completely useful, I know that...And sometimes it's like "hey I see how I got there. Hard to say but I can see where I am and how I became"(personal communication, March 4, 2007).

This leads me to the next question that I analyzed which, was creative conceptualization at the direct practice level.

#### *Creative Conceptualization at the Direct Practice Level: Collaborative Process*

The research participants were asked the question *creative conceptualization at the direct practice level is defined by Linda Turner as creativity that leads to the identification of innovative solutions to clients' problems by encouraging the generation of alternatives.*

*Please describe for me how you might use creative conceptualization at the direct practice level in your social work?* All of the research participants involved commented that for them creative conceptualization at the direct practice level involved a collaborative process. The collaborative process involved either working together with the client or family and or working together with other service providers (creative teams). Each participant had interesting insights into how they utilized the collaborative process in a creative way. Mary, an Aboriginal social worker, explained that

The therapy goals involved addressing the presenting issues as well as education on and in addressing the systemic issues. This is a collaborative process involving the client and the client is treated as an expert in his or her life rather than being talking down to. So they are included the whole way through (personal communication, February 10, 2007).

Molly explained the collaborative process as working together with the family (one-on-one and all together) to share a meal, learn about culture, and discuss communication. Gelfand (2002) explains that the more opportunity for involvement that individuals, either men or women, most affected by the anticipated change have, the greater the chance will be that the change can be effectively implemented. The other research participants discussed that they collaborated with service providers and either acting as advocates or liaisons with and for their clients. Angela commented that it all depends on the client's needs:

if the client is showing a need of transportation or a need of mental health issues you really need to work with those other agencies or create something...new and different that...works with what you have (personal communication, March 18, 2007).

Angela goes on further to say that:

Transportation was an issue between two towns...The child lived in one community and he really needed to go to school in another community...we got foster parents and social workers all working together to be able to get this kid to school. So it was an amazing plan that was just ridiculous, but this kid was able to go to school and he was supported. He wasn't going to get kicked out and so his needs were

completely met in that respect...we were able to create a really intricate infrastructure (personal communication, March 18, 2007).

Marie discussed that when working in a collaborative process in the north that social workers may end up wearing many hats.

Sometimes working with individuals...it's also important to recognize that you have to be able to work with everyone else that is involved in the person's life. And to be able to switch hats and wear three hats at times. That's being creative and also to be aware of it. I think that awareness piece is huge. If you're not aware of it, how do you know what is going on? (personal communication, March 1, 2007).

Creative conceptualization at a direct practice level requires social workers to listen calmly to their intuition and have self-awareness. Focusing on intuition means that "through empathy and intuition, the social worker and client, for example can reach ideas and use intuition to find ideas" (Damianakis, 2001, p.25). In a sense the relationship that is formed between the social worker and the client is a creative team; creative teams are sensitive to one another and to their environments and are composed of self-motivated, fulfilled individuals (Damianakis, 2001). I believe that creative teams are teams that involve social workers, clients, and service providers. In small northern towns social workers need to sit down with the community members and find out who the players of the community team are. Social workers need to know who the doctors, dieticians, drug and alcohol counselors, family support workers, group home workers, clients, and their family members. hooks (1994) comments on this as collectively bringing our knowledge, resources, skills, and wisdom to one another. Creative conceptualization at the direct practice level means to work collaboratively together to generate innovative solutions. Betty shared her opinion that, when involved in a collaborative process with other professionals (medical staff, nurses, and physicians), it can be a challenge to hold onto your social work perspective because everyone is coming at you from different perspectives:

So it can be challenging at times when you are primarily working within a medical model/system to try and be true to your social work perspective and values and try to communicate from a social work perspective of what's important and what we need to look at for the family (Betty, personal communication, January 14, 2007).

Lola discussed how she found creative conceptualization at the direct practice level, in terms of a collaborative process, involved being a liaison between school and parents:

Spending time with them. Giving them information. Like with the school it was mainly Aboriginal people. A lot of that was on residential schools and understanding where they are coming from. And also on the flip side of it, explaining it to the people they are dealing with. A lot of times at schools you would have a lot of parents that were doing a lot of head nodding. They weren't really communicating with their child or the administrator. They were going into the schools feeling powerless. It was like they didn't have a choice anyway, this was how it was going to be. So educating both sides on where this behavior is coming from. And giving them the ability to be able to speak up for themselves. It was a real eye-opener, especially for me because that's what my parents were like with me when I grew up (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

I believe that creative conceptualization at the direct practice level can be creative teams that form circles around clients and their families. Creative teams can help to ensure that workers and clients are conversing together moving the problem or issue forward and that everyone is aware of each others role on the team. I will now move on to discuss the next question which was creative conceptualization at the community practice level.

#### *Creative Conceptualization at the Community Practice Level: Community Development*

The research participants were asked the question *creative conceptualization at the community practice level is defined by Linda Turner as creativity of what needs to change at a structural level and the innovative methods to bring about the desired change. Please describe for me how you might practice this form of creativity.* All of the research participants answered this question with an overwhelming response of wanting to see more

community development. The participants had creative ideas of what needed to happen within a multi-disciplined (transdiscipline) community-based level to get a community event started; some were already involved in community development projects. The ideas were as varied as the participants were. Molly, an Aboriginal social worker, spoke passionately about how there is very little for Aboriginal youth to do in the Peace Region. She spoke of putting together a health and wellness conference just for youth:

You know, why just for professionals and adults? Have the youth involved in that health and wellness conference for three days. You know get the schools to get the kids up there...they would need to be provided with meals, an incentive to go there. A certificate saying that I participated in the conference. Might even have youth teaching youth (Molly, personal communication, February 20, 2007).

Creativity and innovation are critical to developing success in social work in rural areas by involving its community members. Before the community can improve at supporting its oppressed and marginalized members, the community supports (transdisciplinary teams such as social workers, doctors, teachers and so on) need to be working together, brainstorming, and building community networks and relationships. Betty spoke about trying to get community development initiated across several disciplines and community members, which can be a struggle in the north.

I found that there was some people really interested and others they just didn't have the time. They were overloaded with their own work and responsibilities to try and put their energy into another group...Once you got a core group, the group could start educating others. That started to happen. And so I thought it was successful...just a work in progress in trying to get community people together...having a mix rather than having just professionals...So I think it was really a community development way of doing things (personal communication, January 14, 2007).

Mary, an Aboriginal social worker, had some interesting insights into being involved at the community development level. Mary explained that she sat as a member of several community multi-disciplined committee's representing her agency; however, she found that

she was the one that was representing oppressed groups and consistently brought their voices to the table.

