Praxis and Pedagogy: Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice in a Context of School Improvement

By

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

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ABSTRACT

Although efforts to improve schools continue to dominate education, many reforms have failed to adequately consider principles of social justice. This study examined the influence of societal and cultural factors in the development of teachers' conceptions of social justice, and the impact of their conceptions upon the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives. The research attempted to answer four questions: (a) How do teachers conceive of social justice as it relates to their students? (b) How do these conceptions influence the teachers' practices and the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives? (c) What are the school improvement initiatives which were designed and implemented by the teachers? and (d) How do these initiatives attempt to address distributive and cultural injustices?

The conceptual model developed for the study illustrated the influence of monocultural and multicultural perspectives of education (Fleras and Elliott, 2003), discourses of academic achievement and failure (Gale and Densmore, 2000), and distributive and cultural paradigms of justice (Fraser, 1997; Young, 1990) upon the formation of teachers' conceptions of social justice and upon the design and implementation of the school improvement initiatives attempted at one school during the years 1998 – 2005.

The research was designed as a case study focusing on one secondary school in a large urban centre in Manitoba. Data were collected from one focus group interview and two individual interviews conducted with each of four teacher participants and one principal. These data, as well as data from school documents and the researcher's field

notes, were used to explore insights provided by examination of the teachers' perceptions of social contexts and phenomena relevant to the research questions.

The research suggested that the participants' conceptions of social justice were dominated by monocultural views of education that were influenced by discourses of deficit and disadvantage. The school improvement initiatives designed and implemented by the teachers at the school appeared affirmative rather than transformative in nature, resulting in changes that may have contributed to the maintenance of the educational status quo. Some evidence was found indicating the presence of conditions considered to be precursors to actions of a more transformative nature. These conditions involved teacher dispositions consistent with a multicultural view of education.

Implications for action stemming from this study include increasing the engagement of school personnel in activities and processes designed to expose and eliminate the stasis-inducing effects of monocultural views of education upon the attainment of social justice in education. The challenge for future research is to identify factors that will encourage transformative change in schools.

DEDICATION

For Neil, Andrew, Aimée, Emilie

and Roger

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Efforts to improve schools have been the focus of countless local and government reform initiatives, research studies and public critiques during the past twenty-five years (Earl, Torrance, Sutherland, Fullan & Ali, 2003; Louis, Toole & Hargreaves, 1999; Spillane & Louis, 2002). Today, education researchers in many parts of the world continue to concentrate on expanding their knowledge of how to make schools better (Apple, 2000; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Levin, 2001).

Several scholars and practitioners have identified the school as the key unit of change, and stress that school improvement must enhance student learning and strengthen the school's capacity for managing change (Earl et al., 2003; Fullan, 2003; Hopkins, 2002; Reynolds, Teddlie, Hopkins & Stringfield, 2000; Spillane & Louis, 2002). However, effective school improvement continues to be a somewhat elusive goal. As Fullan (2005) points out, "Neither carefully orchestrated top-down strategies or site-based management has brought about large scale reform ....It has become increasingly clear that sustained school improvement requires a system solution..." (p. 5).

The majority of school reforms have not adequately considered principles of social justice (Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson & Zine, 2000; Hatcher, 1998; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Thrupp, 2001), and have been criticized for their "...lack of attention to issues of equity and diversity" (Reynolds & Griffith, 2002, p. 21). Hargreaves (1998) remarks that, "...until recently, there has been little attention to how

systemic social inequalities and power imbalances do not just surround the school and its community as part of the change context, but permeate the politics of change within the school itself" (p. 291).

The Context of the Study

The literature regarding school improvement uses terms such as *change*, *reform*, *improvement*, and *re-structuring* interchangeably, even though the meaning of these words can vary substantially. In this thesis, the term *school reform* is used to refer to large-scale programs of change that are primarily directed by government policy, whereas *school improvement* is used to describe smaller, more locally driven initiatives.

Louis, Toole & Hargreaves (1999) observe that "Change (defined as doing something differently) may occur without any improvement (defined as progress toward some desired end)" (p. 251). They also remind us that change is not the same as implementation even though the accomplishment of pre-determined goals is considered by some to indicate reform. Spillane & Louis (2002) argue that school improvement must be about improving students' learning opportunities. Hopkins (1998) agrees, stating that school improvement

> ...is about raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching-learning process and the conditions which support it. It is about strategies for improving the school's capacity for providing quality education in times of change. It is not about blindly accepting the edicts of a centralized polity, and striving to implement these directives uncritically. (p. 1037)

Several recent education reforms have tended to conceive of change initiatives as separate from the social and political contexts of the school (Hatcher, 1998; Thrupp, 1999; Weiner, 2002). This approach reflects a view in which reforms are seen as generic change process techniques that employ generalized models and concepts which rarely acknowledge the impact of culture or socio-economic status on school processes (Hatcher, 1998; Thrupp, 1999). School reform programs frequently convey a notion of school culture that refers only to the official culture of the school, and excludes the identities, cultures and experiences of the students. This type of *monoculturalism* (Fleras and Elliott, 2003; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997) stands in sharp contrast to more egalitarian models of education reform which centre equity and cultural recognition over assimilation (Banks, 2001; Dei et al., 2000; Fleras and Elliott, 2003; Fraser, 1997; Young, 1990).

Models of school reform that portray education as technocratic and objective contribute to the notion that schools are socially neutral, meritocratic institutions which counteract social inequalities (Hargreaves, 1998; Torres, 1998). The effect on students of the failure of schools to address existing social inequity has been examined critically by a number of writers (Apple, 2003; Banks, 2001; Connell, 1993; Dei et al., 2000; Fine, 1989; Fleras and Elliott, 2003; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Reynolds & Griffith, 2002; Thrupp, 2001; Torres, 1998). These authors argue that egalitarian school reform has been replaced by a "...decontextualized approach to improvement issues and a rather diffident stance to the politics of reform" (Thrupp, 1999, p. 165). School reform and improvement programs may thereby actually increase social inequity instead of providing a more egalitarian education.

Social justice is generally considered to involve the principles and norms of social organization which reflect society's responsibility to create structures that protect the dignity of individuals, and provide equal consideration to all people according to their needs, talents and choices (Groome, 1998; Miller, 1976; Vincent, 2003; Young, 1990). As indicated by Furman and Gruenewald (2004), social justice has become a major concern for educational scholars and practitioners at the beginning of the 21st century. This is the result of the growing diversity that is found among the student population of Western industrialized societies, and of the increasing awareness of gaps in the achievement and economic status of children in the mainstream and those in minority groups.

Traditional philosophical theories of justice have confined social justice to the realm of *distributive* justice, which deals with the morally proper distribution of benefits and burdens among society's members. Some critical theorists (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2003; Fraser, 1997; Young, 1990) argue that a broader conception of social justice is more appropriate, because a more expansive view is concerned not just with the distribution of goods and resources, but also with social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication. This latter view of social justice describes *cultural* or *recognitive* justice (Fraser), and involves the recognition of a *politics of difference* (Young). School improvement programs based upon conceptions of social justice which include both distributive and cultural perspectives may be more capable of recognizing the identities, cultures and experiences of the students, and therefore create more egalitarian models of education. As the people who are in daily contact with students, teachers and their conceptions of social justice necessarily play a pivotal role in the design and

implementation of any school improvement program, but especially for those programs which aim to rectify social injustices.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research described in this document was to investigate teachers' conceptions of social justice, and the impact of their conceptions upon the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives aimed at helping students at risk of not fulfilling their educational potential. Using case study methodology, this research attempted to answer the questions:

1. How do teachers conceive of social justice as it relates to their students?
2. How do these conceptions influence the teachers' practices and the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives?
3. What are the school improvement initiatives designed and implemented by the teachers?
4. How do these initiatives attempt to address distributive and cultural injustices?

This study does not attempt to evaluate the successes and challenges of the school improvement program at the case school. The study explores the manner in which teachers' conceptions of social justice influence the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives.

Significance of the Study

In the one hundred and first *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (2002), Joseph Murphy summarizes the work of several education scholars in order to present a "...framework for rethinking school administration" (p. 66). He

describes this framework as "... a powerful combination of three key concepts – school improvement, democratic community, and social justice" (p. 66). The research presented in this thesis identifies with Murphy's key concepts as it explores the relationship between teachers' conceptions of social justice and the establishment and sustainability of school improvement programs aimed at helping students fulfill their educational potential. It is hoped that the interpretations and examples provided by this research will contribute to existing knowledge regarding possible future directions for educational leadership and school administration which are rooted in Murphy's concepts of school improvement, democratic community and social justice.

Gronn (2002) points out that the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) confirmed in 2000 that it was committed to ensuring that educational leaders worked effectively in multiple leadership or distributed leadership teams. He indicates that the CCSSO found that while distributed leadership was present in the discourse of the school leadership profession, there was "...a paucity of discussion of the idea within the scholarly community" (p. 653). Gronn found limited analyses of the concept of distributed leadership in the education literature, even though "...distribution of the responsibility for leadership is viewed as one of the key factors in successful school reform and institutional re-design" (Gronn, p. 654). This study provides a profile of distributed leadership within one school, through the examination of teachers' involvement in the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives. The nature of leadership revealed through analysis of this case study may add to existing knowledge regarding the significance of distributed leadership in the success and sustainability of school reforms.

Mortimore and Whitty (1997) report a strong negative correlation between most measures of social disadvantage and school achievement. School improvement programs aimed at simply raising standards will not adequately address this problem, since there is a "...crucial distinction between absolute and relative levels of attainment" (Hatcher, 1998, p. 268). Furthermore, as pointed out by Fraser (1997) and Cribb and Gewirtz (2003), tensions exist between the distributive and cultural conceptions of social justice. These tensions are sometimes acknowledged, but "...attempts to engage adequately with their practical consequences are few and far between" (Cribb & Gewirtz, p. 19). This study offers an example of the experiences of teachers in one school as they grappled with the practical ramifications of redressing inequity and injustice for their students.

A search for empirical studies regarding teachers' conceptions of social justice revealed no studies focusing on this topic. Furthermore, no studies were found which examined the relationship between teachers' conceptions of social justice and the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives. Given that "There has been a growing dissatisfaction over the past two decades about the slow pace of educational reform" (Fullan, 1998, p. 671), and that "Pilot projects show promise but are rarely converted into successful systemwide change" (Hargreaves, 2006, p. 1), the research described in this document may provide new findings which could further existing knowledge in the area of school improvement.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research problem, discussed the purpose and significance of the study, and provided the questions that guided the research process.

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive summary of literature pertinent to the problem, and discusses several factors relevant to the conceptual framework of the study. Chapter 3 outlines the conceptual model for the research, and Chapter 4 discusses the methodology that was used. A detailed description of the school that was the subject of the case study comprises Chapter 5. Chapter 6 offers a description and analysis of the data regarding the teachers' conceptions of social justice, while Chapter 7 describes how the teachers' conceptions of social justice influenced their practice and the school improvement initiatives at one school. Chapter 8 outlines some suggested remedies for addressing distributive and cultural injustices, and the final chapter presents a summary of what was attempted in the research, what was learned, and some implications of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

The intent of this chapter is to present a substantive review of literature relevant to the conceptual framework of the research described herein. The review begins with a summary of literature describing the context of current education reforms. A discussion of the larger, more global factors is presented first, followed by a description of the local reform context in Manitoba. This section concludes with a summary of factors affecting change that are situated within schools.

The next section of the chapter provides a historical overview of the development of various paradigms of social justice. The overview encompasses descriptions of both distributive and cultural aspects of social justice. This is followed by an exploration of various authors' proposed remedies to social injustice, including a particular focus on multicultural education. The chapter includes an account of various typologies of multicultural education, and describes the connections between perspectives of multicultural education, the development of various discourses regarding student academic achievement, and suggested actions for achieving social justice in schools. The chapter concludes with a review of relevant empirical research.

Major Trends Affecting Education Reform

The nature of reforms which have dominated the field of education for the past twenty-five years have been documented by many authors (Daun, 2002; Hatcher, 1998;

Levin, 2001; Levin & Riffel, 1997; Taylor, 2001; Thrupp, 1999; Townsend, 2002). Levin asserts that an understanding of the historical and social context of education policy is crucial to any discussion of education reform, because of the relationship between education and other more general societal changes. As a result of a study in which he examined changing education policies in New Zealand, England, Minnesota, Alberta, and Manitoba, Levin determined that several commonalities existed among the education policy shifts which occurred in these locales. He noted four common contextual elements in the reforms. These are:

1. The dominance of economic rationale for change – Education is described as being a key component of countries' ability to improve, or maintain, their economic welfare;
2. The context of criticism of schools – School systems are described as having failed to deliver what was promised, as pupil outcomes are perceived to have dropped as pupil costs rose significantly;
3. The absence of additional funding to support change – Governments have decoupled reform from funding and view education as a cost rather than an investment;
4. The growing importance of diversity in managing public policy – Differences within nations in ethnicity, language and religion have become vital policy issues. (p. 12-14)

Levin (2001) also lists three common elements of education reform found in the countries he studied. The first of these involves the decentralization of operating authority to schools. School administrators were given more authority over staffing and

budgets, and parents and community members were invited to share in this authority through the creation of school or parent councils. The second trend in education reform involved an increased emphasis on testing of students on a standard curriculum, with results being made public. This trend is driven in part by the move towards a market-like system, which ties into the third common element found in education reform. This element involves increasing the influence of parents over schools by giving them the right to choose the schools their children attend.

In the introduction to the *International Handbook of Educational Change* (1998), authors Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan and Hopkins indicate that although some recent educational changes may vary from one district, province or country to another, there is no doubt that "...educational change is ubiquitous" (Hargreaves et al., p. 1) and figures prominently in public policy in many parts of the world.

One of the most pervasive changes described by Hargreaves et al. (1998) concerns the school curriculum. Curriculum targets have become tighter and more geared to specific standards and outcomes, resulting in changed assessment practices. There is now an increased reliance upon standardized testing as well as on performance-based classroom assessment. Schools are frequently ranked on the basis of their performance on various measures of accountability, and receive funding which is tied to this performance. Teachers have been asked to implement new teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, manipulative mathematics and reading recovery, and to cope with the impact of computers and other new technologies on their teaching. There also has been a move towards more constructivist forms of teaching and learning, which

stresses teaching for understanding while acknowledging the prior knowledge and beliefs of the students.

Hargreaves et al. (1998) comment upon the attentiveness given to parents' rights and wishes, and to their changing role in school governance. They also note the influence of market principles on education, and the intrusion of corporate concepts into educational reform. The authors remark that there have been numerous efforts at both the local and regional levels to restructure schools, and this has included various measures designed to improve the quality of teachers by defining professional standards and implementing re-certification processes.

Daun (2002) notes that education policies all over the world feature decentralization/centralization, freedom of educational choice, and the application of market forces. Within Canada, Taylor's (2001) analysis of key aspects of the federal and provincial context of educational reforms in Alberta during the early years of the Klein administration (1994-1997) reveals three prominent discourses. These include: (a) the fiscal crisis of the state, (b) the unhappy parent, and (c) the dissatisfied employer (p. 11).

The elements of education reforms such as those noted by Daun (2002), Hargreaves et al. (1998), Levin (2001), and Taylor (2001) can be linked to major societal changes which have occurred during the past three decades. The worldwide impact of trends such as globalization, neoconservatism/neoliberalism, and postmodernism/postsocialism have contributed to the creation of the social, political, economic and cultural climate from which have evolved the education reforms observable in many countries today (Apple, 2000; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Fraser,

1997; Peters, Marshall & Fitzsimons, 2000). The next section of this thesis explores these trends and their impact upon education.

Globalization

Clarkson (2002) calls globalization "...the dominant buzzword of our times" (p. 6). Tabb (2002) refers to globalization as a modern keyword which "...seems to mean that everything in the world affects everything else – and a lot faster than it used to" (p. 12). Definitions of what is meant by globalization vary, but they typically include references to the political, economic, social, environmental, cultural, and technological changes resulting from external and domestic forces (Clarkson, 2002). Daun (2002) argues that the effects of globalization may be considered from four perspectives: (a) the technological/economic; (b) the political; (c) the cultural; and (d) the educational. He characterizes globalization as a cluster of complex and contradictory processes, which increase "...economic competition as well as economic marginalization" and emphasize the "...universalization of cultural aspects as well as particularization of such aspects" (p. 5).

Although some individuals maintain that we have been living in a global economy ever since the laying of the trans-Atlantic cable in the late 1860s (McQuaig, 1998), the origins of contemporary globalization are frequently traced to the petroleum crisis of 1971-1973, which resulted in economic and technological changes designed to uncover new sources of energy (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994; Tabb, 2002). McQuaig points out that during the first three decades following the end of the Second World War, the world's economy was still regulated by a number of forces, but "...the power of markets was more restricted; the rights of capital and investors in general was

given less precedence than they are today, and were often made to take a back seat to the rights of the broader public" (p. xiv).

Changes in patterns of trade, production and consumption, the flow of capital, and monetary interdependence have contributed to the popular perception that the effects of globalization are inescapable. Burbules and Torres (2000) point out that globalization "... has become an ideological discourse driving change because of a perceived immediacy and necessity to respond to a new world order" (p. 2). They and other authors (Apple, 2000; Clarkson, 2002; Kellner, 2000; McQuaig, 1998) argue that while the implications of globalization on education policies and practices must be acknowledged, the popular rhetoric of inevitability that so often drives particular policy prescriptions can and should be resisted. As stated by McQuaig, "The real issue is not whether we live in a global economy (we do). The issue is: what *kind of global economy* will we live in?" (1998, p. xiv).

Today, much of the debate surrounding schools centers upon the argument that educational reform has not kept pace with the transformations which have occurred in labour markets. Schools and other educational institutions are widely criticized for their failure to adequately prepare workers to find jobs and succeed in today's globally competitive society (Apple, 2000; Levin, 2000; Taylor, 2001). The ability of countries to maintain or improve their economy is perceived now as closely linked to education, and it is this economic rationale that drives education reform in many countries (Boyer, 2003; Clarkson, 2002; Daun, 2002). As Levin points out, "...the main rationales for education policy change thirty or forty years ago were quite different, having much more to do with social mobility and individual welfare" (p. 13).

The changes wrought by globalization must be considered in evaluating the extent to which these changes threaten the autonomy of national educational systems, and influence "... the fundamental conditions of an education system premised on fitting into a community characterized by proximity and familiarity" (Burbules & Torres, 2000, p. 4). Education has historically been viewed as a local responsibility (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Reynolds & Griffith, 2002), with schools enforcing policy structures which acknowledged community control over schooling. With the advent of larger, more centralized education systems, government employees, teachers, administrators, and parents struggled to develop policies which would reflect the interests of the larger national community, but which would still acknowledge conditions based on local cultures and ways of life (Burbules & Torres).

Neoliberalism/Neoconservatism

Rapley (2004) argues that globalization is a descriptive rather than a diagnostic term, in that it describes a set of circumstances, but does not identify causes. Rapley believes that the economic policies of the 1990s have contributed to the development of a particular type of globalization, "...one designed to strengthen the role of globalizing fractions of capital while eroding not only the state but also the regimes that operated to the benefit of the world's subordinate classes, thereby raising profit rates and accumulation" (p. 8). The implementation of these policies in many nations occurred concurrently with the process of globalization (Peters, Marshall & Fitzsimons, 2000), and helped to shape its character.

Most economic analysts agree that the quarter century following World War II was "...the golden age of the statist regimes" (Rapley, p. 69), because of the adoption of Keynesian principles by many First World governments (Clarkson, 2002; Duménil & Lévy, 2004; McQuaig, 1999; Tabb, 2004) These principles were based on the ideas of the English economist John Maynard Keynes, and led to the development of government policies which encouraged state involvement in the control of economic activity through various regulations and policies. These policies dealt with credit, currency, and the oversight of financial institutions. Government spending was regulated according to the economic situation and unemployment was considered unacceptable. The state was heavily involved in education, research, industrial policy, and the creation of social welfare supports (Duménil & Lévy). Duménil and Lévy outline three elements which combined to form the basis of Keynesian economic philosophy:

1. Broad respect for private initiative, and the basic rules of the capitalist game;
2. State intervention to control the macroeconomic situation, growth (which meant certain limitations on private initiative concerning finance and a few industries), and technological progress;
3. Guarantees concerning jobs and labor conditions, as well as an increase in purchasing power and social protection. (p. 13)

Keynesian economic philosophy, while respecting some aspects of traditional liberal theory regarding the role of the state in guaranteeing individual freedoms, favoured stronger governmental controls over economic policies than many liberal minded individuals would have preferred. Policies of this nature continued until the early 1970s, when the economic growth rate in many Western countries was slowing, and the

oil crisis and subsequent recession resulted in pressure for governments to abandon Keynesian principles and restore the free market (Clarkson, 2002; Duménil & Lévy, 2004; Rapley, 2004; Tabb, 2004). A new social order emerged which favored "...the revenues and power of those fractions of the dominant classes that embodied capitalist ownership in the most direct way" (Duménil & Lévy, p. 14). *Neoliberalism* is the term frequently used to describe the particular economic, political and social orientation which has come to replace Keynesian policies in the last two decades. According to Rapley (2004), some of the major characteristics of the neoliberal orientation are:

1. A tendency towards hyperconsumerism on the part of individuals;
2. An increase in individualism, civic disengagement and materialism;
3. A shift in the locus of accumulation from the state to the private sector;
4. A change in the state's function from ownership to regulation;
5. Streamlining of regulations to allow the market freedom to operate by its own logic;
6. Paring back of the welfare state.

Clarkson (2002) outlines the policy changes which occurred in Canada during the tenure of Prime Ministers Mulroney and Chretien. Although the term *neoconservatism* is used by Clarkson to describe these changes, they represent essentially the same policy directions as are featured in the neoliberal philosophy described earlier. These neoconservatist characteristics are:

1. The long run prevails over the short term as the policy focus;
2. Controlling inflation trumps reducing unemployment as an immediate priority;

3. Government is intended to steer, not row – that is, to establish framework policies, but not engage directly in micro-management, because an economy is thought to reach an optimal equilibrium through the plan of market forces;
4. The supply side, as opposed to the demand side, of the economic equation is emphasized;
5. Planning a budgetary deficit is rejected as an unacceptable policy tool. (p. 128)

Clarkson (2002) notes that "...the neoconservative governors of the late 1980s and the 1990s had neither a capacity for nor an interest in day-to-day economic intervention" (p. 128). Indeed, rather than emphasizing direct, short-term, demand-based, deficit-supported measures, the neoconservative vision delegitimized the state's involvement, focusing instead on structural, long-term, supply-side, fiscally balanced approaches (p. 128).

In the literature discussing the economic, political and social changes which have occurred since the 1970s, the terms neoliberalism and neoconservatism are used to describe similar policy orientations. For the purpose of clarity, the term neoliberalism is the primary descriptor used in this thesis.

Neoliberalism is characterized by Burbules and Torres as featuring "... cutbacks in social spending, rampant environmental destruction, regressive revisions of the tax system, loosened constraints on corporate growth, widespread attacks on organized labor, and increased spending on military 'infrastructure' (2000, p. 8). Tabb (2004) writes that the neoliberal agenda "...calls for trade and financial liberalization, privatization, deregulation, openness to foreign direct investment, a competitive exchange rate, fiscal discipline, lower taxes, and smaller government" (p. 3). Apple (2000) argues that

neoliberal tendencies have transformed democracy into an economic concept with the result that economics has become the dominant and most powerful rationality. Neoliberalism reduces the prominence of the welfare state, and promotes privatization of social services, health, housing, and education (Peters, Marshall & Fitzsimons, 2000).

Several critics of neoliberal policies (Apple, 2000; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Fraser, 1997; Hatcher, 1998; Taylor, 2001) have examined the effects of neoliberalism on education. Key among these is the increasing perception of students as human capital, and of education as a product to be used by consumers and regulated by market choice mechanisms. Burbules and Torres describe such an educational agenda as one which "...privileges, if not directly imposes, particular policies for evaluation, financing, assessment, standards, teacher training, curriculum, instruction, and testing" (p. 15). Democracy is equated with consumer choice, and market devices such as vouchers are seen as regulators (Apple).

Lam (2004) describes the effects of neoconservative ideology on education as "...a painstaking revision of past remedies, now discredited as piecemeal and superficial", and he notes that "In their all-out search for fresh insights, governments and business people look to successful corporations for reference and eclectically adopt the principles of efficiency, productivity, and accountability in restructuring the school system" (p. 41). He emphasizes that this ideology of 'economic rationalism' is at odds with the values of most educators.

Burbules and Torres (2000) point out that neoliberal restructuring has divided society into two sectors. One sector incorporates people who are protected and included, while the other separates those people who are unprotected and excluded. They note that

this economic restructuring has operated "...through the impersonal dynamic of capitalist competition in a progressively deregulated common market, enhancing the local impact of global trends" (p. 7). As governments withdraw from their responsibilities to administer public resources which promote social justice, the "...unattached individual – as a consumer – is deraced, declassed, and degendered" (Apple, 2000, p. 60).

Postmodernism and Postsocialism

Riley and McCarthy (2003) describe *postmodernism* as "...famously difficult to define" (p. 14). They argue that this difficulty exists for several reasons. Firstly, they suggest that postmodernism is a relational term, implying something that comes after the Cartesian-Newtonian concept of scientific modernism. Secondly, different understandings of what is meant by postmodernism exist, depending upon which field of study originated a particular definition. Riley and McCarthy adopt the description of postmodernism offered by Rosenau (1992), which states:

> Post-modernists rearrange the whole social science enterprise. Those of a modern conviction seek to isolate elements, specify relationships, and formulate a synthesis; post-modernists do the opposite. They offer indeterminacy rather than determinism, diversity rather than unity, difference rather than synthesis, complexity rather than simplification. They look to the unique rather than to the general, to intertextual relations rather than causality, and to the unrepeatable rather than the re-occurring, the habitual or the routine. Within a post-modern perspective, social science becomes a more subjective and humble enterprise as

> truth gives way to tentativeness. Confidence in emotion replaces efforts at impartial observation…fragmentation to totalization. (p. 8)

Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) differentiate between postmodernism as a social condition, and postmodernism as a critique. They argue that critical postmodern thought leads to the analysis of social and educational conditions along the lines of race, class and gender. They state:

> When postmodernism is grounded on a critical system of meaning that is concerned with questioning knowledge for the purpose of understanding more critically oneself and one's relation to society, naming and then changing social situations that impede the development of egalitarian, democratic communities marked by a commitment to economic and social justice, and contextualizing historically how world views and self-concepts come to be constructed, it becomes a powerful tool for progressive social change. (p. 38)

Riley and McCarthy (2003) view postmodernism as a social condition, and argue that the changes, events and movements of recent decades contributed to its rise. They propose that postmodernism is a term used to distinguish the current social world from past eras, and to describe the widespread cultural and social changes taking place across the world. They view postmodernism as emphasizing a pluralistic and open democracy, rather than the coercive totality and politics of previous systems. Riley and McCarthy attribute many of the changes which have contributed to the development of postmodernism to demographics. These authors note that international and internal population migration have contributed to increased contact between people of different backgrounds and experiences. Improved communication and transportation systems have

enabled these population shifts to occur at a faster pace, and have facilitated the maintenance of immigrants' ties with their previous communities.

Postmodernism offers a view of society in which certain important principles, methods, or ideas characteristic of modern Western culture are regarded as obsolete or illegitimate (Cahoone, 1996). Contingency and ambivalence are stressed in what has become a more pluralistic society (Riley & McCarthy, 2003). Starratt (2003) provides a different conception of postmodernism. He conceives of modernity as existing along a continuum, reaching from what he terms *early* modernity to *reflexive*, or *late* modernity.

Starratt summarizes the basic tenets of modernity as follows:

- Science and technology, intrinsically good, are the fuel that drives society's engines.
- Objective knowledge, embedded in scientific discovery and technological invention, represents the truly legitimate knowledge of the world. This objective knowledge enables us to know all of life's realities.
- The individual is the primary unit of society; any theory of society must start with the sanctity of the individual and with individual rights and responsibilities.
- The individual, through the exercise of reason, is the source of intellectual and moral knowledge.
- The individual, guided by reason and self-interest, makes ecomonic choices, the cumulative effect of which, when combined with the choices of other reasonable and self-interested individuals, result in the most widespread happiness of most of the members of that society.

- Under the aegis of science and human reason, human life is becoming progressively better.
- This progress is best guided by an intellectual elite who have developed expertise in the physical, social, and human sciences, and hence are best equipped to manage society's public affairs through their rational administration of state and corporate institutions.
- Democratically elected representatives of the people direct these elites to pursue the common good of society (or the nation or the people). (p. 46)

Starratt (2003) argues that the world is moving toward a reflexive modernity as society tries to temper its previous tendencies to "...absolutize rationality, individualism, objective knowledge, historical progress, and ....the unquestioned beneficence of modernity" (p. 53). He proposes that post-modernism not be conceived as a complete break with modernity, but rather as a developmental process. Starratt believes that as the cultural, economic and technical inventions of modernity are questioned and reformulated, movement along the continuum of modernism is facilitated.

In her discussions of postmodern political thought, Fraser (1997) uses the term *postsocialism* to describe the school of contemporary politics in which a commitment to social equality has been replaced with recognition of cultural difference, by means of a " ...decoupling of cultural politics from social politics, both practically and intellectually" (p. 5).

Fraser views postsocialism as referring to "... a skeptical mood or structure of feeling that marks the post-1989 state of the Left" (p. 1). She distinguishes three features

within the concept of postsocialism. The first of these features is the noticeable lack of a new vision to the current world political order. Fraser attributes this situation to the void created by the collapse of socialism in 1989, and the subsequent "...absence of any credible progressive vision to the present order" (p. 1). She maintains that recent political movements such as radical democracy, multiculturalism, political liberalism, or communitarianism offer weak or unsuitable alternatives.

The second feature of postsocialism described by Fraser (1997) concerns the rising profile of identity politics. Identity politics involves claims for the recognition of group differences, which Fraser argues have eclipsed group efforts designed to achieve social equality. She comments that there appears to be a "...moving away from a socialist political imaginary, in which the central problem of justice is redistribution, to a 'postsocialist' political imaginary, in which the central problem of justice is recognition" (p. 2).

The final feature of postsocialism, which Fraser (1997) describes as resurgent economic liberalism, reflects aspects of both globalization and neoliberalism. Fraser observes that with the movement away from egalitarian principles, the welfare state diminishes, capitalism increases, and the market economy blossoms. She maintains that these shifts heighten the disparity between those who are positioned to prosper in the global economy, and those who are not.

Apple (2000) speculates upon the role played by identity politics in the reduction of egalitarianism in education. He notes that "... cultural struggles and struggles over race and gender coincide with class alliances and class power" (p. 58). The result is that cultural politics becomes separated from social politics, as culturally defined groups

wishing to defend their identity and win recognition replace economically defined classes struggling for their fair share of economic resources.

Common Themes in Education Reform

A review of education reforms implemented in several countries during the past twenty years reveals the influence of globalization, neoliberalism, postmodernism and postsocialism. The effect of these trends on education becomes evident with the exploration of two themes present in many school reforms. These themes involve the concepts of *managerialism* and *marketization.* The next section of this thesis defines these themes, traces their origins, and explores their impact on the conceptions of social justice underlying particular features of education reform.

Managerialism

Education reform in many Western countries has featured an increased emphasis on management instead of on policy and administration (Levin, 2001; Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons, 2000). The latter authors attribute this shift to neoliberalism, which promotes managerialism as a technology for institutional organization not only in the private sector but also in the public sector. Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons argue that managerialism has redesigned bureaucracies, institutions, and public policy processes in ways that decentralize management control. They point out that in countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, managerialism has spurred changes resulting in a "...clarification of organizational structures, ... a separation between policy advice and policy implementation functions, ...a shift from input

controls to quantifiable output measures and performance targets, and an emphasis on short-term performance contracts" (p. 110).

One of the main tenets of managerialism is its purported applicability to the administration of all technical or institutional situations, including education. The belief that there is little to distinguish education from business has led to the adoption of business practices from the private sector into education (Apple, 2000; Hatcher, 1998; Levin, 2001; Weiner, 2002). Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons (2000) emphasize that problems inevitably arise when standardized managerial skills are applied to highly context-dependent situations such as those found in educational settings.

Marketization

Apple (2000) believes that the transference of managerial theory from the private sector to the public has contributed to a growing emphasis on economic rationality in education. Other authors (McQuaig, 1998; Peters, Marshall & Fitzsimons, 2000) agree that governance based on managerialism is not legitimated by reliance on legal-rational authority, but rather by "...a form of legitimacy or rationality that depends upon efficiency in the market" (Peters, Marshall & Fitzsimons, p. 118). Economic rationality, when applied to education, implies a view of students as human capital that requires particular skills to compete efficiently and effectively. Apple argues that equating democracy to consumptive practices transforms democracy from a political concept to an economic concept. Students and their parents are cast as consumers, with consumer choice being "...the guarantor of democracy" (Apple, p. 60).

Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons (2000) maintain that perpetuating the "...notion of the self as an endless chooser and consumer of commodities (including education) permeates much of our social thought" (p. 120). They argue that consumer choice is a fallacy, because the "...forms of rationality and the laws within which the free market will be required to operate and function will shape people as particular kinds of subjects so that they will choose in certain general ways" (p. 120). The choices consumers can make are bounded by the parameters of the available alternatives, and in education these alternatives have been determined by policy makers. Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons point out that in most nations, the state is the monopoly supplier of education, because it is responsible for the curriculum, delivery and accreditation systems. The result is that the idea of the parent or student as an autonomous chooser becomes questionable, and the productive power of managerial approaches to education become evident.

The Local Context of Reform

This section of the chapter describes some of the major factors which have shaped education reform in Manitoba since 1988. The education policies developed by the Progressive Conservative and the New Democratic Party provincial governments since 1988 are summarized. In addition, the structure and role of the Manitoba School Improvement Program, an intermediary organization which has worked with Manitoba schools and school divisions since 1991, are outlined.