I find that I represent oppressed groups at those tables because I seem to be the one who consistently brings their voices to those meetings. To be sure they're needs and issues are included in the planning. So for example I belong to an ethics committee and from the first time that I sat down at the table I looked around and I noticed that there was no representation from the Aboriginal community. And so I started to question that...I feel sometimes like I'm invited to those tables because I'm Aboriginal and also because of where I work. To me that's not appropriate because I don't represent the Reserve. They need representation from the Reserve (Mary, personal communication, February 10, 2007).

Lola described how she was involved at the community development level through facilitating workshops regarding racism around the Peace Region:

Like with me, I've done workshops on racism, and things like that. That's my passion, battling racism. But I finally figured it out. If you have the ability to modify someone's perspective on racism, discrimination and all that stuff, that's good because they will pass that on to their generation (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

Lola then went on further on the topic of community development to explain why she was so passionate about battling racism at a community level.

I was actually racist myself against my own, well actually I hated myself. I hated my culture, I hated anything about it. I have this memory and I still have it, I never did say sorry to my mom but then I don't know if she knows, if she remembers. I was about ten years old and we were at the grocery store and my mom is illiterate. So one of us would always have to go shopping with her and I can understand Cree and English. And I remember my mom speaking Cree to me and there were people around and they heard her. I remember telling her that she was stupid and left the store. I was ten years old (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

Marie commented on creative conceptualization at the community practice level by becoming a local shop steward at her job site and also volunteering for multi-disciplinary community committees that were in areas that interested her.

For example last year I was on the community committee for the sex education program for the school district. And as a person who lives here...I know of the challenges of teaching sex education in this particular highly conservative place (personal communication, March 1, 2007).

I believe that Angela sums up creative conceptualization at the community practice level when she states,

I think it's becoming involved with community organizations. Asking those questions and learning how to ask those questions in a way that will work by knowing the people and the community that you live in...I think that working in a bureaucracy I know how to make changes within that bureaucracy and it can be brought down to that by the reactions that I have and who I go to and the strength and emotion of my argument...So I think that you...want to bring people together to change things but it is also how you do it and I think that is how you change something but it is also something you learn from experience (personal communication, March 18, 2007).

Mulloly (1997) comments that structural social work's focus for change is not solely on the individual but at a structural, multi-disciplined level. At the broader societal level, community development (creative conceptualization at the community practice level) is related to transdiscipline. Community development is working across existing structures that are in place such as the hierarchy of administrators, educators, doctors and community helpers. Transdiscipline attempts to invite community members to require knowledge and skills for working with individuals, families, groups, and communities; always making the connecting between the personal and the political (Mulloly, 1997). The profession of social work requires creative courage to make the leap to transdisciplinarity. There is a community that must occur between students, professors, social workers, teachers, doctors, and so on. Creative conceptualization at the community practice level is professionals and professions crossing boundaries to learn about and invite in other ways of knowing. Lewarne (1998) describes the process as co-creativity leading to the cultivation of genuine relationships, the deepening of communication, and an increased ability to listen empathically. With the slow



emergency of creativity in the field of social work I believe that “to heal our wounds we must be able to critically examine our behavior and change” (hooks, 1993, p.39). This brings me to the next research question, which is creative cosmology.

### *Creative Cosmology: Big Picture and Surprises*

The research participants were asked the question *creative cosmology by Linda Turner (1999) is defined as creativity that holds a central place in a paradigm that sees the world as neither all chaotic nor strictly deterministic. Clients and workers creatively engage in interactions that hold potential for various outcomes. What does creative cosmology mean for you and how do you practice this?* The women interviewed discussed what I would describe as a “big picture” approach to creative cosmology. I believe that the big picture approach consists of stepping back to see all that is in front of you, the whole big picture. The theme that emerged was “big picture,” but each of the women had their own varied responses on what the creative cosmology (big picture) looked like for them. Angela discussed stepping back and looking at her practice as a whole:

You know you need to be able to see healthy relationships so that you can really engage and to be really able to understand the complexities of unhealthy relationships to be able to bring someone to the place right? To identify all of those markers and I think that in itself, you always have to look at the bigger picture on everything and the ramifications of what your actions are. And you always have to look at things in a very... it's weird to think of it as a creative profession but it is because you always look at something in a very different way. Because you are working with very different people all the time (personal communication, March 18, 2007).

Betty shared a situation where she was working with a birth parent who knew she (as the social worker) was finding an adoptive family for her child. How do you build trust and a relationship and discuss the health issues of the child in a case such as this? The birth

parent knew her child had Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and it finally came to a point where the birth mother disclosed that she had drunk during her pregnancy, whereas in the past she had denied it. Betty was able to have conversations, then, with this parent about what kinds of supports did she have, education regarding drinking during pregnancy, what state of health was she in, and what she could do to cope: “We had those conversations about that rather than just about her child...looking at the bigger picture” (Betty, personal communication, January 14, 2007). In this case Betty was able to step back and see the big picture with this client, responding to the situation in a structural, big picture way.

Lola, an Aboriginal social worker, commented on creative cosmology from an Aboriginal perspective.

Poverty and homelessness...is one of the biggest issues...when it comes to working with Aboriginals. I think that for any service provider that we still fail to recognize those needs because the issues are so vast, embedded, and multi-generational (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

The creative cosmology enabled other interesting insights from Mary and Marie.

Mary commented that working with clients in a creative cosmology is about consciousness-raising.

Consciousness-raising helps to educate clients in larger political, cultural issues that influence their coping strategies as well as their self perception and their choices. This allows them to see how societal expectations and limitations shape their worldview. This tends to give clients a sense of freedom in that once they see how they bought into the stereotypes and oppression they no longer view some of their problems as hopeless. Working with clients is about starting the momentum for change, teaching them the process step by step. Starting with small manageable parts to ensure success. Then encouraging them to use the process continuously. Like as an attitude and to get comfortable with it. They then use the skill as a natural process in their lives (personal communication, February 10, 2007).

I believe that creative cosmology is like planting a seed for change – slowly over time change and growth can occur. Marie concludes with her ideas on creative cosmology (big picture):

I guess it just goes down to the world is not black and white. Social work in itself is gray and I think as a person and a social worker and all the different hats I wear...it's impossible to be stagnant, but life and experiences bring on change whether you want to recognize it or not (Marie, personal communication, March 1, 2007).