Provincial Government Policies

Within the Province of Manitoba, education reform was heavily influenced by the policies of the provincial Progressive Conservative Party, which held power from 1988 –

1999. Although the government initially made few significant changes to education, in 1994 the Conservatives began a series of school reforms. The Conservative policy documents that outlined these reforms were: 1) *Renewing Education: New Directions – A Blueprint for Action* (Manitoba Education and Training, 1994); 2) *Renewing Education: New Directions – The Action Plan (1995a)*; and 3) *Renewing Education – A Foundation for Excellence* (Manitoba Education and Training, 1995b). Taken together, these three documents outlined the Progressive Conservative government's six priority areas for action in education:

1. Essential learnings (the development of an outcomes-based curricula in Kindergarten-Senior 4 for all schools in the province);
2. Educational standards and evaluation (the development of mandated standards tests for grades 3, 6, 9 (Senior 1), and 12 (Senior 4);
3. School effectiveness (the defining of principals', teachers', parents' and trustees' roles and rights and the requirement of all schools to produce an annual school plan);
4. Parental and community involvement (establishment of Advisory Councils for School Leadership and the widening of parental choice);
5. Distance education and technology;
6. Teacher education (changes in teacher education including a five year minimum preparation for new teachers and an extended practicum for student teachers).

The activities initiated as part of the educational renewal presented in *New Directions* sought to ensure that effective educational strategies were used appropriately within the system, and that all students had the opportunity to achieve success at school.

The outcomes and standards that formed the basis for the curriculum were planned to incorporate the four foundation skill areas of literacy and communication, problem solving, human relations, and technology. The curriculum changes were designed to be consistent with the outcomes recommended by the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education. This Protocol involved the four western provinces and two territories.

The education reforms instituted by the Conservatives "...were couched in what was called 'common-sense terms' rather than in terms of a clear ideological position" (Young and Levin, 1999, p. 9). As these authors point out, the *New Directions* documents "...said nothing about markets or private sector efficiency", but "...talked instead of ways of improving standards in light of economic and social needs, and made much reference to the importance of balancing provincial direction with local community input" (p. 9). Young and Levin observe that the Conservative government's education policies did not use language focused on competition, choice or markets.

Other significant changes instituted by the Conservatives during their tenure included a roll-back in the provincial funding of education, increased local school taxes, *Filmon Fridays* (forced days off without pay for teachers), and limits to the scope of collective bargaining for teachers. These changes reveal the influence of the 1995 Federal budget which radically restructured government spending patterns in an effort to gain control of the national deficit, which had risen to $37.5 billion (Statistics Canada, 2003). Canada's total debt load at this time had grown to over $545 billion (Statistics Canada, 2003). The goal of the budget reforms, engineered by Finance Minister Paul Martin, was to reduce the overall program spending by twenty percent over a three year

period. This led to reforms to the methods used to enact federal transfer payments to the provinces. Instead of separate social program transfers for education and health, a block transfer was proposed. The actual result of the 1995 Federal budget was a reduction in federal spending of more than $25 billion over three years, and tax increases that amounted to $3.7 billion (Greenspon & Wilson-Smith, 1996).

The overall climate surrounding education in Manitoba in the mid to late 1990s was very negative (Levin and Wiens, 2003). Cuts made to the funding of education, limits placed on the collective bargaining rights of teachers, and the imposition of days off without pay were exacerbated by the belief of educators "...that schools and teachers were being criticized unfairly and being blamed for problems not of their making" (Levin and Wiens, 2003, p. 660).

In September 1999 the Progressive Conservative government of Manitoba was replaced with a New Democratic Party government. In 2000, the Manitoba government began work on developing a document designed to "...strengthen programs and improve practices for the benefit of children and their families" (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002a, p. 1). As Levin and Wiens (2003) note, the government recognized that it needed to rebuild the public school system and renew public confidence in the public schools (p. 660). In August 2002, Manitoba Education and Youth published its plan of action to improve Manitoba's education system. This plan, entitled the *Manitoba K-S4 Education Agenda for Student Success*, outlined a set of priorities designed to address several challenges and issues facing education. Six priority areas were identified for increased attention over the ensuing four years (2002-2006). These areas include:

1. Advancing student success – improving outcomes especially for less successful learners;
2. Schools, families and communities – strengthening links by improving collaboration among schools, families and communities;
3. School planning – strengthening school planning and reporting;
4. Professional development – improving professional learning opportunities for educators;
5. Learner transitions – strengthening pathways among secondary schools, post-secondary education and work;
6. Education research – linking policy and practice to research and evidence. (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002a, pp. i – ii)

The intent of these priorities was to develop a provincial education plan that would truly focus on the needs of the students (Levin and Wiens, 2003). These particular priorities were chosen because research suggested that they could result in improvements in student learning, and they appeared likely to foster collaboration among various educational partners within the province. The priorities built on work that was already being done in Manitoba schools, and complemented other provincial policy initiatives. As Levin and Wiens point out, the intent of the New Democratic Party was to avoid "...having a top-down plan that was resented by people in schools" (p. 661). Instead, "...the intention was to develop an agenda that would be widely seen as positive, useful, and manageable and that many people could commit to" (p. 661).

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (2003b) acknowledged that in order to improve education outcomes for all learners, especially those who are less successful, the

needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students had to be addressed. For this reason, the initiative *Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity* was launched in the summer of 2002. The government stated its intention to "...develop a comprehensive and meaningful action plan that will help build schools that are committed to social justice, equality, democratic government, equitable opportunity for all, intellectual freedom, environmental protection, and human rights" (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2003b, p. 2).

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (2003b) used the terms *diversity* and *equity* to highlight the core beliefs that informed its thinking and actions. The working definitions of these terms adopted by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth are:

> **Diversity** encompasses all the ways in which human beings are both similar and different. It means understanding and accepting the uniqueness of all individuals as well as respecting their differences. It is ultimately about acceptance and respect for difference.
>
> **Equity** is a concept that flows directly from our concern for equality and social justice in a democratic society. Educational equity refers most broadly to a condition of fairness with respect to educational opportunities, access, and outcomes for all people. Departmental initiatives towards equity are intended to remove barriers to equality by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices. (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2003b, p. 4)

In addition to the *K – S4 Education Agenda for Student Success*, the Manitoba Government defined a broader commitment to enhancing diversity and equity through other initiatives such as "...Healthy Child, Early Intervention, Early Childhood

Development, Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy Framework, Special Education Review Initiative and its implementation, Gender Equity, and Adult Literacy and Learning initiatives" (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2003b, p. 5).

The local context for education was further affected when, in 2001, the New Democratic government passed Bill 42, *The Amendment of the Public Schools Act* (Manitoba Department of Education, 2001a). This legislation, which placed the statutory responsibility for collective bargaining under the *Labour Relations Act*, restored to the collective bargaining process much of the scope that had been removed by the previous Progressive Conservative government. That same year, the *Public Schools Modernization Act* (Manitoba Department of Education, 2001b) was passed. This Act had the effect of reducing the number of school divisions in the province from 54 to 38.

The New Democratic government continued the pattern started by the Progressive Conservatives of reducing the share of education costs paid for by the province. By 2003, government support of education had dropped to its lowest level ever, 56.7% (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2004).

Since 2002, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth has published three annual reports (2002b; 2003a; 2005) of provincial student performance. These reports use a variety of indicators, such as marks in various subjects, retention in grade, high school completion rates, and participation in postsecondary education, in addition to test scores, to provide an aggregate report on provincial student outcomes. These first of these reports acknowledged that inequities exist in student achievement as a result of factors such as socio-economic status, geographic location, ethnicity, disability and gender. The

2002 annual publication *A Profile of Student Learning: Outcomes in Manitoba* stated that:

> Both PISA [Programme for International Student Assessment] and SAIP [School Achievement Indicators Program] have found statistically significant differences in achievement by gender and socio-economic background. Manitoba data shows that students in northern areas of the province do not perform as well as students from southern Manitoba. It is further known that Aboriginal students and students who require special assistance are less likely to achieve high levels of performance. (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002b, p. 8)

The 2003 annual report revealed a performance gap between male and female students who wrote the Senior 4 language arts tests in January and June 2003. This report also stated:

> In its examination of the relationship between student performance and socio-economic background, PISA found that while the level of resources provided to schools was not, in most cases, closely associated with students' socio-economic backgrounds, the use of resources by students was closely associated. Less advantaged students do not tend to use school resources as regularly as students of higher economic, social and cultural status do. (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2003a, p. 16)

The 2003 report indicated that a significant number of Manitobans still do not have a high school diploma. The national average of individuals in Canada without a high school diploma, according to the 2001 census, was 22.7%, compared to 28.4% for

Manitobans. The figures for aboriginal adults were much higher. The national average for Canada was 42.0% of aboriginal adults without a high school diploma, while in Manitoba this figure was 49.9%.

The 2005 report reiterated the findings detailed in the 2003 report regarding the relationship between student performance and factors such as socio-economic status. The 2005 report referred to findings which indicated that Grade 3 test results, Senior 4 Language Arts test results, and high school completion rates all demonstrated a strong socio-economic gradient. The report continued with comments related to strategies designed to reduce learning inequities:

> Erasing socio-economic disparities in student learning and performance is a challenging task for Manitoba's education system. Inequities in student performance and attainment have deep roots and reasons for these inequities are multi-faceted. While better educational policies can help address these challenges, they may not be sufficient. Educational research is identifying a need to reconsider the importance of out-of-school hours in which families and communities have significant influences and roles to play. This involves implementing comprehensive early-childhood, after-school and summer programs. (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2005, p. 19)

In this report, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (2005) outlined some of its initiatives intended to reduce the impact of the socio-economic gradient on student learning and performance. These include Lighthouse Programs, Reading Recovery, and Early Years Literacy programs. These initiatives are examples of the efforts of the

Manitoba government to "...achieve outcomes that are more equitable for linguistically and culturally diverse students" (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2003b, p. 4). The goals of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth to ensure more equitable educational outcomes include:

1. All students have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of school life in an inclusive and affirming manner;
2. All students experience culturally and personally relevant learning that engages them and encourages a sense of community and belonging that promotes socially responsible behaviour and action;
3. All students become knowledgeable about human diversity, the multicultural nature of Canada, and Aboriginal peoples, both their history and contemporary lifestyles and aspirations;
4. All students, regardless of origin or gender, complete their secondary education and access post-secondary education and training that will enable them to flourish and participate fully in the community and in the workplace. (2003b, p. 4)

The Manitoba School Improvement Program

An important and unique reform element which has existed on the educational terrain in Manitoba for the past fifteen years is the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP). MSIP is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental intermediary school improvement organization which has provided financial, consultative and technical support to approximately 50 Manitoba secondary schools since 1991. The

goals of MSIP focus on whole-school improvement, and strive to serve students, particularly those at-risk (Earl, Torrance, Sutherland, Fullan & Ali, 2003).

As an organization, MSIP employs a framework for school improvement emphasizes "... the involvement of teachers, students, parents, and the community; connecting to the outside world; broadening leadership; engaging in inquiry and reflection; creating coherence and integration, and increasing the schools' capacity for change" (Earl et al., p. 4). The knowledge and experience gained by schools engaged in developing school improvement initiatives with the support of MSIP has helped to shape the school reform agenda in Manitoba. Representatives of MSIP have collaborated with members of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth to influence aspects of education such as provincial school planning templates, data collection and usage strategies, and the inclusion of students in education planning sessions.

Since 2003, MSIP has focused its efforts towards working with entire school divisions, in order to facilitate education reform on a systemic level. Each year, over thirty schools representing several school divisions embark upon significant reform initiatives, aided by the financial, consultative and technical support of MSIP.

Change Factors Internal to the School

According to Earl et al. (2003), "Embedding and sustaining school improvement depends on school capacity for change, including the motivation and capacity of teachers to engage in the reforms, continued professional development to reinforce and extend the reforms, local leadership, and schools' capacity for continuous change" (p. 8). Factors

internal to the school which may affect the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives are described in the next section of this chapter.

Fullan (1998) argues that there are two key dimensions involved in capacity. He suggests that one is what individuals can do, while the other involves the transformation of systems. The majority of school improvement initiatives undertaken since the 1990s attempted to address one or both of these dimensions. One approach to increasing capacity for change involves the use of individuals who are identified as formal *change-agents* in the school (Miles 1998). The idea is that these agents facilitate change by inducing a *multiplier effect* (Miles), through modeling the use of new practices and helping to train others.

Saxl, Miles & Lieberman (cited in Miles, 1998) compiled a series of eighteen skills which were frequently used by individuals who were determined to be effective *change agents*. They note that some of these skills were general in nature, such as being a good facilitator, working competently with groups of people, being well organized, and pedagogically capable. Other important skills included the ability to take initiative, to mediate conflict, and to develop trust and rapport. Effective change agents also needed to be skilled at what Miles termed *organizational diagnosis*, which involved understanding schools as organizations, collecting data, and analyzing them in order to plan action.

Fullan discriminates the difference between progress and change. He argues that the core goals of change should be to make a difference, and that "Moral purpose and change agentry make perfect partners" (1998, p. 222). Change which simply results in doing things differently is not necessarily progress; rather, true change involves "...the individual and the group in the learning organization and learning society grappling with

dilemmas of managing change by making a difference in the lives of students as well as in their own lives" (Fullan, 1998, p. 222).

Miller (1998) considers teachers who are re-constructing learning and teaching for their students and themselves to be *reculturing* the school. They are building their capacity for change as they "... shift from one set of assumptions, beliefs, norms, behaviours and practices to another" (p. 530). Miller notes the following fundamental shifts among the teachers she observed in reforming schools:

1. From individualism to professional community - Teachers replace the individualism, isolation and privacy of traditional schools with new norms of collegiality, openness and trust;
2. From teaching at the centre to learning at the centre – Rather than focusing exclusively on how they should teach (collaborative learning, direct instruction, questioning strategies etc.), teachers focus on how students learn, and adjust their teaching accordingly;
3. From technical work to inquiry – The notion that teaching is the accumulation of discrete and unrelated behaviours is rejected in favour of a process of systematic inquiry, research and reflection that involves teachers and students in a process of continuing learning;
4. From control to accountability – Accountability for student learning is more important than accountability for control;
5. From managed work to leadership – As leaders in their classrooms, teachers relinquish 'power over' their students in exchange for 'power to' (Sergiovanni, 1987) affect improved student performance. Outside of their classrooms, teachers

gain responsibility in areas traditionally reserved for administrators – instruction, assessment, rules, procedures, and governance;

6. From classroom to whole school focus – Teachers think about the culture of the whole school and how to develop and support it. They move beyond individual concerns about *my* classroom and *my* students to concerns about *our* school and *our* students. (p. 530-532)

In addition to these shifts in the ways in which individual teachers change their practice, Miller (1998) suggests eight key elements which appear to be present in schools which are making a transition from one teaching culture to another. She indicates that these key elements involve: (a) a long term perspective; (b) principal leadership; (c) teacher leadership; (d) inquiry and reflection; (e) outside support and reference group; (f) focus on student learning; (g) attention to student learning; (h) teacher mobility. Miller argues that while any one or two of these elements usually are present in a school, the school is unlikely to change unless these eight elements occur together. Used in combination, they become "... a powerful force that promotes the re-design of school, learning and teaching" (p. 542).

Motivation for change was shown to be an important factor in the design and implementation of the school improvement initiatives studied by MSIP in its June 2003 final evaluation (Earl et al., 2003). This report showed that "Successful MSIP schools experienced a sense of urgency and determined that the school must act" (p. 7). The energy associated with implementing change in MSIP schools was connected to expectations from outside parties, or to particular innovations that members of the staff found intriguing. The report concluded that continuous school improvement requires

motivation strong enough to keep people engaged over a long period of time. The types of changes which can foster student learning and engagement were found to be those that challenged the "...deeply held normative structures inside schools" (Earl et al., p. 7). Ultimately, in order to change their practices, teachers "...must make sense of and decide that the change is worth the cognitive and emotional effort" (p. 7).

Fullan (2003) also recognizes the importance of motivation in the success and sustainability of educational change. He suggests that a critical motivator in addressing the complex task of school reform is moral purpose, which he defines as "...making a difference in the lives of students" (p. 18). He argues that "...moral purpose must go beyond the individual; it must be larger and more collective in nature" (p. 12). He believes that if moral purpose is left at the individual level, the results will be insufficient to make the necessary shifts which will result in the"... societal changes needed for greater social cohesion, developmental health and economic performance" (p. 18).

Leadership practices within the school are of significant importance in the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives. Spillane and Louis (2002) suggest that school improvement requires leaders who are able to anchor their work "...in learning and teaching, promoting a distributed understanding of leadership, nurturing the development of social trust, and facilitating the development of professional networks" (p. 96). Murphy (2002) argues that school administrators need to fulfill the multiple roles of moral steward, educator, and community builder. He believes that school leaders "...must be directed by a powerful portfolio of beliefs and values anchored in issues such as justice, community, and schools that function for all children and youth" (p. 75).

Smith and Andrews (1989) maintain that the day-to-day activities of principals and teachers collectively exert a powerful influence over the behaviour of individual teachers' interactions with children. They consider leadership to mean that "...principals and superintendents use their professional knowledge and skills to foster conditions where all children can grow to their full potential" (p. vii).

Hallinger and Heck (1998) conducted a review of empirical research regarding the role of the principal in school effectiveness. They examined 40 published articles, dissertations studies and papers, and classified them using a framework adapted from the work of Pitner (cited in Hallinger & Heck, 1998). The results placed the actions of the principal into one of three possible categories. These included: (a) direct effects, where the actions of the principal influence school outcomes; (b) mediated effects, where the actions of the principal affect outcomes indirectly through other variables; and (c) reciprocal effects, where the principal affects teachers and teachers affect the principal, thereby affecting outcomes. The conclusion reached by Hallinger and Heck was that "The general pattern of results drawn from this review supports the belief that principals exercise a measurable, though indirect effect on school effectiveness and school achievement" (p. 186).

Social Justice Paradigms

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, social justice was described as involving the principles and norms of social organization that reflect society's responsibility to create structures that protect the dignity of individuals and provide equal consideration to all people according to their needs, talents and choices. The research described in the thesis is

based on the assumption that various models of school improvement are predicated upon particular views of social justice. These views may incorporate aspects of several social justice paradigms. The term *paradigm* is used here in the sense employed by Banks (2001). He describes a paradigm as "...an interrelated set of facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories that attempt to explain human behavior or social phenomena and that imply policy and action" (p. 91). In his view, particular aspects of social reality are explained by the intersection of various paradigms, each providing a partial theory. Each paradigm is perspectivistic, and is derived from specific values, assumptions and conceptions. Banks (2001) comments that frequently, new paradigms will emerge that challenge older ones, but do not replace them. Multiple paradigms can co-exist.

The definition of social justice which is used in this thesis is built upon two paradigms of justice, (a) distributive justice, and (b) cultural justice. The next section of Chapter 2 will discuss the development of these social justice paradigms, and will outline differences in the manner in which the paradigms conceive of social justice.

Origins of Social Justice

Attempts by various scholars to trace the origins of justice frequently begin with Plato's account, which states that "It is just...to render to each his due" (cited in Kekes, 2003, p. 43), or with Justinian's sixth century comment that "Justice is the constant and perpetual will to render to everyone their due" (cited in Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 10). Miller (1976) notes that the concept of justice as being composed of a number of subdivisions was suggested by both Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Two of the subdivisions distinguished by these early philosophers were the divisions of legal justice

and social justice. Legal justice was viewed as dealing with "...the punishment of wrongdoing and the compensation of injury through the creation and enforcement of a public set of rules (the law)" (p. 22), while social justice concerned the distribution of benefits and burdens throughout society.

The significance and longevity of social justice as a feature of past societies is evidenced in Groome's (1998) description of the connection between faith and justice which is found in all of the world's great religions. He comments that "The major traditions vary in their particular memories of justice, ways to describe it, and level of emphasis, but all teach that to live in faith demands giving everyone their due" (p. 361). Groome traces the roots of social justice in Western civilization through the history of the early Christian Church, which based its social morality upon the conviction that being created in God's image gave everyone the right to be treated with dignity and a mandate to treat others the same. He describes the types of social reforms which were sponsored by the church throughout the Middle Ages on behalf of those most in need, and the religious teachings which urged people to work for justice and peace.

Groome (1998) credits the developing economic structures and relations between capital and labour which occurred during the Industrial Revolution for leading to an increased recognition that "...works of mercy and acts of charity must reach beyond the personal and be realized at the structural level as commitment to justice" (p. 363). Groome writes that within Catholic Christianity, teachings which promoted social responsibilities were emphasized in *Rerum Novarum*, the 1891 encyclical of Pope Leo XIII. Concurrently, within the Protestant religion, the 'Social Gospel' movement advocated by Walter Rauschenbusch emphasized similar sentiments.

The focus of social justice shifted away from just the rights of workers in the late nineteenth century to "...the international community, then to the threat of nuclear destruction, ...to the problems of postindustrial society, responsibility to the environment, and the need for solidarity among all peoples" (Groome, 1998, p. 364). Throughout this evolution, the meaning of the term social justice has been debated by theologians, philosophers, sociologists and educators.

Suum cuique: To Each His Due

The conceptions of justice reflected in the accounts offered by Plato, Aristotle, Justinian, and many other more recent philosophers are based upon principles of *distribution,* which maintain that "The just state of affairs is that in which each individual has exactly those benefits and burdens which are due to him/her by virtue of his/her personal characteristics and circumstances" (Miller, 1976, p. 20). Young (1990) points out that most of the contemporary discourse about justice is based upon what she terms the *distributive paradigm*, to the extent that "...even critics of the dominant liberal framework continue to formulate the focus of justice in exclusively distributive terms" (p. 17). Young indicates that in using the term *paradigm* she is referring to "...a configuration of elements and practices which define an inquiry: metaphysical presuppositions, unquestioned terminology, characteristic questions, lines of reasoning, specific theories and their typical scope and mode of application" (p. 16).

A distributive principle refers to "...the share of that good which different members of the group have for themselves" (Miller, 1976, p. 19). Miller indicates that distributive principles may be formulated in the following ways:

1. The distributed good may consist either of valued individual states such as happiness, or of external resources such as education or wealth;
2. The distributive principle may specify how the good is to be divided (as in equal division) or it may specify some property of the individual which will determine what his/her share of the good will be;
3. The distributive principle may be formulated to arrange a complete distribution of all the resources, or it may specify only a partial distribution, leaving certain resources to be allocated on another basis.

The distribution of goods and resources is not the only way to conceive of social justice. Miller (1976) describes a vision of social justice based on *aggregative* rather than distributive principles. He defines an aggregative principle as one which refers to the total amount of good enjoyed by a particular group. An example of a theory of justice which is based on aggregative principles is utilitarianism. This theory rests on the idea that justice is achieved by performing whichever action among the options available would result in the greatest sum of happiness of all. Miller explains that utilitarianism is in direct conflict with principles of distribution, because "...the distributive character of justice – its concern that each individual should receive his due – cannot be accommodated to theories such as utilitarianism which ... ultimately make the rightness of actions depend upon the sum total of happiness produced" (p. 39).

In his explanatory summary of how to determine what each person is due, Miller (1976) describes three criteria which can serve as guidelines. These involve distributing goods and resources according to criteria involving an individual's *rights, deserts,* or *needs*.

Miller (1976) states that the rights in question "...may be legal rights, institutional rights, or certain types of moral rights, such as the rights one derives from a promise or other non-legal agreement" (p. 26). These rights are not dependent upon an individual's behaviour or personal qualities, because they usually are derived from publicly acknowledged rules, established practices, or past transactions. The conception of justice based on rights is sometimes referred to as *conservative* justice, because it is concerned with "...the recognition and protection of legal and other customary rights" (Miller, 1976, p. 25). Conservative justice deals with preserving the status quo of a social order over time.

. The actual distribution of rights within a society can itself be assessed from the point of view of justice. How is it determined who is entitled to which rights? One widely accepted condition which is used to settle this question relates to the concept of desert. Desert involves the ideal of justice which aims to ensure that "...the benefits people enjoy and the harms they suffer should be proportional to the goodness and badness of their lives – as closely as the contingencies of life allow" (Kekes, 2003, p. 45). Desert is dependent upon the actions and personal qualities of the individual, and may be measured according to factors such as moral virtue, productive efforts, or capacities.

In addition to the notions of rights and desert, the concept of need can also be used to determine the distribution of goods and resources. Need refers to a lack or deficiency, which if not remedied will result in injurious consequences to the individual.

Miller (1976) points out that these three guidelines for distributive justice represent conflicting values. Rights and deserts, or rights and needs, "...are *contingently* in conflict, since we may strive for a social order in which each person has a right to that

(and only that) which he deserves, or to that (and only that) which he needs" (p. 28). However, in reality, the actual distribution of goods does not correspond solely to either of these criteria. Deserts and needs also conflict, since no society is able to distribute goods according to the demands of both desert and need.

The criteria of rights, deserts and needs are each viewed as sufficiently important aspects of justice that one cannot be utilized to the exclusion of the other two in developing a theory of justice. As a result, many social justice theorists searched for a guiding principle or set of principles which would give some weight to each of these three criteria, but which would provide clear direction in cases of conflict. Utilitarianism was thought by some to be a possibility, but the aggregative nature of this theory proved unable to accommodate a distributive view of justice. The set of principles provided in the contractual theory of justice developed by John Rawls has gained much broader acceptance as a model of social justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Kekes, 2003; Miller, 1976; Young, 1990).

Rawl's Theory of Justice

In his book *A Theory of Justice,* John Rawls (1999) states that because "Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override....justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others" (p. 3). His repudiation of utilitarianism led Rawls to develop his contractual theory of justice, which he based upon theories of social contract previously devised by Locke, Rousseau and Kant. The general conception of justice proposed by Rawls holds that primary goods in society, such as liberty, opportunity,

income, wealth, and the bases of self-respect should be distributed equally. The distribution would be conducted by persons (or agents) unaware of specific information, such as the age, gender, or religious beliefs of the individuals in need. This *veil of ignorance* would thus restrict the agents' reasoning to principles of justice considered morally relevant by Rawls. These principles are:

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all;
2. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:
   (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and
   (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. (1999, p. 266)

Rawls (1999) conceived of social justice as providing "...a standard whereby the distributive aspects of the basic structure of society could be assessed" (p. 8). He proposed that his two principles of justice would serve in the role of "...assigning rights and duties and in defining the appropriate division of social advantages" (p. 9).

An Expanded Conception of Social Justice

Young (1990) argues that distributive theories of justice inappropriately restrict the definition of social justice to the morally proper distribution of benefits and burdens among society's members. She maintains that although such distributive issues are crucial to a satisfactory conception of justice, reducing social justice to issues of distribution is a mistake for two reasons. Firstly, the distributive paradigm "...tends to

focus thinking about social justice on the allocation of material goods such as things, resources, income and wealth, or on the distribution of social positions, especially jobs" (p. 15). Young maintains that this is problematic because such a focus ignores the social structures and the institutional contexts which help form distributive patterns.

Secondly, Young (1990) points out that many social justice theorists attempt to apply principles of distribution to non-material goods such as power, opportunity, or self-respect. She believes this to be inappropriate, because these non-material social goods are then represented as "...static things, instead of a function of social relations and processes" (p. 16). Young advocates displacing conceptions of justice which view individuals primarily as possessors and consumers of goods with a "...wider context that includes action, decisions about action, and provision of the means to develop and exercise capabilities" (p. 16). She maintains that she is not rejecting distribution as unimportant, but wishes to expand the concept of social justice to include "...all aspects of institutional rules and relations insofar as they are subject to potential collective decision" (p. 16). Young argues that "The concepts of domination and oppression, rather than the concept of distribution, should be the starting point for a conception of social justice" (p. 16), because such a shift in focus "...brings out issues of decisionmaking, division of labor, and culture that bear on social justice but are often ignored in philosophical discussions" (p. 3). She identifies five forms of oppression observable among groups in society today: (a) exploitation, (b) marginalization, (c) powerlessness, (d) cultural imperialism, and (e) violence.

Fraser (1997) also advocates the use of a broader conception of social justice, which she claims can integrate the fair distribution of goods and resources with the

valorisation of a range of social collectivities and cultural identities. Fraser suggests that because of complexities arising from the current postsocialist condition and the decentering of class, "...diverse social movements are mobilized around crosscutting axes of difference" (p. 13). These social movements contest a range of social injustices, so that "...demands for cultural change intermingle with demands for economic change" (Fraser, p. 13).

Fraser (1997) admits that the distinction between economic injustice and cultural injustice is analytical, since "...even the most material economic institutions have a constitutive, irreducible cultural dimension; they are shot through with significations and norms" (p. 15). Conversely, cultural practices are underpinned by material supports, and have a political-economic dimension. Although economic and cultural justice are intertwined, Fraser maintains that separating conceptions of social justice into two distinct paradigms permits clarification, and hopefully resolution, of "...some of the central political dilemmas of our age" (p. 13).

Fraser describes socioeconomic justice as rooted in the political-economic structure of society. She views such justice as the absence of the following conditions:

- Exploitation (having the fruits of one's labour appropriated for the benefit of others)
- Economic marginalization (being confined to undesirable, poorly paid work or having access to none)
- Deprivation (being denied an adequate material standard of living). (p. 13)

The second category of justice described by Fraser (1997) is cultural justice. She sees this as referring to the absence of conditions such as:

- Cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own)
- Non-recognition (being rendered invisible by means of … authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices…)
- Disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life situations). (p. 14)

In her discussion of solutions to problems of social injustice, Fraser (1997) maintains that two distinct kinds of remedy are required. She suggests that the remedy for economic injustice involves some form of political-economic restructuring. She refers to this restructuring as *redistribution*. The remedy for cultural injustice that is suggested by Fraser involves cultural or symbolic changes that revalue the identities of some groups, and may involve the transformation of societal patterns of representation, interpretation and communication (p. 15). She refers to this remedy as *recognition*. Fraser argues that social justice requires both redistribution and recognition.

Fraser (1997) points out that the politics of redistribution and recognition can have contradictory aims, and can lead to what she calls the "redistribution-recognition dilemma". She cites as an example of this dilemma a situation in which a policy of redistribution aimed at remedying material inequalities might involve minimizing group specificity, but a policy designed to affirm the value of a group would require promoting group differentiation.

According to Fraser (1997), two approaches are possible to resolve the redistribution-recognition dilemma. These remedies are: (a) affirmation, and (b)

transformation. Fraser defines affirmation as involving remedies to injustice which are aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying frameworks that generate them. She offers the example of social policies which pair the affirmative redistribution policies of liberal welfare states with the affirmative recognition policies popular in some perspectives on multiculturalism. This pairing creates problems because affirmative redistribution policies fail to engage the deep level at which the political economy is structured in terms of gender and cultural differences, and by calling attention to these specific gender or cultural differences, affirmative recognition policies can generate resentment against affirmative action programs.

Fraser (1997) sees transformative remedies as being aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes through the restructuring of the underlying generative framework (p. 23). She describes the potential changes which could result from instituting a policy of transformative redistribution with transformative recognition in dealing with problems of racial injustice. She suggests that a policy of transformative redistribution would redress racial injustice through "...some form of antiracist democratic socialism or antiracist social democracy" (p. 31), and a policy involving transformative recognition would "...consist of antiracist deconstruction aimed at dismantling Eurocentrism by destabilizing racial dichotomies" (p. 31). Fraser points out that affirmative and transformative approaches to social justice "...generate different logics of group differentiation" (p. 26), since affirmative recognition remedies tend to promote existing group differentiations, while transformative remedies destabilize them to make room for alternate future group configurations.

Social Justice and Cultural Identity

In the book *Human Rights and Federalism: A Comparative Study on Freedom, Democracy and Cultural Diversity*, author Luan-Vu Tran (2000) examines the argument that cultural diversity must be sacrificed to protect human rights. Tran asserts that human existence and culture are inextricably intertwined, both from a philosophical and a sociological point of view (p. 254). Based on this assertion, he rejects liberal ideological traditions which associate individual freedoms with the absence of governmental regulation. Such prohibition of state interference with the private affairs of citizens promotes separation of the public realm from the private sphere that encompasses the right of individuals to pursue happiness and prosperity. A political model based on this liberal theory relies upon a conception of people "...not as socially rooted human subjects, but as an abstraction – the **individuum**" (Tran, p. 250). Such a conception results in the belief that justice must ignore cultural characteristics, group membership and personal preferences or desires. Justice must be procedural and colorblind, because "...every allocation of state resources, which is made on the ground of immutable traits such as race, ethnicity, gender and religion, runs against equality of opportunity" (Tran, p. 250).

In her analysis of social justice, Young (1990) examines the significance of group differences in the structure of social relations and oppression. She argues that because group differences do exist, and because some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice must acknowledge and affirm group differences in order to eliminate oppression. It is this position which forms the basis of Young's proposal for a

politics of difference in the accomplishment of social justice. In a similar vein, Fraser (1997) acknowledges that "...in the real world....culture and political economy are always imbricated with each other, and virtually every struggle against injustice, when properly understood, implies demands for both redistribution and recognition" (p. 12). Tran's argument is consistent with the positions stated by Young and Fraser. He states that identity is a product of socialization, and people are not "... autonomous and separate entities in the world" (p. 251). Furthermore, social relations cannot be sustained outside of cultural parameters.

Tran (2000) maintains that law is a cultural construction, as illustrated by "...the use of language in legal discourse, and by the political bargaining process, which is the main source of law" (p. 254). Tran refers to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to illustrate how the law conceptualizes multiculturalism for all Canadians, not as a set of shared values, but as providing "... the substantive and institutional conditions under which citizens can collectively discuss, develop and modify their own sense of identity and citizenship" (p. 264). Magsino (2000) describes Canadian multiculturalism as encompassing both "... a statement of values and principles to be pursued in a culturally diverse society", and "... a statement of a programmatic plan for implementation purposes" (p. 324).