Cameron (1996) states that the seeds of our creativity require enough solitude and space to grow unhindered. Creative cosmology is about looking at life, work, and various situations from a different view or perspective, taking the blinders off and seeing what else is going on. Social work has been implicated in oppressive processes because it has historically fostered relations of dominance that are consistent with supporting the status quo (Dominelli, 2002) Turners (1999) creative cosmology appears to assume the position of shedding strictness or the status quo and shifting paradigms to a creative one. Mathews (1991) describes this as a long process of stripping off the veils one by one, a journey of valorous fall. Creative cosmology consists of a process of integrating insights and social workers need to accept the shifting of this paradigm. I will conclude with the words from the poem *Changes*,

There's a time when everything begins to change  
Looking around, you find nothing familiar  
just strange  
Things aren't the way they used to be  
and the road ahead becomes difficult  
to see...

(Franklin, 1999, p.37)

Throughout the writing of this thesis I have had “aha” (surprise) moments where I reflected on the reasons that I focused my research on the topic of creativity. As a researcher my hope is that the participants are thinking about creativity and seeing their world through Turner’s lens simply by going through this process of being asked questions about creativity. By asking questions about creativity this research begins an opportunity to co-construct knowledge about how social workers practice creatively. I noticed throughout the interviews that some of the participants also had “aha” moments and I felt I needed a discussion in the thesis to help capture this. I believe these surprise moments were “aha I am a creative social worker” and what I would call a “trickle-down” effect.

I was most excited about the “aha I am a creative social worker” because I felt that it was the epiphany of the thesis. When the women agreed to participate in this research project most of the women were dubious about the topic of creativity. They responded with, are you sure you want to ask me about creativity? I really am not very creative. What do you mean creativity...like drawing? Betty explains that:

I think that from my experience that the social workers I have worked with have all been quite skilled in being creative. I did not feel that I identified myself as being a creative social worker and was not sure if I was the right person to be a part of the interview. That’s at first what I was thinking. Well I’m not that creative, I’m not artistic. I’m not musical (personal communication, January 14, 2007).

Once engaging in the interview most of the women all had a moment where they realised that as a northern social worker they engaged in some kind of creative social work. A worker who can be creative and is comfortable with less traditional interventions will be more effective (Ingebrigtsen, 1985). I did not ask the social workers involved in this study if they were non-traditional interventionists as the focus of the study was creativity. However going further with creativity and non-traditional approaches could be an avenue for

future research. “Aha” moments are what hooks (1997) refers to as new ways of learning, questioning, challenging, and problem-solving. “Aha” moments can be an opportunity for a paradigm shift and a new way of thinking. Angela commented that for her creativity was something that grew with time and experience:

I think that creativity in some ways comes with experience but I think as you start social work you...go by the book and then you realize that it doesn't really apply to a lot of things....I'm finding that I'm getting more and more creative and I can look at things in a very different way than when I first started social work (personal communication, March 18, 2007).

Mary, an Aboriginal social worker shares her thoughts on this framework of creativity:

you know when there's a lack of services and a lack of support and that sort of thing you have to be creative. That's what I would say to the social work profession is that there needs to be more support for social workers so that they can implement this sort of thing into their practice (personal communication, February 10, 2007).

Marie and Lola both explained that you could not be a social worker without being creative. Without creativity many social workers may feel the pull of burnout and exhaustion due to the nature of the work that social workers do. The words of the poem *Sometimes* captures for me how social workers manage to continue in the field of social work:

I want  
to just quit  
run away  
leave it all behind  
cause you know  
sometimes i  
just get tired  
of having to  
address yet another  
incident  
of racism  
but I stay  
because

I can't not.

Baylis

(Baylis, Burton, Fraser & Transken, 2002, p.35)

Marie explains that,

People are complex and if you are not creative in finding and meeting that complexity you are dead in the water if you are working with actual human beings. Maybe they can be a social worker for pets or something...I mean there's rules for people who aren't overly creative, I mean maybe research people, but even they have to be creative. I don't know. I guess I just can't imagine a social worker without having some form of creativity in some way (personal communication, March 1, 2007).

Lola, an Aboriginal social worker explains how to be creative:

So when you're working with families, it's important because we are so strapped for services, you need to be creative with some of the things. Even when I was at probation...judges would make these orders which are impossible like anger management classes. Well you can't get anger management classes in the Peace Region, it's just not possible. So in that regard you do have to be creative with what services are available to you. As a worker working within government you can be creative within the legislation (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

"Aha" moments are important for social workers, Gil (1994) describes that creativity has always been an interest to social workers and therapists because they can represent a tool that individuals use to show their experience of the world. Hooks (1997) describes creativity as being encouraged to chart new journeys and to make our own maps. Betty explained how through the lens of creativity she could view her practice as being creative.

When you break it down, creativity can be seen as many different things ...different ways and is already within your practice... and can be defined in different ways (personal communication, January 14, 2007).

Betty finished her interview with these words:

I would say that I am a creative social worker. When I break it down and look at things...it makes me feel better about my work (personal communication, January 14, 2007).

The next surprise that I had while engaging in the interviews was the “trickle-down” effect that several of the women commented on. Each of the following women brought up the trickle-down effect on their own accord. Betty explained the trickle-down effect as she was discussing setting up educational workshops in her community. Through the setting up of workshops and educating a specific group of people Betty was attempting to bring people to a level of awareness:

And basically how I brought it together was, I just started networking with the foundation, finding a mentor that could help give me ideas on how to begin the process. And so I was given some ideas and I had to think about how I could make this work, in our town, in the north. And how can we get people involved. Because you really need a vested interest from people...To try and bring people to a level of awareness there and then bring it back locally to our group and talk about it. And then our group would educate within the community. So it's kind of a trickle-down effect. Just patience and getting to know people (personal communication, January 14, 2007).

In this way, one person would impact the next person who would impact the next person and so on and so on. Angela commented that the trickle-down effect she was speaking about was in terms of working within a bureaucracy and trying to make a change within the bureaucracy in such that a paradigm shift would occur:

It was more putting the onus on the client than having the onus on the bureaucracy itself. So that in a way is really trying to bring out change within the bureaucracy with which I work with the workers and the leaders to make a paradigm shift. And hopefully what my thought was that we change how we work with clients and how we work within the community then the community would respond as such. And there is a trickle-down effect. So that was my thought (personal communication, March 18, 2007).

Mary and Lola, both Aboriginal social workers, discussed the trickle-down effect as more of a pay-it-forward idea. This meant that the client would learn something and then pass it along to the next person who in turn may learn something and continue to pass it along. Lola stated that “if you have the ability to modify someone’s perspective on racism,

discrimination, and all that stuff. That's good because they will pass that on to their generation" (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

Mary discussed that, through counselling, clients would get comfortable using a particular skill as a natural process in their lives: "When they ask how to thank me I tell them to pay it forward. The ripple effect impacts the clients social circle, family, work, and friends" (personal communication, February 10, 2007). The trickle-down effect appeared to have meaning and importance for each of the women who brought it up. The trickle-down or pay-it-forward idea also appeared to be another metaphor for the way that social workers approach their social work practice. This metaphor also appears to relate to its function for social workers. The function of metaphors perhaps helps social workers to see their work as larger than the small individual acts. The trickle-down effect or pay-it-forward idea appeared to help the social workers to cope with the intensity of the job. The social workers involved are aware that they can not be everything to everyone at all times and that much of the time the clients are in their own environment. Therefore if the clients are passing on the learned information and education perhaps it means that the social work information is spreading out to the other facets of clients lives.