Fleras and Elliott (2003) refer to multiculturalism as "... one of those vacuous terms that can be used to mean everything and yet nothing" (p. 384). Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) remark that "...multiculturalism is not something one believes in or agrees with, it simply is" (p. 2). For the purposes of this thesis, multiculturalism shall be considered to refer to issues involving race, socio-economic class, gender, language,

religion, sexual preference, or disability. It is defined as encompassing strategies for engaging diversity as different yet equal as a basis for living together with differences (Fleras and Elliott, p. 384),

Tran (2000) points out that as a part of the Canadian Constitution, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is of eminent importance in our society. It fulfills three important functions. These functions are (a) normative-organizational, (b) moral, and (c) symbolic.

Tran (2000) argues that the moral validity of the Charter is based upon its capacity to establish the social, economic and cultural conditions under which all citizens can participate in a democracy. He maintains that if the authorities who interpret and reinforce the Charter disregard the social, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the populace, the Charter's normative, moral and symbolic functions will not be achieved. Tran states that "Effective democratic discourse cannot take place if there is no respect for the cultural identity of the participants" (p. 267). Reliance upon a uniform and ethnocentric interpretation of the Charter makes political participation difficult because it is "...insensitive to the situation and needs of minority groups" (p. 267).

Tran (2000) asserts that the normative-organizational, moral and symbolic force of the Charter is dependent upon the existence of equal respect for different groups in Canada. The diversity of Canada's population must therefore be taken into account in any efforts aimed at creating a socially just society.

As stated previously, Fraser (1997) argues that while injustices of distribution require a politics of redistribution in order to produce a more equal sharing of goods, cultural injustices require a politics of recognition, which is aimed at producing respect

for and a positive affirmation of the cultural practices and identities of oppressed groups. The values and principles which form the basis of the original conception of multiculturalism in Canada support cultural recognition as integral to the attainment of national unity, equity, and cultural retention (Magsino, 2000). This is indicated by the following excerpt from a statement by Prime Minister Trudeau to the House of Commons:

> A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians. Such a policy should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies. National unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions.... It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all. (Trudeau, 1971)

Subsequent federal and provincial governments enacted legislation consistent with the values and principles of this view of multiculturalism. For example, the Multiculturalism Policy of Canada (1988) includes sections which state that the federal government will:

> (a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;

(c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation;

(e) ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity;

(f) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character;

(Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988)

In 1990, the government of Manitoba issued a *Statement of Government Policy for a Multicultural Society* which articulated the need for the "...government and the community ....to recognize that effective policies for a multicultural society must also respond to a range of social and economic issues and opportunities relating to the challenge of diverse groups of people living together in harmony and equality" (p. 2). This policy statement was followed in 1992 by the enactment of the Manitoba *Multiculturalism Act*. This Act articulated the rights of Manitobans to equal access to opportunity and participation in all aspects of the life of the community and to respect for their cultural values.

In his analysis of the normative, moral and symbolic functions of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Tran (2000) examines the transformative capacity of the Charter to establish social, economic and cultural conditions under which every citizen can participate in deliberative democracy. Specifically, Tran describes two distinct ways that the Charter is considered to address cultural differences: (a) the programmatic approach, and (b) the adjudicative approach. These aspects of the Charter

stem from interpretations of Section 27 of the Charter, which states: "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians".

The programmatic aspects of the Charter encompass legislation designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural context necessary for the realization and enjoyment of human rights. This legislation may include:

> ...large-scale policies addressing social ills (unemployment, crime, poverty, drug abuse), governmental measures aimed at facilitating the integration (not assimilation) of newly arrived immigrants, publicly funded educational programs to further cross-cultural understanding, and to assist immigrant children in preserving their language and culture of origin, to infrastructure projects like the maintenance and improvement of public schools, day-care centers, transportation, streets, recreational parks, low-cost housing, and so on. (Tran, p. 269)

The adjudicative aspects of the Charter emphasize the significance of cultural identity by incorporating it into the consideration of competing interests between individuals involved with courts and quasi-judicial institutions. Together, the programmatic and the adjudicative aspects of Section 27 of the Charter help to ensure that the cultural diversity of Canada is taken into account in the functioning of the Charter as the supreme law of Canada (Tran, p. 268).

Social Justice in Education

Strategies aimed at modifying the total educational environment so as to better reflect the diversity of the classroom comprise what has come to be referred to as

multicultural education (Banks, 2001; Fleras and Elliott, 2003; Sleeter and Grant, 1999). Multicultural education involves making institutional changes within a school so that students from diverse groups have equal educational opportunities. Scholars such as Banks, Fleras and Elliott, and Sleeter and Grant agree that the concept of multicultural education is still evolving, and that a number of different approaches to multicultural education exist. Banks remarks that "... the variety of typologies, conceptual schemes and perspectives within the field reflects its emergent status and the fact that complete agreement about its aims and boundaries has not been attained" (p. 3).

Monocultural Education

Fleras and Elliott (2003) differentiate between *monocultural* education and *multicultural* education. They use the term monocultural education to refer to aspects of educational practice which are intended to reproduce the existing social order. Using Fraser's (1997) terminology, these practices would be affirmative rather than transformative in nature, because they are intended to perpetuate the status quo. Practices such as the selection of textbooks that reflect mainstream experiences and values, the choice of Eurocentric curricula, the streaming of minority students into lower-level programs, and diminished teacher expectations for minority students all contribute to the creation of an assimilationist dynamic that leads to reproduction of the mainstream ideological and social order (p. 335). Fleras and Elliott do not consider the hegemonic practices of monoculturalism to be consistent with the goals of multicultural education.

Fleras and Elliott (1991) suggest that education programs which were first used in Canada to respond to the challenges presented by growing ethnic diversity were more

consistent with monocultural views of education than of multicultural education. These early programs focused on the children of racial and cultural minority groups who demonstrated low educational attainment and high drop-out levels. These children were considered to be 'disadvantaged' as a result of their differing cultural backgrounds, and were targeted for remedial programs designed to boost their academic performance. Fleras and Elliott point out that "This 'compensatory' approach to education could only be regarded as multicultural in the loosest sense of the term", because "...its objectives remained firmly embedded within a framework of assimilation and anglo-conformity" (p. 190). In this approach, problems blocking educational success were considered to rest within the student, requiring the school to "...isolate these problem areas and to apply corrective measures" (p. 190). The goal of education within this perspective is to integrate and assimilate ethnoculturally different minorities into the mainstream culture.

Several other scholars describe educational practices similarly designed to assimilate culturally different students into the mainstream of society. Unlike Fleras and Elliott (2003), these authors consider such practices to be forms of multicultural education. Gibson (1976) uses the term 'benevolent multiculturalism' when referring to monocultural education aimed at incorporating culturally different students more effectively into the mainstream culture and society. Pratte (1983) considers educational strategies which seek to alleviate deficiencies in minority students 'restricted multicultural education'. Sleeter and Grant (1991) label the approach used by schools during the 1960s to remediate culturally deprived students so they could succeed in the mainstream as 'teaching the exceptional and culturally deprived'.

Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) describe the educational perspective that views children of non-whites and the poor as deprived and in need of cultural assimilation in order to gain access to economic opportunity as 'conservative multiculturalism'. Closely related to this perspective is their description of 'liberal multiculturalism', which assumes that all people share a natural equality and common humanity. This perspective promotes a philosophy of colour blindness as an illustration of the belief that "...men and women and various races and ethnicities share more commonalities than differences" (Kincheloe and Steinberg, p. 10). The lack of attention paid to students whose experiences fall outside the boundaries of the 'common' culture is not seen as problematic, since applying the principle of universalism is considered a noble goal. By promoting a culture built upon the view of individuals sharing a common humanity, dynamics of difference are erased. As in their category of conservative multiculturalism, consensus is advocated as an appropriate way to build a society suited to meeting the common needs people share. However, since the standards against which needs are assessed reflect those of dominant Western culture, liberal multiculturalism, like conservative multiculturalism, assimilates others to these same standards.

Banks (2001) lists a number of factors that have been used to guide educational research and practice aimed at structuring educational experiences for students from diverse ethnic, racial and social-class groups. He refers to these factors as paradigms, because they describe "... an interrelated set of facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories that attempt to explain human behavior or social phenomena and that imply policy and action" (p. 91). Banks maintains that each of these paradigms is a partial theory, providing an incomplete explanation of the academic and social problems that

low-income students and minority students experience in schools. In total, Banks describes ten paradigms, four of which reflect elements of Fleras and Elliott's (2003) description of monoculturism. These paradigms include 'cultural deprivation', 'language', 'genetic', and 'assimilationism'.

Banks (2001) uses the paradigm of cultural deprivation to convey the belief held by some individuals that many poor and ethnic minority youths are socialized within homes and communities that prevent them from acquiring the cognitive skills and cultural characteristics they need to experience success in school. The language paradigm suggests that poor student achievement can be attributed to schooling conducted in a language other than the child's mother tongue. The genetic paradigm attributes poor academic achievement to biological characteristics that cannot be corrected through educational intervention programs. Assimilationism is the paradigm Banks describes as promoting the belief that "Ethnic minority youths should be freed of ethnic indentifications and commitments so they can become full participants in the national culture" (p. 95). Assimilationism proposes that the fostering of ethnic identification retards the academic growth of students and contributes to the development of ethnic tensions.

Multicultural Education

Fleras and Elliott (2003) explain that multicultural education "...seeks to incorporate all students by modifying existing content and protocols to ensure better involvement and success" (p. 335). They describe it as encompassing "... a variety of policies, programs, and practices for engaging diversity within the school setting to

ensure that differences do not disadvantage students" (p. 335). These authors created a typology of multicultural education perspectives which serves the dual purposes of separating the various perspectives for analysis, and presenting a chronological sequence that highlights overlap and ambiguity among the perspectives. As stated previously, several other scholars (Banks, 2001; Gibson, 1976; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997; Pratte, 1983; and Sleeter and Grant, 1991) also devised typologies. Although these different approaches to multicultural education reflect varying conceptual views of school and society, some similarities among the typologies are evident.

The typology of approaches to multicultural education created by Fleras and Elliott (2003) was used within this document as the overall framework for describing the views of multicultural education listed by other scholars. The typology created by Fleras and Elliott was chosen as the overall framework because it provides categories to describe multicultural education which are broad enough in scope to encompass all of the categories described by Gibson (1976), Pratte (1983), Sleeter and Grant (1991), Banks (2001), and Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997). At the same time, the four categories of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott are sufficiently detailed that the continuum of multicultural education is incorporated within them.

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Elliott's death, Fleras worked on revised editions of some of their joint works, commenting that these revisions represented collaborations which were "...jointly authored ....in name only" (Fleras, 2003, p. xiv) as part of a collaboration of "...intent rather than process" (Fleras, p. xiv). Fleras' work in the area of race relations and multiculturalism has been described as being "...detailed and rigourous sociological inquiry", encompassing "...a broad reach, convening a diversity of issues, questions, problems, policies and programs" (Herberg, 2003).

Fleras and Elliott (2003) differentiate three approaches to multicultural education which they refer to as *enrichment, enlightenment*, and *empowerment*. These styles of multiculturalism are presented in Table 1. The following section of this chapter will describe each of these perspectives, and will briefly discuss the categories of multicultural education outlined by other scholars such as Gibson (1976), Pratte (1983), Sleeter and Grant (1991), Banks (2001), and Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997).

Enrichment Perspective of Multicultural Education

The enrichment perspective of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) is intended to reach all students, rather than just minority students. It is focused on educating students about cultural differences. Multicultural education for all students is endorsed as a way to increase awareness of diversity and to cultivate an appreciation for the unique contributions of diverse groups to society. Proponents of this perspective believe that closer contact with diversity will (a) enhance positive attitudes toward outgroups, (b) improve minority self-images, (c) reduce the incidence of bigotry and discrimination, and (d) foster social harmony (Fleras and Elliott, 1991, p. 191).

Table 1

Styles of Multicultural Education (Fleras and Elliott, 2003, p. 339)

	Enrichment	Enlightenment	Empowerment
Focus	Celebrate	Analyze	Empower
Objective	Challenge prejudice	Remove discrimination	Achieve success
Goal	Diversity	Eliminate disparity	Self-esteem
Outcome	Lifestyle ('Heritage')	Life chances	Biculturalism
Means	Cultures	Race relations	Cultural renewal
Style	Experience	Understand	Immersion
Target	Student	Institution	Minority students
Scope	Individual	Interpersonal	Collectivity

Fleras and Elliott (1991) examine the assumptions underlying this perspective, and point out that although sustained exposure to cultural differences is valued, Western monocultural education "...has suppressed ethnic identities in the name of assimilation, progress and Christianity – to the detriment of minority success" (p. 191). As a result, while the children of the dominant sector of society observe their cultural norms and values being widely represented at all educational levels, the children of ethnic minorities note that their cultural norms are "... underrepresented except in derogatory or stereotypical fashion" (p. 191). The enrichment model of multicultural education fails to deal with the historical and cultural roots of racism and doesn't equip students to cope with the challenges of pluralism. When analyzed using Fraser's (1997) criteria of

affirmation or transformation, the enrichment perspective of multiculturalism is clearly within the affirmative realm.

The second category of Gibson's (1976) typology also focuses on education about cultural differences, in an attempt to promote better cross-cultural understanding. Sleeter and Grant (1991) label this type of strategy the 'human relations' approach, while Pratte (1983) recommends 'modified restricted multicultural education' to accomplish the goal of promoting equality among groups within the school.

Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) describe the approach to multiculturalism which highlights aspects of race, language, culture, disability and sexual preference in its attempt to celebrate human diversity as 'pluralist multiculturalism'. In this approach, the culture and history of groups of people that have been traditionally marginalized become the focus, reflecting the belief that pluralism is "... a supreme social virtue, especially in a postmodern landscape where globalization and fast and dynamically flexible capitalism are perceived as pushing the international community towards a uniform, one-world culture (Kincheloe and Steinberg, p. 15). In its emphasis on difference, pluralist multiculturalism equates pride in one's heritage and culture with increased self-esteem and subsequent academic success. Psychological affirmation is confused with political empowerment. The status-quo remains intact, since socio-economic class is not addressed, even though the visibility of non-whites increases so that there is "... greater parity in matters of symbolic representation while greater disparity grows in the distribution of wealth" (Kincheloe and Steinberg, p. 17).

Another view of multiculturalism described by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) which fits within the enrichment perspective of Fleras and Elliott's (2003) typology is the

view which proposes that cultural identity is situated in a set of unchanging properties or *essences* that are derived from the group's historical past. Kincheloe and Steinberg refer to this view as left-essentialist multiculturalism, and suggest that proponents of this view create a cultural identity based on connections to the past history of a cultural group. They argue that a view of multiculturalism based on essentialism "... can become quite authoritarian when constructed around a romanticized golden era, nationalistic pride and a positionality of purity that denies complications of competing axes of identity and power such as language, sexual preference, religion, gender, race and class" (p. 20). A form of moral superiority may result from the privileging of identity as the basis of political and epistemological authority, since only individuals deemed to have been oppressed are considered qualified to voice particular criticisms.

Three of the paradigms of multicultural education described by Banks (2001) fit within the enrichment perspective of Fleras and Elliott (2003). These are the 'ethnic additive' paradigm, the 'self-concept development' paradigm, and the paradigm of 'cultural difference'. The ethnic additive paradigm assumes that ethnic content can be added to the curriculum without any reconceptualization or restructuring. Proponents of this paradigm believe that the addition of special units on ethnic foods, holidays and heroes is sufficient to adequately integrate ethnic content into the curriculum.

The self-concept development paradigm results from the belief that the insertion of ethnic content into the curriculum can help increase the self-concept of ethnic minority students, and improve their self-image. The paradigm of cultural difference supports the belief that minority youths have rich and diverse cultures that have values, languages and behavioural styles that are functional for them and valuable for society as a whole. The

major goal of this paradigm is to change the school so it respects and legitimizes the cultures of students from diverse ethnic groups.

Enlightenment Perspective of Multicultural Education

Fleras and Elliott (2003) emphasize that an enrichment model of multicultural education, although well-intentioned, fails to deal with the societal roots of racism. The second category of their typology describes an enlightenment perspective of multicultural education which is focused on educating students about race relations in society. This approach goes beyond a "... description of specific cultures; endorsed, instead, is a broader, analytical approach toward diversity not as a 'thing', but as a relationship, both hierarchical and unequal" (Fleras and Elliott, 2003, p. 336). The creation and maintenance of minority-majority relations are examined, as are the requirements of what would be needed to transform these unequal relationships. As explained by Fleras and Elliott, the objective of the enrichment model of multicultural education is "...to analyze those arrangements that have the intent or the effect of compromising minority success in schools" (p. 336), including:

1. school policies and politics;
2. the school culture and 'hidden' curriculum;
3. languages – official, heritage, and other;
4. community participation
5. assessment, testing procedures, and program tracking;
6. instructional materials;
7. the formal curriculum;

8. the ethnic composition of the teaching staff;
9. teacher attitudes, values and competency. (Fleras and Elliott, 2003, p. 336 – 337)

Although the enlightenment perspective of multiculturalism does begin to examine the societal structures and practices that contribute to social injustice, it does not move out of Fraser's (1997) affirmative realm into the transformative, because no actions are yet taken to change the underlying generative framework.