Social workers engage with people in every phase of the life cycle, in every community, in every lie, and within every truth told (Transken, 2002). "We cannot be all things to all needy people and purposes. Nonetheless we try; and we hope to succeed" (Transken, 2002, p.34). The trickle-down idea is a way of touching other peoples lives that social workers may not actually have direct contact with. McGoldrick (1998) explains that as we expand our boundaries we open up enormous possibilities for helping families in multiple contexts; we also must be able to use a variety of healing tools, from music,



mediation, prayer, and poetry, to community meetings. This brings me to the next and last question which is the reality of northern social workers.

*Lived Reality: Northern Issues*

All of the research participants were asked the question, *what is the lived reality of a social worker in the Peace Region?* The responses from all of the research participants overwhelmingly involved northern issues, which mostly circulated around the lack of services or service providers and the necessity of doing more with less. It appeared from the information that the women shared that due to the scarcity of resources that this opened the door to working from a creative framework. However it also appeared from the information that the women presented that while metaphors of creativity were present that there were also metaphors of powerlessness and that these metaphors appeared to co-exist.

Well in the north because of lack of resources that the creative solutions are just part and parcel with social work. We don't have the resources to depend on so you have to create really sort of different solutions when faced with... it's more of a necessity when you're actually going to work in the north (Angela, Personal Communication, March 18, 2007).

While a scarcity of resources can open the door to creativity it appeared that it can also lead to metaphors that indicate a sense of powerlessness and futility. Molly, an Aboriginal social worker, comments on creative ideas but also comments on metaphors of powerlessness:

They're cutting programs and they're not giving us anything else. They're not giving us more resources and so I feel that our hands are tied to a certain extent. We need more programs, we need more services, and we need more people in the services. We need service providers who are not burnt-out (Molly, personal communication, February 20, 2007).

Molly goes on further to say that:

Just as a social worker we have to come up with different ideas to help the family...we can put respite in there, we can put a family support worker in there, but we need services to help take the load off of the foster parents and respite. So maybe we need some different kinds of services...social services can only do what they can...But if we can provide them with a really positive service, like something for youth, for kids, something for moms alone. Which is provided, but it's not enough, it's not a big enough scope (Molly, personal communication, February 20, 2007).

Lola also shared her frustration with a lack of services and service providers by stating, "this is really difficult. You feel like you're kind of the bottom of the barrel sometimes. You don't have any community supports available. You do have some but there's all these waitlists" (Lola, personal communication, March 4, 2007). Lola, like Molly above, discusses metaphors of powerlessness. Angela shared similar thoughts when she explained that in other places (other parts of the province) there tends to be more resources (Angela is a social worker that had also worked as a social worker in other parts of the province):

There's that infrastructure that we don't have in the north. That infrastructure of care. Just generally the population is overloading the area. And I'm speaking mostly for the Peace Region because that's where I mostly worked. You know there just wasn't the service base (Angela, personal communication, March 18, 2007).

This scarcity of resources can both be an obstacle to creative social work as well as an opportunity for creative social work. Betty comments about this scarcity of resources and creativity:

Often I found that you would hear that working in a smaller community maybe more of a challenge than working in a bigger city center. But I think for me, coming from this is where all I've ever known. This is all I know how to deal with. That's more comforting to me to deal with than going to a bigger city would be. I would feel that that might be more difficult...So I think that it does open the door for creativity to come in when you work in a small town because you don't have a choice to not be creative. If you're not creative you are going to have real challenges in your practice (personal communication, January 14, 2007).

These women were all very passionate in the way they described some of the challenges in working as a northern social worker. Lola, an Aboriginal social worker and research participant, is aware that social workers in the north are understaffed and is frustrated by this:

You know what, and I'm ashamed to admit this, I quit making referrals because every referral I have ever made, my child gets put to the bottom of the list and I am sick of that. I've just wasted 10 minutes of my time. I've actually gone out of, and I shouldn't do this, but if I can get other support workers to start seeing my kids that's the way I go (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

The above example I think again shows how creativity (such as Lola finding other support workers to work with her clients which is creative and flexible) and powerlessness (Lola not making referrals any longer due to feeling that her client is put at the bottom of the waitlist) can co-exist. Similar to that of a lack of services is that general feeling of doing more with less. When you have few workers, fewer resources, long hours, and longer waitlists, it appears that the only choice is creativity:

You know when you live in a community like this you have to be creative. You know when there is a lack of services and a lack of support and that sort of thing you have to be creative. That's what I would say to the social work profession is that there needs to be more support for social workers so that they can implement this sort of thing into their practice (Mary, personal communication, February 10, 2007).

Marie shares her thoughts about doing more with less due to the lack of services and service providers:

The lived reality? Oh boy. You're doing more with less. You have to be very open to doing it yourself but also allow yourself to rely on others when they're available. To be very aware of the different mindsets of people up here, especially when you come from the south...The idea of community is very different up here. You know interesting enough if you break down on the side of the road and someone will stop. You won't wait more than five minutes. But down in Vancouver, if you break down

you better be prepared to walk. In many ways it's very fulfilling and in other ways it's been a real challenge (personal communication, March 1, 2007).

Betty comments that sometimes you just need to bite the bullet and do what needs to be done even if the work doesn't fall under your mandate or legislation.

Sometimes you just need to get the job done and sometimes it should not be your role but really when it comes down to it, it needs to get done right? A senior person living by themselves, they don't have family, all of their friends are gone either through death or just being disconnected and basically who that person has involved is service providers. And so there's certain things that need to be done to help that person that necessarily you wouldn't have done. For example if he's limited in mobility and he needs a winter jacket. Who's going to get it? Somebody's got to get him a jacket. He can't get it for himself. Somebody's just got to bite the bullet and do what needs to be done. I think you probably find that more with northern remote towns (personal communication, January 14, 2007).