The category of multiculturalism described by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) as examining the forces of domination and the relationship between social inequality, the suffering that accompanies it, and education is described by them as 'critical multiculturalism'. This category of multiculturalism has similar goals to those of the enlightenment model of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003). Critical multiculturalism examines the origins of inequalities of race, class and gender, and in doing so moves beyond "...the conservative and liberal assumptions that racial, ethnic and gender groups live in relatively equal status to one another and that the social system is open to anyone who desires and is willing to work for mobility" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 25). A central focus of critical multiculturalism involves working to understand how power shapes consciousness and meaning. Within schools, a philosophy of critical multiculturalism drives a curriculum designed to enable students to recognize the forces that shape their identity.

Typologies describing approaches to multicultural education compiled by some other scholars do not contain categories similar to the enlightenment perspective discussed by Fleras and Elliott (2003). Most of these approaches tend to focus on

educating students for cultural pluralism, and strive to foster an appreciation for the difficulties that constrain and control the lives of racial and ethnic minorities. They aim to enable individuals to function comfortably in more than one culture. Gibson (1976) refers to multicultural education for cultural pluralism, and uses the term 'bicultural education' when referring to education designed to prepare students to operate successfully in two different cultures. She recommends that multicultural education be the normal human experience, so that students are taught to function in multiple cultural contexts. Pratte (1983) identifies educational strategies designed to remediate ethnocentrism in students by teaching them to identify with a plurality of cultural groups as 'unrestricted multicultural education'. Sleeter and Grant (1991) group the approaches that were used in multicultural education in the early 1970s into a category in their typology which they call 'multicultural education'. This group of approaches was aimed at making the entire school celebrate diversity and equal opportunity by linking race, language, culture, gender, disability and social class.

Of the ten paradigms of multicultural education described by Banks (2001), three attempt to deal with the cultural plurality aspects of multicultural education. These include the 'radical' paradigm, the 'racism' paradigm, and the paradigm of 'cultural pluralism'. The radical paradigm suggests educating students so that they accept their social-class status in society. Proponents of this paradigm maintain that the school cannot help liberate victimized ethnic and cultural groups because it plays a key role in keeping them oppressed. A major goal of multicultural education within this paradigm is "... to raise the level of consciousness of students and teachers about the nature of capitalist, class-stratified societies, and to help students and teachers develop a

commitment to radical reform of the social and economic systems in capitalist societies" (Banks, p. 94).

The racism paradigm indicates that the major cause of the educational problems of non-Whites and ethnic minority groups is racism, and that the school should play a major role in eliminating institutional racism through active measures to reduce prejudice. This may involve an examination of the total environment to determine ways in which racism can be reduced, including curriculum materials, teacher attitudes and school norms (Banks, p. 93).

The paradigm of cultural pluralism described by Banks (2001) assumes that schools should promote ethnic identifications and allegiances, and that educational programs should reflect the characteristics of ethnic students, so that ethnic students are not alienated from their cultures.

Empowerment Perspective of Multicultural Education

Fleras and Elliott (2003) indicate that an empowerment perspective of multicultural education is concerned with imparting the skills and resources necessary for minorities to take charge of their destiny. Unlike the enrichment and enlightenment perspectives, the empowerment model of multicultural education focuses directly on the needs of non-majority students. Based on the belief that monocultural school systems are failing minority students, the empowerment approach for minority students advocates a "...school context that capitalizes on their strengths and learning styles as a basis for achievement" (p. 337). This perspective is based on the argument that accomplishing significant change will require the empowerment of minorities through a restructuring of

the system around minority needs, concerns and aspirations. A continuum of structural changes can include everything from the "...creation of culturally safe places within the existing school system", to "...the creation of separate schools for minority pupils" (Fleras and Elliott, p. 337). The rationale for this perspective of multicultural education suggests that if issues concerning power, agenda-setting and decision-making are not addressed, the cultural status-quo will be maintained, and the "... capacity of multicultural education to solve problems is thus aborted" (Fleras and Elliott, 1991, p. 193). The empowerment perspective of multicultural education possesses the potential to enter into the transformative realm described by Fraser (1997), because actions to empower minorities may affect the underlying generative structure of society.

Other typologies of multicultural education contain attributes which imply consistency with the empowerment perspective. Pratte's (1983) fourth category in his typology of multicultural education is titled 'modified unrestricted multicultural education' and is described as seeking to prepare all students for active citizenship in a racially diverse society. Although this description does not specifically advocate the establishment of parallel schools for minorities, it does promote the concept of active citizenship, which implies the need for a restructuring of existing power structures.

Sleeter and Grant (1991) use the phrase 'education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist' to describe the approach they believe is best suited to dealing with oppression and social structural inequality based on race, social class, gender, and disability. Similar to tenets of Fleras and Elliott's (2003) empowerment perspective, Sleeter and Grant's interpretation of multicultural education involves a complete redesign

of the entire educational program to reflect the concerns of diverse cultural groups (p. 188).

In his typology of ten paradigms to explain why poor and minority students fail to succeed in school, Banks (1991) suggests that many educators have latched onto one or more of his paradigms to account for the problems of marginalized students, and have attempted to implement solutions based on particular paradigms. Banks maintains that the academic achievement problems of students of color and low income students are too complex to be solved with reforms based on single-factor paradigms such as he describes. He believes that a *holistic paradigm*, which conceptualizes the school as an interrelated whole, is needed to guide educational reform (p. 104). Banks articulates that "...we must formulate and initiate a change strategy that reforms the total school environment in order to implement multicultural education successfully" (p. 104).

Figure 1 presents a comparison of monocultural education and the views of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) with the typologies of multicultural education devised by scholars such as Banks (2001), Gibson (1976), Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), Pratte (1983), and Sleeter and Grant (1991).

Fleras and Elliott (2003)	Monocultural Education	Multicultural Education		
		Enrichment	Enlightenment	Empowerment
Gibson (1976)	Education for the culturally different	Education about cultural differences	Bi-cultural education Multicultural education as the normal human experience	
Pratte (1983)	Restricted multicultural education	Modified restricted multicultural education	Unrestricted multicultural education	Modified unrestricted multicultural education
Sleeter & Grant (1991)	Teaching the exceptional and culturally different	Human relations	Multicultural education	Education that is multicultural and social recontructionist
Banks (2001)	Cultural deprivation paradigm Language paradigm Genetic paradigm Assimilationism paradigm	Ethnic additive paradigm Self-concept paradigm Cultural difference paradigm	Radical paradigm Racism paradigm Cultural pluralism paradigm	Holistic paradigm conceptualizing the school as an interrelated whole
Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997)	Conservative multiculturalism Liberal Multiculturalism	Pluralist multiculturalism Left-Essentialist multiculturalism	Critical multiculturalism	

Figure 1. Comparison of Typologies of Monocultural and Multicultural Education

Discourses of Academic Achievement and Failure

In the book *Just Schooling: Explorations in the Cultural Politics of Teaching* (2000), Gale and Densmore summarize three discourses commonly heard in discussions regarding academic achievement and failure. These discourses focus on students' *deficits, disadvantages*, and *differences*. Figure 2 illustrates how the discourses described by Gale and Densmore reflect assumptions and actions that are consistent with views of monocultural and multicultural education outlined by scholars such as Fleras and Elliott (2003), Banks (2001), Gibson (1976), Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), Pratte (1983), and Sleeter and Grant (1991).

Gale and Densmore (2000) maintain that the discourses of academic achievement and failure they describe have "...considerable influence in determining how teachers, students and parents define what constitutes success or failure in schools .... and the beliefs they hold about students who fail and those who succeed" (p. 108). The next section of this chapter explores the extent of this influence. The assumptions and actions of each educational discourse are described, and linked back to the perspective of monoculturalism or multiculturalism in which it is rooted.

The first discourse of student achievement and failure described by Gale and Densmore (2000) is the discourse of deficit. Underlying this discourse is the conception of ability as a "...discrete, quantifiable, individual characteristic that has little, if anything, to do with social context" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 111). As a result, it is to be expected that individuals will vary in academic achievement, since innate intellectual differences exist. Coupled with the belief that society offers equal opportunities for

Perspective of Education	Discourse	Assumption	Actions of Marginalization and Domination
Monocultural Education	Deficit	Academic performance is determined by innate ability and effort.	Lower expectations of students. Track or stream students. Use IQ tests and remediation programs
	Disadvantage	Culturally and/or economically disadvantaged students are weak academically.	Assimilate poor and non-white students. Compensate for diverse cultural practices with specific programs (English as a second language, bilingual programs).
	Difference (*Type 1*)	All individuals have the same universal needs. Differences between groups are not meaningful, and may be divisive.	Embrace colour-blindness and treat all people the same. Use a standard eurocentrically based curriculum.
Multicultural Education			**Actions of Recognition**
Enrichment	Difference (*Type 2*)	Diversity is intrinsically positive.	Celebrate and affirm differences. Insert special ethnic studies curriculum units (foods, holidays, heroes).
Enlightenment	Difference (*Type 3*)	Socio-cultural differences are mediated by social relations.	Examine structures that position groups as unequal. Institute prejudice reduction programs and remove discrimination.
Empowerment			Emphasize minority voices. Repudiate monoculturalism. Create culturally safe places within the school system for minority students.

Figure 2. Discourses of Academic Achievement and Failure Resulting From Monocultural and Multicultural Views of Education

education to all is the idea that the responsibility for educational and economic success or failure rests with the talents and efforts of the individual. The deficit discourse of academic achievement and failure reflects a monocultural view of education which maintains that children of the poor and non-white are inferior and less able to succeed in school (Shields, 2004). Education is viewed as a way to improve one's life chances and become upwardly mobile. Those individuals who remain poor or in some way disadvantaged are considered either to be not trying hard enough, or to be lacking the talent to succeed.

Gale and Densmore (2000) explain how, with the best of intentions, teachers hold lower expectations for those students believed to have less ability, in order that the students do not become frustrated or embarrassed. As students are given less difficult tasks, they become less prepared for challenging and rewarding positions in society. Gale and Densmore explain, "... differential preparation in school destines students for different niches in the occupational hierarchy" (p. 112).

The monocultural view of education underlying the discourses of deficit also gives rise to the second discourse described by Gale and Densmore (2000). This discourse suggests that students who are weak academically are deprived culturally and economically because their home backgrounds are disadvantaged. Students from such homes are considered to be lacking proper values, stimulation, and motivation, since it is the white, middle-class home that is viewed as "...the norm for all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity or social class" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 114). Education policies founded on a discourse of disadvantage typically attempt to modify cultural practices in order to assimilate poor and non-white students. The motivation for such actions rests on

the belief that if students can be changed to align with the norms of white, middle-class society, they will gain more opportunities for success.

The third category of discourse for academic achievement and failure described by Gale and Densmore (2000) contains three types of discourse of difference which they refer to as Types 1, 2, and 3. Type 1 is based on two monocultural assumptions that are aimed at eliminating notions of group diversity. The first of these is that all individuals have universal needs, and any differences which may exist between individuals are not meaningful. This assumption is based on the idea that all people share a natural equality and common humanity. Teachers following this discourse strive to treat all individuals the same in order to meet their common needs, and they frequently espouse a philosophy of colour blindness. The second assumption underlying Type 1 proposes that the differences between groups are not meaningful, and may in fact be divisive. The threats presented by group differences are dealt with through the promotion of a standard, eurocentrically based curriculum.

The Type 2 discourse of difference places emphasis on the positive aspects of diversity. The cultural traditions of groups are celebrated, romanticized and endorsed following the belief that social harmony and tolerance is enhanced when people learn about other cultures. The perspective of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) as *enrichment* encompasses the assumptions and actions consistent with Gale and Densmore's (2000) Type 2 discourse of difference.

Type 3 is the final discourse of difference described by Gale and Densmore (2000). The Type 3 discourse of difference outlines a rationale for creating a more inclusive dialogue examining and understanding the social processes used to generate the

standards for judging the relative worth of a social group. This rationale is based on the assumption that socio-cultural differences are mediated by social relations. Rather than promoting the assimilation of diverse groups into the mainstream norm, this discourse argues that groups deserve to be involved in processes that ensure their inclusion in public life. Type 3 discourses of difference are reflected in both the *enlightenment* and the *empowerment* perspectives of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003).

The enlightenment view of multicultural education suggests that the structures of schooling need to be examined in order to properly understand the reasons for differential academic achievement, as do the arrangements that position different groups of people as unequal with one another. The ways in which power relations operate within different contexts require analysis to understand how they affect individuals. The enlightenment view of multicultural education suggests dealing with differences by instituting prejudice reduction programs and attempting to remove discrimination.

The empowerment view of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) also reflects the Type 3 discourse of difference referred to by Gale and Densmore (2000). However, actions consistent with an empowerment view of multicultural education suggest dealing with minority student differences through the creation of culturally safe places within the school system for these students, or even the establishment of entire schools for these students.

A Framework for Action

Gale and Densmore (2000) drew upon the work of Anthony Giddens to develop a framework for action by which the practice of teaching could be reconstructed to reflect a recognitive view of justice. By adapting Giddens' areas of 'life politics' and applying them to schools, Gale and Densmore developed four *dialogic democracies* (p. 143) which they suggest can act "... as principles to guide socially just practices in schools" (p. 144). These dialogic democracies include:

1. Democracy of emotions;
2. Democracy of social space;
3. Democracy of systems and routines;
4. Democracy of scale. (p. 146-154)

The democracy of emotions described by Gale and Densmore (2000) deals with the arena of teacher-student relations. The authors suggest that there are "...three dispositions that characterize the personal lives of democratic classrooms and which inform a democracy of emotions" (p. 146). These are: (a) active trust; (b) mutuality; and (c) negotiated authority. Active trust is described as a giving of oneself, or a sharing of one's identity. Mutuality refers to teachers knowing their students and the students knowing themselves and their teachers. Negotiated authority implies "...continual dialogue and interchange with students and parents" which "...enables teachers to earn trust and respect" (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 147). Gale and Densmore argue that teachers must model democratic dialogue and interchange with students and need to build supportive relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

The second dialogic democracy described by Gale and Densmore (2000) concerns democratizing group life in a democracy of social space. Such a disposition values public dialogue, and accords groups their own voices through actions leading to self-organization, self-expression and self-development.

The third area Gale and Densmore (2000) discuss is concerned with the democracy of systems and routines. They describe this as concerned with institutional life, and they suggest that democratizing schooling will require social reflexivity, responsiveness and devolved responsibility. Gale and Densmore consider reflexivity to involve "...an ongoing commitment to rethinking and reworking accepted wisdom" (p. 151), so that sensitivity and flexibility are present in the actions of school personnel. This will require shared responsibility for decision-making in which teachers, administrators, parents and students work together.

The final area addressed by Gale and Densmore (2000) relates to democratizing community life. The authors argue that "...democratizing community life means, in part, that within and outside of schools, individual and group differences are affirmed" (p. 152). This affirmation allows for difference without excluding or marginalizing others, and fosters multiple collectives and connections.

Several other authors (Brown, 2004; Popkewitz, 1999; Rusch, 2005; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1996; Shields, 2004) describe factors to be considered in transforming education policy and practice to address concerns of social justice. These factors may be grouped into three areas: (a) the centrality of relationships (Shields), (b) rational discourse (Brown), and (c) transformative leadership/learning (Shields; Brown).

In advocating for acknowledgement of the role played by relationships in efforts to address social justice goals, Shields (2004) refers to the works of psychologists, sociologists and educators (Giroux; 1997; Grumet, 1995; Noddings, 1986; Sidorkin, 2002; Taubman, 1993) who describe how our own sense of self is constructed and affected by our relationships with others. Shields contends that socially just learning is deeply embedded in democratic ideas and relational pedagogy. She argues that "...an educational orientation to social justice and democratic community requires pedagogy forged with, not for, students to permit them to develop meaningful and socially constructed meanings" (p. 115).

Brown (2004) uses the term *rational discourse* to refer to the dialogic process that she considers a prerequisite for full, free participation. She defines rational discourse as involving:

> ...a commitment to extended and repeated conversations that evolve over time into a culture of careful listening and cautious openness to new perspectives, not shared understandings in the sense of consensus but rather deeper and richer understandings of our own biases as well as where our colleagues are coming from on particular issues and how each of us differently constructs those issues. (p. 93)

Shields (2004) advocates the use of *moral dialogue* as part of a way of life directed towards discovery and new understanding. Rusch (2005) maintains that the most common feature identified by people who write about learning organizations is *organized talk*, which she describes as made up of collective interaction, intense communication, reflective dialogue, persistent inquiry, and reflective thinking.

Whether the dialogic process is named rational discourse, moral dialogue or organized talk, what emerges is the importance of emphasizing inquiry and increasing understanding in a way validates, refines and focuses awareness of issues pertaining to equity and justice, and leads to the cultivation of social actions (Brown, 2004).

A stance of critical and constructive inquiry is considered by Sirotnik and Kimball (1996) to be a vital component of the educational activism so necessary in the development of a more equitable system of education. Brown (2004) points out that transformative learning alters the way people see themselves and their world. Transformative learning contributes to transformative leadership (Shields, 2004), as individuals create a link between personal understandings and public responsibility. Brown and Shields both advocate for action through policy praxis as a way of producing change. As Brown states, "Critical, transformative leaders enter and remain in education not to carry on business as usual but to work for social change and social justice" (p. 96).

The dialogic democracies described by Gale and Densmore (2000), and factors such as the centrality of relationships, rational discourse, and transformative learning/leadership provide a framework for understanding the actions required within educational settings to achieve social justice, by offering concrete descriptions of actions which embody Fleras and Elliott's (2003) enlightenment and empowerment perspectives of education. Table 2 illustrates the interdependency of these factors. For example, actions designed to build relationships with students and parents contribute to building a climate congruent with a democracy of emotions. These actions reflect the centrality of relationships in attaining social justice, and reciprocally help build the democracy of emotions. The democracies of social space, systems and routines, and scale are similarly

interdependent with factors critical to the attainment of social justice such as rational discourse and transformative learning/leadership.

Table 2

Interdependency of Dialogic Democracies and Factors Fostering Social Justice

Dialogic Democracies		Factors Relevant to Attaining Social Justice
Democracy of Emotions	↔	Centrality of Relationships
Democracy of Social Space	↔	Rational Discourse
Democracy of Systems and Routines	↔	Transformative Learning/Leadership
Democracy of Scale	↔	All of the Above Factors

Review of Empirical Research

A search for empirical studies regarding teachers' conceptions of social justice was conducted through the use of databases including the Canadian Business and Current Affairs Education division (CBCA), the Education Resources Information Center of the United States Department of Education (ERIC), and the EBSCOhost fulltext database. The first descriptor entered in the search was *teachers and social justice*. This resulted in 270 hits from the ERIC database, 46 hits from CBCA, and 115 from EBSCOhost. The documents found with this descriptor were not relevant to the research in this thesis. They dealt with topics such as human rights education, citizenship training, peace education, students' concepts of fairness and morality, students' concepts of social justice, and multicultural education.

The second descriptor tried was *conceptions of social justice*. This resulted in seven hits from ERIC, five hits from CBCA, and three hits from EBSCOhost. Many of the same documents appeared on the list of results from all three databases. With one exception, the topics discussed in the documents were not relevant to this thesis, since they focused on student engagement in learning, civic literacy and student learning, social justice and public education, and pluralism and moral polarization.

A search using the descriptor *teacher conceptions of social justice* yielded no results.

Although no studies were found which dealt with teachers' conceptions of social justice, one study was uncovered which did explore teacher's conceptions of justice. It was conducted in 1993 by Andra Makler, and was reported in a paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the National Council for Social Studies. It is titled *Social Studies Teachers' Conceptions of Justice*. This study sought to understand social studies teachers' conceptions of justice and whether the teachers believed that they taught about justice in their curricula. Makler interviewed 18 teachers (16 high school teachers, two middle school teachers). The results showed that the teachers' conceptions of justice could be grouped into three clusters. These were:

1. Justice as right and wrong;
2. Justice as fairness (of treatment);
3. Justice as an ideal or standard. (p. 7).

Makler (1993) found that the teachers she interviewed drew on ideas from all three clusters in their teaching. She also found two secondary themes. These were:

1. Justice requires moral action;

2. Justice is an individual construct. (p. 7)

Although Makler (1993) originally questioned whether male and female teachers held and expressed different concepts of justice, her results showed that strong gender-associated differences in language of justice did not appear.

While this study did examine teachers' conceptions of justice, it dealt more with the curricular content of these teachers' lessons as related to the teaching of *justice*, rather than teachers' conceptions of *social* justice.

The finding that no empirical studies appear to have been completed that explore how teachers conceive of social justice, and how these conceptions influence their daily practice as well as their involvement in school improvement reforms would signal that this is an area requiring attention. It is the teachers who interact daily with students, and who influence virtually every area of school life. It would therefore seem prudent to gain a better understanding of how teachers develop conceptions of fairness, equity, and diversity.

CHAPTER THREE

The Conceptual Model for the Study

The intent of this chapter is to present the conceptual model which forms the theoretical and organizational basis for the research, and to provide theoretical definitions for the relevant concepts.

The Model

The design of the conceptual model includes a number of factors that influence the development of teachers' conceptions of social justice, and their subsequent actions. This model is presented in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3 begins with three factors that contribute to the development of the teachers' conceptions of social justice. The first of these factors involves the paradigms of distributive and cultural justice. A description of these paradigms which highlights the differences in the way each defines social justice was presented in Chapter 2. Distributive justice was defined as dealing with the allocation of educational and social resources to all students, particularly those at the economic and social margins of society. Cultural justice broadens the definition of social justice to include a respect for and the positive affirmation of cultural practices and identities of groups through the incorporation of practices aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements.

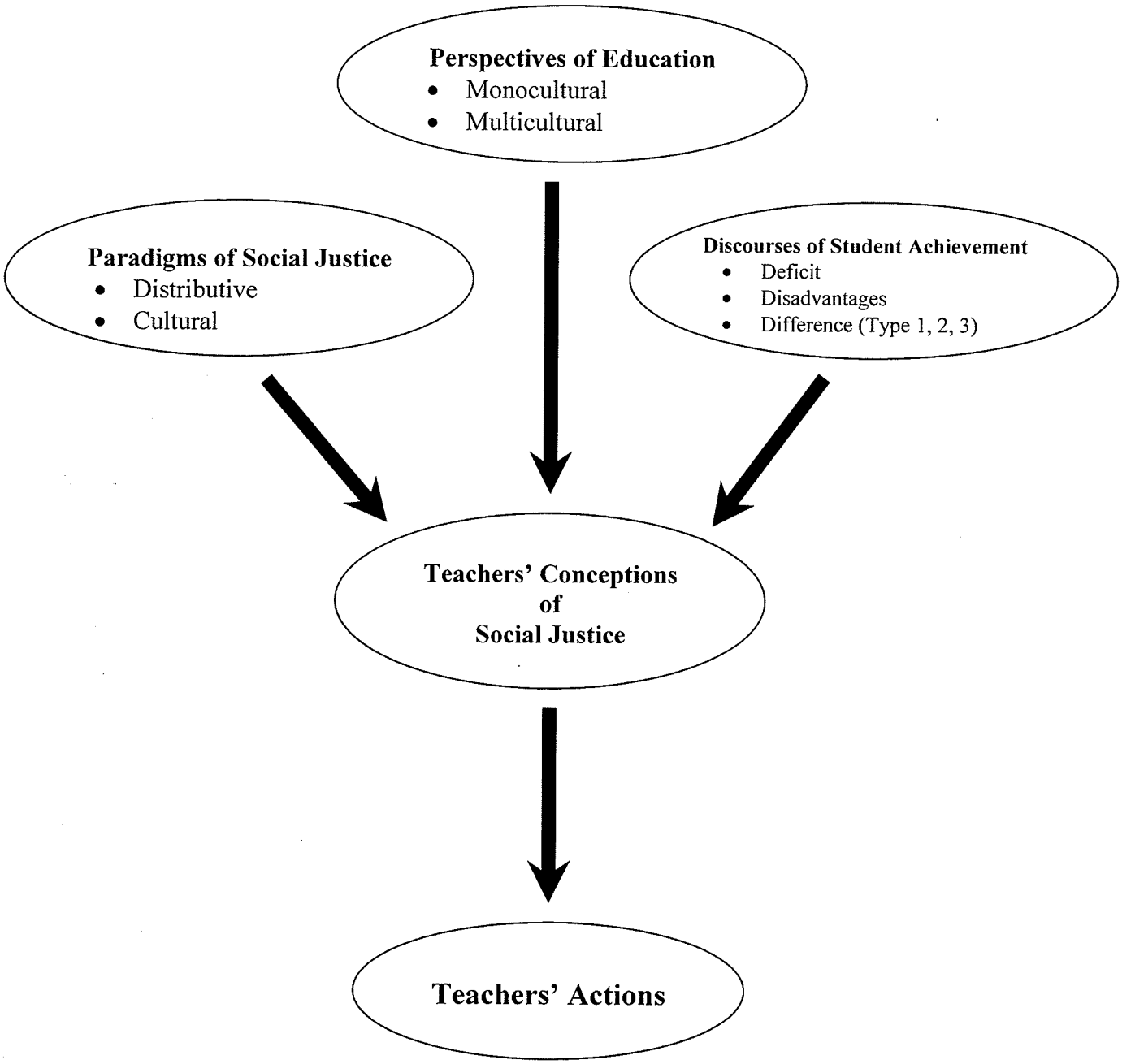

Figure 3. Conceptual Model of the Factors Contributing to the Formation of Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice

The second factor affecting the development of teachers' conceptions of social justice involves the influence of monocultural and multicultural perspectives of education as described by Fleras and Elliott (2003). The first perspective reflects a view of education which is based on a monocultural philosophy that promotes aspects of educational practice intended to reproduce the existing social order. The second perspective advocates using multicultural strategies aimed at modifying the total educational environment so as to better reflect the diversity of the classroom.

The third factor presented in the conceptual model as helping to shape the formation of teachers' conceptions of social justice is drawn from the work of Gale and Densmore (2000). These authors describe three common discourses regarding academic achievement that focus on students' deficits, disadvantages and differences.

Within the discourse of deficit, student ability is conceived of as a discrete, quantifiable, individual characteristic that is considered independent of social context. The discourse of disadvantage is based upon the assumption that students who are deprived culturally and economically will be academically weak as a result of their home situations. The final discourse described by Gale and Densmore (2000) is the discourse of difference. Three types of discourse of difference are included in this category; Types 1, 2, and 3. The Type 1 discourse of difference maintains that all individuals have universal needs and that any differences which may exist between individuals are not meaningful. The Type 2 discourse of difference argues that diversity is intrinsically positive, while the Type 3 discourse of difference adheres to the assumption that socio-cultural differences are mediated by social relations.

The conceptual model presented in Figure 3 suggests that the factors described influence the development of teachers' conceptions of social justice, and these conceptions in turn influence the teachers' involvement in school improvement initiatives and their teaching practices. Figure 4 illustrates the types of actions the teachers may be expected to enact as a result of the factors described in Figure 3. Examples of actions that were observed at Rothman High School are included in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

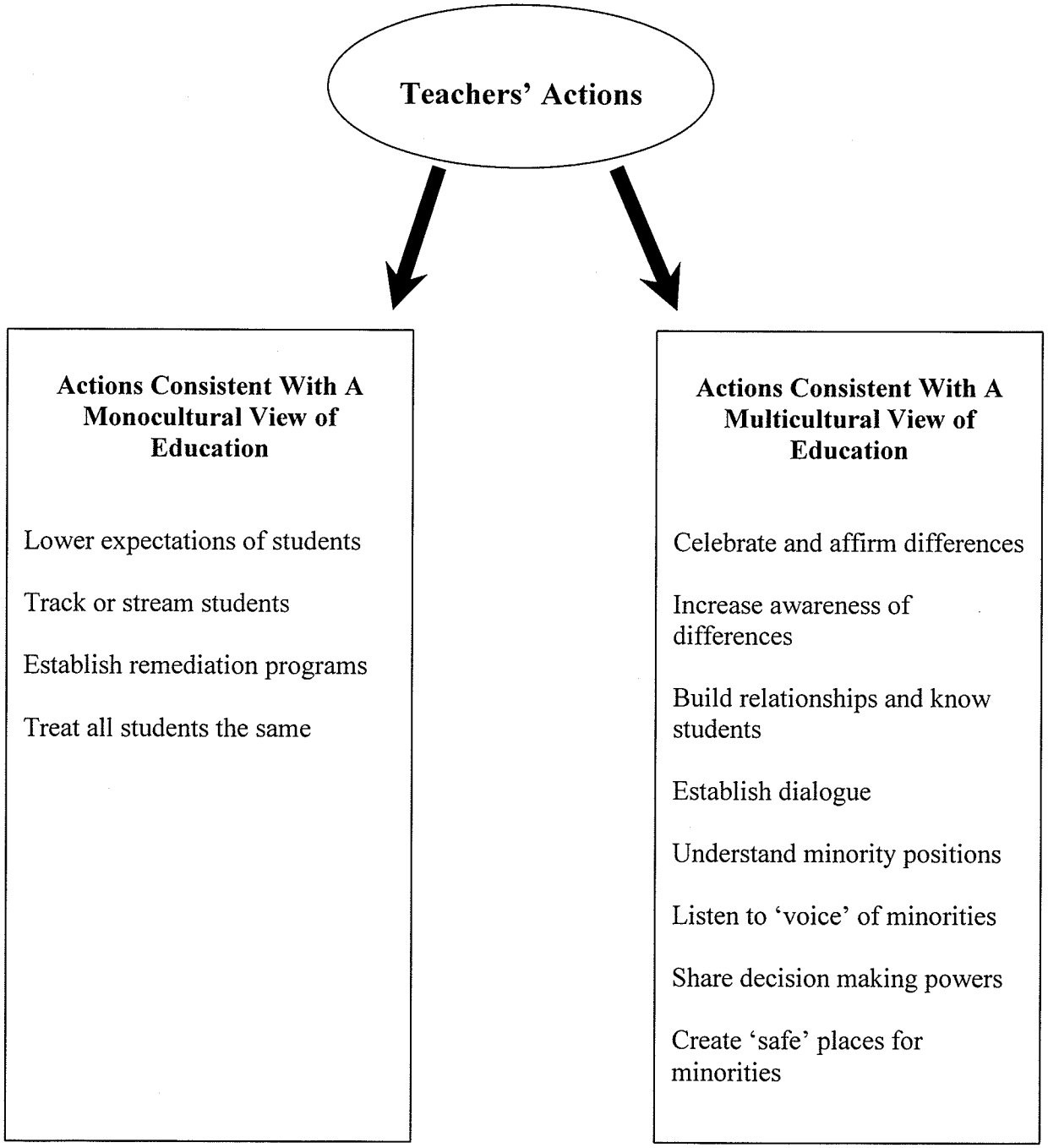

Figure 4. Conceptual Model of Teachers' Actions Influenced by Conceptions of Social Justice.

Theoretically Defined Concepts

Social Justice

The principles and norms of social organization which reflect society's responsibility to create structures that protect the dignity of individuals, and provide equal consideration to all people according to their needs, talents and choices.

Paradigm

An interrelated set of facts, concepts, generalizations, and theories that attempt to explain human behavior or social phenomena and that imply policy and action

Distributive (Socioeconomic) Justice

The allocation of educational and social resources to all students, particularly those at the economic and social margins of society.

Cultural (Recognitive) Justice

Respect for and the positive affirmation of cultural practices and identities of groups through the incorporation of practices aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements.

Rights

The legal, institutional or moral entitlements derived from publicly acknowledged rules, established practices or past transactions. (Miller, 1976)

Needs

A lack or deficiency which if not remedied will result in injurious consequences to the individual. (Miller, 1976)

Desert

The belief that the benefits people enjoy and the harms they suffer are dependent upon the actions and personal qualities of the individual. These benefits and harms may be measured according to factors such as moral virtue, productive efforts, or capacities. (Miller, 1976)

Marginalization

The consideration of individuals or groups as being outside the dominant culture, resulting in material deprivation, curtailment of rights and loss of opportunities.

Domination

The establishment of the dominant group's experience and culture as the norm, and the subsequent rendering invisible of the oppressed group's perspective. (Young, 1990)

Recognition

Understanding the cultural politics inherent in the ways group differences are structured by power relations in the social and historical context.

Monocultural Education

Aspects of educational practice which are intended to reproduce the existing social order.

Multicultural Education

Strategies aimed at modifying the total educational environment so as to better reflect the diversity of the classroom.

Discourse of Deficit

The conception of ability as a discrete, quantifiable, individual characteristic that is considered independent of social context (Gale and Densmore, 2000).

Discourse of Disadvantage

The suggestion that students who are deprived culturally and economically will be academically weak as a result of their home situations.

Discourse of Difference Type 1

The assumption that all individuals have universal needs and that any differences which may exist between individuals are not meaningful (Gale and Densmore, 2000).

Discourse of Difference Type 2

The assumption that diversity is intrinsically positive. (Gale and Densmore, 2000).

Discourse of Difference Type 3

The assumption that socio-cultural differences are mediated by social relations. (Gale and Densmore, 2000).

Democracy of Emotions

The presence or absence of active trust, mutuality and negotiated authority in the classroom. (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 147-148)

Democracy of Social Space

The presence or absence of self-organization, self-expression and self-development. (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 147-148)

Democracy of Systems and Routines

The presence or absence of social reflexivity, responsiveness and devolved

responsibility. (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 151-152)

Democracy of Scale

The presence or absence of all of the previous actions, as well as multiple collectives and multiple connections. (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 152-154).

Affirmative Redistribution

A remedy for economic injustice which seeks to redress end-state maldistribution while leaving intact much of the underlying political-economic structure (Fraser, 1997).