I believe that when Betty comments on biting the bullet and creative social work practice is again an example of the co-existing metaphors of being creative in social work practice while also dealing with a metaphor of powerlessness. Zapf (2002) explains how Canadian social work has begun to acknowledge the uniqueness of northern and remote practice, northern issues remain largely outside the focus of the mainstream profession. As the researcher I wonder if the uniqueness of northern practice accounts for the co-existing metaphors of both creativity and powerlessness. I wonder if the co-existing metaphors are related to funding dollars and policy makers. Mulloly (1997) explains that "because the Liberals do not seek to change the given economic system, most of their interventions into the economy will be symptom-focused and ameliorative rather than structural" (p.56). Lewarne (1998) describes how "cutting has occurred at the direct expense of real people and real jobs, not some fictitious numbers on a computer screen or balance sheet" (p.8). It appears that typically funding cutbacks occur first to the ministries that do not secure some

kind of revenue for the provinces. These are typically ministries that revolve around services for women, children, and people with disabilities. When the politicians began to cut programs, social work positions were lost. It appears that the trickle-down effect metaphor (a metaphor of creativity) and metaphors of powerlessness (burnt-out or hands-tied) may be a result of political (structural) decisions. Social workers can create creative opportunities for clients and look for creative frameworks in which to practice. However going hand-in-hand with creative opportunities are metaphors of powerlessness and futility and social workers understanding that the lived reality for northern social workers can be challenging. Social workers may be facing challenges such as funding cut-backs as a result of political decisions. Transken (2002) notes that “all of us within this profession – and especially those who are on the edges of this profession – need to find ways to comprehend our contradictions and function creatively within them” (p.33).

Finally, in this section, I will comment on the self-disclosure, which was a theme that emerged within the interviews of the Aboriginal women. I noticed as a researcher that the Aboriginal women had some interesting comments to make regarding self-disclosure. In terms of self-disclosure I would relate this to creative presentation of self from Turner’s (1999) framework of creativity. Creative presentation of self encompasses risk-taking, metaphor, spontaneity, and flexibility and I believe that self-disclosure is a social work practice that is flexible, spontaneous, and can involve a certain amount of personal risk in knowing how much or how little to share. Molly, an Aboriginal social worker in the Peace Region and research participant, explains her use of self-disclosure:

So there’s self-disclosure. It isn’t, like say, if I had a woman who was suffering from depression and she’s talking about how she feels. And I tell her, like I can relate to that. And she goes well how can that be? And I say well I’ve suffered from depression myself. And I know how it feels

to not be able to do things. To not be able to enjoy life anymore. Not able to parent very well. Too tired, fatigued. Just all you want to do is sleep. I can relate to all that. But then on the other hand, I can tell her that I can relate to it, but then I can tell her a little bit on how I dealt with it. You know, how I found help (personal communication, February 20, 2007).

As a social worker I was intrigued by this self-disclosure and risk-taking style. I believe that western ideology and practice cautions the use of risk-taking (in this case self-disclosure) due to professional boundaries and the perceived need to take care of oneself first. When I asked Molly how she handled this boundary issue of knowing how much and how little to share she explained:

What the line is? Well I would never go into the deepest part of my depression. I would never go into that part where I felt I was losing it. Because I don't want her to think that she's losing it. So I would never go any further than I know how you feel. I know that parenting is difficult. Coping everyday is difficult, but there is help (personal communication, February 20, 2007).

Molly went on further to explain that self-disclosure could be risky because it is no longer private:

It's a bit of a risk to self-disclose. She can do what she wants with it. So I have to be careful of what I disclose and how I disclose it (personal communication, February 20, 2007).

Mutual self-disclosure is one of the most common ways that an empathy and authenticity is developed in the therapeutic relationship: "When the therapist is revealed not only as a competent professional but as a genuine human being, there is a greater likelihood an authentic connection will evolve" (Kottler, Sexton & Whiston, 1994, p.127). Mary, another Aboriginal social worker explained that she uses self-disclosure in her practice with clients as well: "I sometimes use my story as an Aboriginal woman in recovery, from the generational, residential school affects" (personal communication, February 10, 2007). I believe this connection of creative presentation of self and use of self-disclosure and risk-

taking is an important piece of creative northern practice because it can emphasize common ground.

Lola, an Aboriginal social worker describes her use of self-disclosure:

I do share some of my own stuff with clients...I do it because I want them to see that I know where they are coming from. That I know what its like to be there. And the big piece about this now is that I had a lot of family support behind me. So I know the power of family. You know they can help you change your whole life around, if that's what you want. Make your life for the better (personal communication, March 4, 2007).

Hart (2005) comments how the differences between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples worldviews, values, beliefs, and practices are real. Hart (2005) goes on further to say that these differences can challenge the helping relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples since the ability to make strong connections can be difficult as a result. Being aware of social work practices and styles that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social workers use is important because it helps bring more awareness to how to work with certain populations. In the north there is an increased number of people in terms of Aboriginal populations. It appears from this research that self-disclosure is a technique and practice that the Aboriginal research participants utilize. The literature also supports the use of self-disclosure when working with Aboriginal peoples. Hart (2005) explains that he shares his experiences and beliefs with others in order that he does not misrepresent himself and so others can understand where he is coming from. Storytelling is a form of communication in Aboriginal culture and a way for lessons to be learned. Storytelling is a valid form of Aboriginal knowledge as it includes responsibility on the part of the listener/researcher, incorporates both interpretation and analysis, has room for many explanations for the phenomena being researched, is a creative search for solutions, and is a political act of liberation and self-determination (Baskin, 2005).

Self-disclosing fits with creative presentation of self in that it involves risk-taking, flexibility, spontaneity. It involves social workers reflecting on their own lives and being willing to share their life experiences to aide in the support of healing clients or families. The use of self-disclosure can help move clients to an increased sense of empowerment. The use of self-disclosure is also in the moment social work practice and is typically unplanned and this is where the creative presentation of self in terms of spontaneity and flexibility are involved. Collier (2006) explains that in a remote village if the social worker can be quiet for a moment and if the time and place are right, if one has the trust of the speaker, the worker might be honored with some of the stories of the speaker.

In addition, another part of professional boundaries is the acknowledgement of necessary limits to professional creativity. There is a fine line between self-disclosing and sharing too much of self with clients. As the social worker this is where it is important to have several things in place. Firstly I believe that a strong background in the Social Work Code of Ethics is the grounding tool to understand and reflect on when to share self. Secondly I believe that having an established and structured decision making model can ensure that practice continues to be flexible and yet also professional. Personally I have been trained in Congress's (1996) ETHIC decision-making model and have used this model on many occasions when confronted with challenging situations. Thirdly I believe in the importance of not only having timely and appropriate supervision with either a manger or supervisor but continual peer supervision can be significant when engaging in the balancing act of professional boundaries and creative and innovative practice.

In conclusion, the data collected demonstrated varying ideas and opinions about how to be a creative northern social worker. All of the women spoke passionately about their



work and all brought forth interesting ideas, thoughts, and reflections about how to be a creative northern social worker. As the researcher I believe that Turner's (1999) framework of creativity is a helpful way in looking and re-looking at social work practice. Turner's framework is a particular lens in which to specifically look at certain aspects of social work practice and explore creative social work practice. I am hopeful that by participating in this research that the participants also found a new way or lens in which to look at the social work practice that they engage in.

## CHAPTER 5

### FUTURE RESEARCH

#### Limitations and Possibilities

Several of the limitations that are apparent to me in this thesis are its sample size and its use of personal interviews. The sample size was small and selective. Having a broader sample size (such as 50 people) might exhibit stronger indicators of creativity. I would also wonder what the data would have looked like if the social workers involved in the study were all men or if the social workers were all Aboriginal people. It would also be interesting to continue with this research in different northern communities as different communities have different needs hence social workers may practice their social work differently.

Another limitation of this study is that as the researcher I asked the participants to think about creativity and their social work practice. I also provided my participants with a copy of Turners (1999) article three weeks prior to the interview to be familiar with the terminology. I influenced the participants in that I was asking them questions (see Appendix C for interview questions) to look at their practice from a particular lens. As I described in the research methods section the rationale for providing the interviewees with this article was so that they would be familiar with the terminology of the questions that I would be using in the interview. After the interviews were completed and transcribed I gave the transcriptions back to the women to read over. Marlow (2001) suggests that “the researcher and subject explore the topic together, each contributing to the process and each working in different ways (p.159). Also this review was done to also ensure that the entire journey of the research project was done with the utmost respect. For example, the subconscious ideas that the interviewer holds about the topic area may affect how she categorizes the data, delivers the

interview questions, and makes meaning of the questions and answers: “The researcher is part and parcel of the research process, and we must always be aware not only of how we might influence and shape the slice of culture we study, but must also be aware of how we ourselves are changed by the research process” (Thomas, 1993, p.67).

As mentioned earlier, the participant may also respond differently depending on the interviewer’s age, gender, cultural background, and so on. In addition, there is the reactive effect to consider, where the interviewer can influence the participant and the participant responds in a particular way. Goffman discusses how social interaction is often a composite of frames, each manipulating our understanding of the others (Manning, 1992). This is again where I would consider my identity pegs and reflect on how I may have impacted the participants in a certain way.

In terms of possibilities for future research, at this point I believe that the concept of creativity could be explored in more depth with more social workers. For example if I were to follow up with these social workers in a year or two and discuss more in depth about creative social work practice I would wonder what the women would report back about creative social work practice. The women may find that they see their social work practice through a creative lens or perhaps they may find that their social work practice has evolved. The more related research that emerges, the more value that creativity will be given. I also wonder about future studies that could be done specifically with male social workers looking at creative social work practice or specifically with Aboriginal social workers looking at creative social work practice. I also wonder about studies focusing on creative social work practice in specific communities. For example creative social work practice may look different for the Peace Region compared to a community in the lower mainland or on

Vancouver Island. Other studies could look at similar topics but with a focus specifically to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) offices, or non-profit organizations, or educational institutions. Overall I believe that there is a need to develop more research around the field of creativity in social work, and particularly social work in northern regions.

### Final Thoughts

In my professional and personal opinion, I am excited about the creative social work, particularly for the north. I believe that northern regions can and will benefit from information around creative social work practice. The analytical framework of creativity as discussed by Turner (1999) pushes us into unfamiliar territory, the unknown but for some this is precisely the most exciting aspect of such work.

Engaging in research such as this has impacted how I, as the researcher and practitioner, engage in my own social work practice. For example in terms of my own phenomenological descriptions of creativity I believe that my research has encouraged me to do two things. Firstly as a feminist researcher I am a strong believer in dialogue and consciousness-raising. Therefore I believe that the first step with forwarding the research around the topic of creativity is simply through conversation, discourse, and the sharing of information. This can be done at all levels, whether that is through daily conversations with other social workers, conversations with multi-disciplinary teams, or simply in conversation with clients and families. I believe that it starts at the grassroots level and moves up from there. Secondly I believe strongly in naming creative social work practice when it occurs. There is something strong about naming and identifying that can bring forth a great

awareness and reflection to others. For example if I hear of a social worker discussing a creative approach I will name it, identify it, and praise and encourage that individual for the necessary and innovative thinking that occurs to come up with innovative solution finding.

As social workers are moving into more managerial, technical roles; when it comes to documenting activities, one must now account for every fifteen minute time-block to the funder, politicians, and those that hold power: “Some non-profit agencies, such as child welfare, have introduced computer technologies that standardize work processes, dictate detailed time lines and order of tasks, provide electronic monitoring, and in effect, remove most discretionary decision-making previously enjoyed by workers” (Baines, 2004, p.272). It concerns me as a social worker that so much of our work is becoming more status quo, more standardized, and, in effect, less creative. This standardization is not only damaging for the social worker, not being able to use important and necessary skills, but damaging for the client who becomes a statistic or case number.

Baines (2004) discusses how a general lack of resources for providing programming, and mandates to intervene only when clients are fully entitled, leaves many social service workers feelings as if they do little more than “warehouse clients” and “fill out forms.” I believe that a scarcity of resources can both generate and inhibit creative social work depending on a number of factors. Factors such as who the social worker is, who the client is, what the community is, what time of year it is and so on. A scarcity of resources can provide a springboard for social workers to be creative, however at the same point a scarcity of resources can also lead social workers to feel exhausted and overwhelmed. As mentioned in the previous chapter the metaphors of creativity and powerlessness appear to co-exist. Collier (2006) describes how northern social workers must actually refashion the way they

do their job, rejecting old ways of ordering information and rethinking their assumptions about how society works. An example of this “standardization” that I recall from the Peace Region occurred when a local, non-profit organization replaced their receptionist with an automated telephone system. The client, or anyone else contacting the organization, would need to go through about four minutes of teleprompts before reaching an actual person. We must ask how many people in crisis needing support, help, or counseling are willing and able to go through four minutes of teleprompting to reach someone? The simple answer is that they will not.

Baines (2004) explains that in public sector and larger non-profit agencies, standardized forms, record keeping, and assessments, in both digital and paper formats, have replaced the informal interactions and assessments of the past. I believe that in many cases social service workers have become clerks filling out their check-box forms. With the increased push for agencies to become accredited, the amount of paperwork and check-box forms has also increased. Many workers have observed that certain skill sets may eventually be eliminated from the role of social workers through the routinization of work and standardization of skills.