Transformative Redistribution

A remedy for economic injustice which seeks to redress end-state maldistribution by transforming the underlying political-economic structure (Fraser, 1997).

Affirmative Recognition

A remedy for cultural injustice which seeks to redress disrespect by revaluing unjustly devalued group identities, while leaving intact both the contents of those identities and the group differentiations that underlie them (Fraser, 1997).

Transformative Recognition

A remedy for cultural injustice which seeks to redress disrespect by transforming the underlying cultural-valuational structure (Fraser, 1997).

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to investigate teachers' conceptions of social justice, and the impact of their conceptions upon the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives aimed at helping students at risk of not fulfilling their educational potential. The specific research questions to be answered were:

1. How do teachers conceive of social justice as it relates to their students?
2. How do these conceptions influence the teachers' practices and the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives?
3. What are the program initiatives implemented by the case study school which are aimed at improving the learning experiences and achievement of students in at-risk situations?
4. How do these initiatives attempt to address distributive and cultural injustices?

This chapter describes the design of the study, its context, the participants, the data collection strategies, and the analysis and reporting procedures.

The Design

This study utilized qualitative methodology, based upon a constructivist paradigm which assumes that "...reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds". (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). According to Merriam, qualitative inquiry is interpretive, holistic research which focuses on understanding meaning in context. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe qualitative research as consisting of a set of

interpretive, material practices that help to make the world visible through the study of phenomena in their natural settings.

The constructivist assumptions underlying the design of this study imply that individuals develop interpretations of their social environment which will affect their subsequent actions. It is these interpretations, and the intentions formed on the basis of the interpretations, that result in particular actions by individuals. Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) describe research that is grounded in this assumption as *postpositivist* research. They maintain that their definition of postpositivism as similar to constructivism as it is defined by authors such as Guba and Lincoln (1994).

A qualitative methodology was selected for this study in order to explore social justice concepts from the perspective of the teachers involved. This insider's view is referred to as the *emic* perspective (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998; Stake, 1995), and contrasts with the *etic* perspective (the outsider's or researcher's view). Stake describes qualitative case study methodology as being able to preserve multiple realities, which refer to "... the different and even contradictory views of what is happening" (p. 12). It was hoped that examining the emic perspective would generate descriptive data to deepen understandings of the possible relationship between teacher conceptions of social justice and the presence or absence of particular indicators of social injustice in school improvement initiatives.

A single case study design was employed for this research, in order to develop a rich, in-depth understanding of the situation. Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) define case study research as "...the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (p.

436). Merriam (1998) describes case study research as supporting "... interest in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (p. 19). Stake (1995) suggests that case study methodology enables the researcher to "... catch the complexity of a single case", and to "... look for the detail of interaction with its contexts" (p. xi). Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) outline four characteristics of case study research. These are:

1. The study of phenomena by focusing on specific instances, that is, cases;
2. An in-depth study of each case;
3. The study of a phenomenon in its natural context;
4. The study of the emic perspective of case study participants. (p. 436)

These four characteristics suggested that case study research methodology would facilitate the type of in-depth study which was the goal of this study, within the natural context of the school, and from the perspective of the teachers involved.

The purpose of this study was both descriptive and interpretive (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) suggests that a descriptive case study in education is "... one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study" (p. 38). She states that frequently the phenomena under study in descriptive research are innovative programs and practices, and that such studies can form a database for future comparison and theory building.

When descriptive case study data are used to develop conceptual categories which either illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions, or provide explanations for the phenomena being examined, the purpose of the study is considered to be interpretive (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Merriam states that "... the level of

abstraction and conceptualization in interpretive case studies may range from suggesting relationships among variables to constructing theory." (p. 39). The intent of this study was to understand the possible relationship between teacher conceptions of social justice and the presence or absence of paradigms of both distributive and cultural justice in particular school improvement initiatives, which implied that some interpretation of the research findings in terms of a possible relational pattern would be required.

Delimitations of the Study

The research presented in this thesis is based on a case study of a single school. It involved five participants, the principal and four teachers, from that school. A decision was made to delimit the study to one school, located in a geographic area within a reasonable distance from the researcher's home. Although a multiple-site case study would have provided a broader selection of data, compiling a suitably 'thick' description (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003) of the participants and the context and conducting the type of in-depth analysis demanded by case study methodology would have proved beyond reasonable limits of time and expertise for the beginning researcher conducting the study. For similar reasons, a decision was made to delimit the choice of participants for this study to one administrator and four teachers at the school. Although the inclusion of the voices of students would have undoubtedly added a valuable dimension to the investigation of the research questions, that option was also determined to be beyond the scope of what would be reasonable to accomplish in one study.

Context

The Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP) is an intermediary school improvement organization that has supported improvement initiatives in a number of schools within the province since 1991. The mandate of MSIP focuses on whole-school improvement as a vehicle for improving secondary schooling, and maintains a clear vision of school improvement that is based on principles of equity and social justice for all students. This vision is evident in the mission statement of MSIP, which states that "MSIP promotes educational equity and social justice by collaborating with public secondary schools and school divisions to build their capacity to improve student learning and engagement." MSIP was selected as a source for obtaining the names of schools which could potentially serve as the site for this case study, because schools that had a history of engagement with MSIP were assumed to be more likely to have engaged in school improvement initiatives that focused on issues involving concerns of equity and social justice.

The names of schools which have developed school improvement programs with the support of MSIP are public knowledge, and are available from MSIP. The school plans produced by these schools are also available to the public. Upon receiving approval of the research proposal by the Human Subject Research Ethics Review Board in January 2005, the names of eleven schools which could serve as potential research sites from MSIP were obtained, and purposeful sampling (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Mertens, 1998) was used during the review of the schools' plans to select a school site which appeared to provide the best opportunity to understand the phenomenon to be examined.

The site chosen was a secondary school located within the urban centre of Winnipeg. The school had been engaged in developing and implementing school improvement initiatives that appeared to have a focus on issues involving equity and social justice for all students. The selected school had been involved in the design and implementation of their school improvement initiatives over the past several years. This school was selected in order to facilitate the gathering of data regarding both the design and the implementation of the initiatives. Studying a project which was completed more than five years ago would likely have proved problematic because many of the personnel involved in the inception of the project may have moved on to positions at other schools, or retired. Choosing a school which was just beginning to develop an improvement initiative would not have offered the opportunity to examine the actual implementation of the proposed changes.

Stake (1995) suggests that the criteria to select a site for a case study involve considerations such as: (a) the potential to maximize what can be learned; (b) an environment hospitable to the researcher; (c) reasonable access distance. A secondary school which had developed and implemented an improvement project during the last three to five years which dealt with some aspects of social justice for the students was sought out. The site selected needed to be within a reasonable travel distance from the researcher's home in order to facilitate access, and the personnel at the school needed to be willing to participate in the study. Rothman High School (a pseudonym) appeared to fit these criteria.

Participants

Once the school site was selected, a letter was sent to the superintendent of the school division in which Rothman High was located informing him of the purpose of the study, and requesting permission to conduct the study. A copy of this request letter is included in Appendix B. After receiving consent from the superintendent, the principal of the school was contacted by telephone by the researcher, and a meeting was requested in order that the purpose and the nature of the study could be explained, and the principal could be invited to participate. This meeting took place in early February 2005. At this meeting, the principal was given a letter restating the purpose of the study, and requesting his involvement. A copy of this letter is included in Appendix B. Upon receiving the principal's written consent to participate, teachers who had a history of involvement in the school's improvement projects were identified by the principal. Four teachers were randomly selected from this alphabetized list of names. These teachers were contacted in writing, were informed of the purpose and nature of the study, and invited to participate. Four teachers were chosen to participate in the study, along with the principal, because of a previous decision of the researcher to delimit the number of participants to five. Copies of the letters inviting the teachers to participate in the study are included in Appendix B. Written informed consent (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003) was obtained from the participants. Copies of the letters of consent for the superintendent, principal and the teacher participants are included in Appendix C.

Data Collection

This study involved five participants (the principal and four teachers) from the school. The data collection strategies used included interviews, field notes, and document review. Validity of the case study findings was enhanced through the use of triangulation (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Mertens, 1998; Stake, 1995), member checking (Gall, Gall & Borg; Janesick, 2000), and the interpretive validity criteria described by Gall, Gall and Borg. These criteria include notions of usefulness, contextual completeness, researcher positioning and reporting style (p. 462).

An initial focus group interview (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Mertens, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) involving the principal and the four teachers was conducted in mid-February 2005, once written consent was obtained from all participants. The purpose of this focus group interview was to gather information from the participants about the school, such as its goals and mission statement. The teachers were asked to describe the school's strengths, as well as areas they perceived still required attention. The focus group interview was also designed to gather data about the students attending the school, and about the school improvement projects, both past and current.

On the day that the focus group interview was scheduled, the principal and one of the teacher participants were absent due to illness, but because of difficulties encountered in scheduling an alternate meeting date that was suitable for all participants, it was decided to go ahead with those participants who were in attendance. The participants who were unable to attend the focus group interview were asked to comment on the questions from the group session at their first individual interview session.

At the start of the focus group interview, the participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the study, and were reminded that they were free to withdraw at any time. They were told that they were not obligated to respond to any of the questions, and were informed that their confidentiality (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) would be enhanced through the use of pseudonyms. The participants were assured that no descriptors which might identify individuals would be used. They were informed that the interview tapes, notes, and transcriptions would be maintained in a locked, secure cabinet in the researcher's home, and that upon completion of the study the tapes would be destroyed.

Following the focus group interview, each of the five participants in the study was interviewed individually (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes and employed a general interview guide approach (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). The individual interviews were audio-tape recorded. The researcher took notes as needed during and immediately after the interview.

The interview questions probed the participants' interpretations of situations involving the marginalization of students, possible barriers to student learning, and the involvement of parents and the community in the school. Other questions were designed to elicit comments about the participants' actions connected with their involvement in the school's improvement initiatives, and in their professional practices.

Although the content of the interview protocol for this study was structured to reflect some components of the conceptual model, the study would have been strengthened by the inclusion of questions and interview probes that were designed to elicit information related more specifically to other aspects of the conceptual model. For

example, the inclusion of questions aimed at probing the participants' views on sustaining the monocultural status quo within education, and their willingness to engage in transformative actions would have provided greater fidelity between the interview protocols and the conceptual model of the study. This weak connection between the interview protocol and the conceptual model is a limitation of this study.

The audio-tapes of all the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and copies of the transcriptions were returned to each participant for a member check in order to help ensure the validity of the participant's emic perspective. A copy of the letter to the participants seeking confirmation of the accuracy of the transcripts is included in Appendix D.

A second focus group interview was planned to take place in April 2005, after some initial coding and analysis of the first focus group and individual interviews had been completed. The purpose of this second focus group interview was to create an opportunity for the participants to add further commentary to their responses to the questions contained in the first focus group interview. Unfortunately, due to scheduling conflicts among the participants, the timing of school-wide events such as the annual drama production, and an out of town conference attended by several of the participants, it proved impossible to arrange a time suitable for everyone to meet before the end of May. It was therefore agreed to re-schedule the last focus group interview to occur after the completion of the second series of individual interviews. However, once the second set of individual interviews had been completed, the participants communicated to the researcher their belief that a second focus group interview would be redundant. The participants believed that they had received ample opportunity to respond to all the

questions and to express their thoughts during the course of the first focus group interview and the two individual interviews. The researcher also believed that the expressed purpose of the second focus group interview had been accomplished in the second series of individual interviews. As a result, no second focus group interview was conducted.

The second individual interviews took place in late April and early May 2005. These interviews followed an informal conversational approach (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003), to permit the "... spontaneous generation of questions in a natural interaction" (p. 239). This approach allowed for the participants to express their thoughts after participating in the focus group and individual interviews. The audio-tapes of the second individual interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and sent to the participants for member checks. The questions and probes which were used in the focus group and both sets of individual interviews can be found in Appendix A of this document.

In addition to the interviews, relevant school records and documents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gall, Gall & Borg; Taylor & Bogdan) were examined and analyzed. One of the documents examined was the 2004-2005 Rothman High School Improvement Plan. In Manitoba, each school is required to prepare a School Plan on an annual basis, and to submit the plan to its central school division office and to the provincial Department of Education. The School Plans outline yearly goals, activities, and budgets. In addition to the School Plan, documents containing summaries of the surveys conducted by the school with teachers, parents and students were studied. Minutes of selected Parent Council and staff meetings were also made available to the researcher.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Data analysis for this study was interpretative, and followed an emergent design utilizing a constant comparative method (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), so that some data analysis occurred while the data collection was still in progress (Charmaz, 2000; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). Analysis of the focus group, individual interviews, and the researcher's field notes began with line-by-line coding (Charmaz; Taylor & Bogdan), after which the text was organized into meaningful segments called *comments*. In this thesis, a comment refers to a section of text data selected from interview, focus group or documents obtained during this study which contains one item of information that is comprehensible even if read outside the context in which it is embedded. This section of text may be a phrase within a sentence, a sentence, a paragraph, or a longer section of text.

In this thesis, a total of 108 segments of text were coded as comments. The first 49 comments are included in Chapter 5 to enhance the description of the case school which provided the setting for the study. Comments 50 – 88 appear in Chapter 6, to describe the teachers' conceptions of social justice. The final set of comments (89-108) is included in Chapter 7, where they are placed to illustrate the influence of teachers' conceptions of social justice on school improvement initiatives and teacher practices.

In total, one hundred and thirty-six single-spaced pages of transcript were obtained from one focus group interview and 10 individual interviews conducted with the five participants. These data were read and coded on five separate occasions over a period of ten months. The first coding of the transcripts resulted in segments of the data

being labeled with code names according to the content of each segment. These code names are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Preliminary Coding Categories of Interview Data

Teachers' Definitions of Social Justice	Democracy of Emotions
Distributive Justice	Active Trust
Distributive Injustices	Negotiated Authority
Cultural Justice	Mutuality
Cultural Injustices	Democracy of Social Space
Reasons for Involvement in School Improvement Initiatives	Dialogue
Description of Students	Own Voice
Nature of the School Improvement Initiatives	Democracy of Systems and Routines
Impact of Local Policies	Devolved Responsibility
Impact of Government Policies	Reflexivity
Barriers to Change	Affirming Differences
Supports for Change	Marginalization
Sustainability of Change	Democracy of Scale

Subsequent drafts of coding categories reaffirmed the legitimacy of the first set of categories, because the same categories emerged during each reading of the data. The comments were next examined to identify themes or concepts, and to develop propositions (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) which assisted in interpreting the data. The comments related to the case school, its students, and the school improvement initiatives were grouped into one theme titled *School Improvement*. Other themes were *Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice*, and *Social Justice Actions*. Further examination of the theme School Improvement resulted in the decision to use comments grouped under this theme as the basis of a separate chapter in the thesis that would describe the setting of the study (Chapter 5). The comments grouped under the theme of Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice were incorporated into Chapter 6, and the comments included in the theme of Social Justice Actions formed the basis of Chapter 7.

Concepts and propositions (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998) based on the data were developed through a process in which the participants comments were analyzed according to a series of theoretical constructs. These constructs include the components represented in the conceptual model for this study, which are outlined in Chapter 3. The constructs are: (a) the distributive and cultural paradigms of social justice (Fraser, 1997; Young, 1990), (b) monocultural and multicultural perspectives of education (Fleras and Elliott, 2003), (c) discourses of academic achievement (Gale and Densmore, 2000), (d) dialogic democracies (Gale and Densmore), and (e) factors to be considered in transforming education policy and practice to address concerns of social justice (Brown, 2004; Popkewitz, 1999; Rusch, 2005; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1996; Shields, 2004).

The process of developing concepts and propositions in order to make sense of

the data involved examining each comment to determine whether it fit within one or more of the theoretical constructs. For example, the following quotation was coded as a comment illustrating the discourses of deficit and disadvantage, a monocultural view of education, and the cultural paradigm of justice.

> *These students are not considered able to succeed in a classroom setting, so we remove them from the classroom and put them in the learning centre. In that way they become marginalized, because they associate their learning with that place, instead of a regular setting. It can work against them to be considered as kind of outsiders with their peers, and because there could be a concomitant lack of success academically. I'm not saying it's a wrong thing, I'm just saying that it could be interpreted as marginalizing a student.* (Ruth Caldwell, Comment 65)

In the comment, the teacher referred to the students as being "less able to succeed in the classroom setting", which resulted in the statement being interpreted as reflective of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage described by Gale and Densmore (2000). The statement was also considered to be illustrative of a monocultural view of education, since the students referred to by the teacher were assigned to work in the learning centre, in an attempt to provide remedial assistance to compensate for their inferior academic achievement. As the teacher pointed out in her comment, this type of placement resulted in the marginalization of the student. Marginalization is an action which is consistent with injustice within the cultural paradigm.

Once each comment had been considered in this manner, the data were examined to determine the presence of patterns which corresponded to those predicted in the conceptual model for the study described in Chapter 3. These patterns were then

subjected to interpretation by the researcher, following the interpretive criteria of plausibility, authenticity, credibility, and relevance (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003). The resulting interpretations were used to respond to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

Data from documents and records such as the school improvement plans for