Another concerning factor is that, with the standardization of work, it is easier for those without social work credentials to assume the work that lowers the costs of labor (Baines, 2004). Why pay a social worker \$25.00 an hour when a volunteer will do the work for free? Baines (2004) explains that the routinization of work makes it easier to break work into small blocks which makes it possible to involve larger numbers of unwaged workers without significantly increasing the number of managers. Baines (2004) goes on further to say that, as social service work is increasingly computerized and remade into repetitive,

technical tasks, it becomes possible for the work to be outsourced on a global as well as a local level.

As social workers we must be creative and this is why this research is so important. More research needs to be done on creativity so that it can be measured, so that it can be supervised, so that its value can be documented, and so that it may be seen as an alternative to standardization. In conclusion, this thesis has examined and explained my research ideas about creativity and how female social workers of differing cultures in northern British Columbia engage in creative social work. The research has the potential of reframing how we view people and their situations as well as how we interact and learn about the people with whom we work.

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## Appendix 1: ETHICS APPROVAL FORM

- 1.) Researcher's Name – Jillien Humphrey
  - 2.) Address – 8458 Sparrow Road, Prince George, BC, V2K 5H2
  - 3.) Phone Number – 962-9060  
Email Address – [jillbickerton@hotmail.com](mailto:jillbickerton@hotmail.com) or [bickertj@unbc.ca](mailto:bickertj@unbc.ca)
  - 4.) Supervisor's Signature and Name – Dr. Si Transken Associate Professor
- 
- 5.) Program – Master of Social Work
  - 6.) Title of Project – “Northern Social Work: How Are Northern Social Workers Creative?”
  - 7.) Type of Project – Thesis required for the MSW
    - ☐ Class Project (Class projects are normally reviewed by professors after a protocol has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board).
    - ☒ X Thesis
    - ☐ Faculty Research
  - 8.) Source of funding – N/A
  - 9.) Is this project a replication of an earlier project or protocol that received ethics approval?
    - ☐ Yes (Attach a copy of the Certificate or letter and submit to the REB. You need not complete the remainder of the form).
    - ☒ X No (Go to Question 10)
  - 10.) Purpose of Research

The purpose and goal of this research is to find and bring together the creative thoughts and voices of female northern social workers who have worked/lived in the Peace Region. In being asked questions pertaining to the lived realities of the participants the researcher will gather evidence regarding how northern social work is practiced creatively.

11.) Expected Start Date for Data Collection – Spring Semester 2007

Completion Date – Fall Semester 2007

12.) Does this project require any physically invasive procedures (e.g. blood tests, potentially harmful physical regimes (e.g. special dieting) or potentially harmful psychological or social experiments (e.g. illusory perception tests)?

☐ Yes

☒ No

13.) Summary of Methods: In the space below give us a brief summary. Sufficient information must be given to assess the degree of risk to participants.

It is my intention to use the qualitative paradigm to conduct the research. I will explore with the participants their ideas and thoughts around creativity and how they practice their social work creatively in a northern environment. The study will use Linda Turner's framework of creativity as stated in her paper, *Creativity – an Overview and Framework for the Social Work Practitioner*, as a baseline to explore and examine creative northern social work (1999). Turner discusses five forms of creativity which are creative expression, creative presentation of self, creative conceptualization at the direct practice level, creative conceptualization at the community practice level and creative cosmology.

It is my intention to ask eight questions to the participants involved with my study. The questions will include a description of the participants role as a social worker, how the participant uses creative expression in her social work, how she practices creative presentation of self, how she practices creative conceptualization at the direct practice level, how she practices creative conceptualization at the community practice level, what creative cosmology means to her and how she practices it, what is the lived reality of a social worker in the Peace Region and any other thoughts regarding creativity and social work.

Six participants will be chosen to take part in the interview process, where the eight questions will be presented and a dialogue will ensue regarding the content of the questions.

Once all of the interviews have been conducted, and the resulting material gathered, thematic analysis will be conducted as a means to find the threads or commonalties of the material emerging from the data.

14.) Please append a complete copy of the research project proposal, including any interview protocols or questionnaires.

(See Appendix 4)

15.) How will participants be recruited? In the space below give us a brief summary.

In this study, I want to be sure that the data is information rich and have therefore decided on a smaller number of participants. For the purpose of this study there will be six women recruited. I will be using both criterion sampling as well as snowball sampling. Criterion sampling, which involves picking those who meet an eligibility criterion of three women being First Nations and three women being Caucasian. Secondly the women must have a social work degree. The participants will be recruited, identified, and contacted through snowball sampling. As a social worker in the north I have made connections with other northern social workers (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). Some of these social workers have indicated they are interested in taking part in my research. It is my anticipation this will create a snowball effect with other potential participants who would want to take part in this research.

Participants who are willing to take part in the research will be presented with an information form and a consent form (see Appendices 2 and 3).

16.) Will participants be competent to give consent?

☐ X Yes (Go to Question 17))

☐ No (e.g. children and cognitively impaired people.) How will the issue of consent be addressed? In the space below give us a brief summary.

17.) Will participants be compensated?

☐ Yes How?

☐ X No (Go to question 18)

18.) Will consent be obtained from each participant either in writing or recorded?

☐ X Yes Please attach a copy of the Consent form or the questions/statements to be recorded. Each participant must receive one copy of the signed consent form at the beginning of signing. (see Appendix 3)

☐ No Please attach information which will be provided to participants and/or participant communities

Note: Checklist of items to be addressed in your Information Sheet or Consent Form is provided at the end of this Approval form.

19.) Does the project involved any deception?

☐ Yes Justify the use of deception and indicate how disclosure finally will be

addressed.

- ☐ X No (Go to question 20)

20.) What is your plan for feedback to participants? How do you propose to distribute results to participants?

Each participant will be offered the option of receiving a summary of the results.

21.) Will the research participants be from an institutional population; e.g. company, agency, schools, universities, hospitals, prisons, etc.

- ☐ Yes (Go to question 22)
- ☐ X No (Go to question 23)

22.) If the answer to Question 21 is yes, attach a letter of consent for access from the Institutional: e.g. company, agency, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, prisons, etc.

23.) Will the research participants be participating as representatives of, or on behalf of an Aboriginal group?

- ☐ Yes Attach letter of consent from appropriate authority, e.g. Band Council, etc.
- ☐ X No (Go to question 24)

24.) Does this project require any other ethical approval, e.g. Hospital, First Nations Band, Health Board, etc.? If so, please ensure that all guidelines are followed.

- ☐ Yes Please specify the agency \_\_\_\_\_ and attach letter of consent/ethical approval form from the appropriate authority.
- ☐ X No

#### Reference

Turner, L. (1999). Creativity – An overview and framework for the social work Practitioner. *Canadian Social Work*, (1), 91-97.

## Appendix 2: INFORMATION LETTER

### **Northern Social Work: How are Northern Social Workers Creative?**

This research project is interested in creativity among northern social workers that are from different cultural backgrounds. Due to the fact that this research project is a collaborative process, I would like to explain a few aspects of this proposed research, before you make a final decision as to your participation.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose and goal of this research is to find and bring together the creative thoughts and voices of three northern Aboriginal women and three northern non-Aboriginal women from the Peace Region. As the researcher I will explore with you your ideas and thoughts around creativity and how you see yourself engaging in creative northern social work. My hope is that my research data will create insights and generate possible ideas about how women social workers engage in creative social work in the Peace Region.

I hope that you will participate by being a part of this interview. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be audio taped to verify content. I will provide you with a summary of key themes for your review.

#### **How Respondents Were Chosen:**

You were chosen on the basis of eligibility criteria. The first criteria being that you are a First Nations woman or that you are a Caucasian woman in the Peace Region. The second criterion is that you must have a social work degree.

#### **What Will Respondents Be Asked To Do:**

Your responsibilities in this research project are to take part in one conversation of approximately 60 minutes in length with myself. This research will take place between April 2007 and September 2007. All conversations will be audio taped. You will have the opportunity to review what is to be reported from your interview and to provide corrections or further interpretations as needed.

#### **Who will have Access to Respondents Responses:**

All records will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at Jillien Humphrey's home. The information will be kept until the final report of the project is complete. (Audiotapes will be kept no longer than 2 years and will then be destroyed). After this time, all original documents related to the interview will be either returned to you, or destroyed via a wood-burning incinerator. Throughout the project Jillien Humphrey and UNBC will ensure that your identity is not revealed directly or indirectly. The information that you provide may be reflected in the final thesis, however anonymity will be maintained.

#### **Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation in the research project is entirely voluntary and, as such, you may choose not to participate. If you participate, you have the right to terminate the interview at any



time. Also, please feel free not to answer any questions with which you feel uncomfortable. You may withdraw from the project at any time and have any information you contributed withdrawn. Your name and identity will be kept in strict confidence. Pseudo-names will be used and any identifying information will be kept confidential.

**Potential Risks and Benefits:**

The UNBC Research Ethics Board will assess this project. I believe that the project presents no risk to respondents. I hope that by participating you will have the chance to provide information about how you practice social work creatively while living in a northern region.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality and Information Storage:**

Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed. Your name or the name of your department, program, unit or organization will not be used in the research materials. You will receive a copy of your signed consent form. All records will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at Jillien Humphrey's home. The information will be kept until the final report of the project is complete. (Audiotapes will be kept no longer than 2 years and will then be destroyed). After this time, all original documents related to the interview will be either returned to you, or destroyed via a wood-burning incinerator. Throughout this project Jillien Humphrey and UNBC will ensure that your identity is not revealed directly or indirectly. The information that you provide may be reflected in the final thesis, however anonymity will be maintained.

**Contact person and Research Results:**

In case questions arise you can contact the researcher by email [bickertj@unbc.ca](mailto:bickertj@unbc.ca). At the end of the data analysis, all participants will have an opportunity to meet with the researcher, and/or to receive a copy of the results.

**Complaints:**

Complaints regarding this research may be sent to the Office of Research, [officeofresearch@unbc.ca](mailto:officeofresearch@unbc.ca) or 250.960.5650.

I am grateful for your time and consideration, and thank you in advance for your participation in this important project.

Sincerely,

Jillien Humphrey  
MSW Student

### Appendix 3: CONSENT FORM

#### **Northern Social Work: How are Northern Social Workers Creative?**

I understand that Jillien Humphrey, who is a graduate student in the Masters of Social Work Program at the University of Northern British Columbia, is conducting a research project pertaining to northern social work and creativity.

I understand the purpose of this research project is to gain awareness, insight and information regarding female social workers working creatively in northern environments.

I understand that I was chosen as a participant for this research study due to the fact that I have a social work degree and that I am a woman of either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal background. The researcher based on eight questions pertaining to creativity and social work will interview me. I understand that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study.

1.) This consent is given on the understanding that Jillien Humphrey will use her best efforts to guarantee that my identity is protected and my confidentiality maintained, both directly and indirectly.

2.) I have read and received a copy of the attached information sheet. I am also aware of the benefits and risks involved in participating in this study.

3.) Confidentiality has been explained to me and I give my consent freely and understand that I may terminate the interview at any point and can withdraw from the research process at any time.

4.) I understand and agree that the information I have given to Jillien Humphrey in our interview will be treated in the following manner:

- the interviews will be audio-taped (audio-tapes will be kept for a maximum time of 2 years and will then be destroyed)
- hand-written notes will be taken during our discussing
- this data will be securely stored by Jillien Humphrey in a locked filing cabinet in her private residence
- the data will be used only by Jillien Humphrey and only for her thesis project
- the data will be either returned to me or burned at the end of the thesis project

5.) I hereby waive any claim against Jillien Humphrey, Dr. Si Transken, the University Of Northern British Columbia, its employees, administration, and Board of Governors with respect to the use of said information, provided it is used on accordance with this agreement.

6.) I understand that if I have any comments or concerns, I can contact the Vice President of Research at UNBC at 960-5820.

7.) A copy of this agreement will be retained by all parties to the interview.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

RESEARCHER: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Appendix 4: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1.) Please describe for me your role as a social worker.
- 2.) Creative expression is defined by Linda Turner (1999) as a tool in therapeutic intervention, including writing, painting and music. Please describe for me how you might use creative expression in your work.
- 3.) Creative presentation of self is defined by Linda Turner (1999) as creativity which is evident in the social worker's style, which can include use of metaphor, spontaneity, flexibility, and risk-taking. Please describe for me how you might use creative presentation of self in your social work.
- 4.) Creative conceptualization (at the direct practice level) is defined by Linda Turner (1999) as creativity that leads to the identification of innovative solutions to clients' problems by encouraging the generation of alternatives. Please describe for me how you might practice this in your social work.
- 5.) Creative conceptualization (at the community practice level) is defined by Linda Turner (1999) as creativity of what needs to change at a structural level and the innovative methods to bring about the desired change. Please describe for me how you might practice this form of creativity.
- 6.) Creative Cosmology by Linda Turner (1999) as creativity that holds a central place in a paradigm that sees the world as neither all chaotic nor strictly deterministic. Clients and workers creatively engage in interactions that hold potential for various outcomes. What does creative cosmology mean for you and how do you practice this.
- 7.) What is the lived reality of a social worker in the Peace Region?

8.) Are there any other things you would like to say to me or to the social work profession about creativity?

## Appendix 5: PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

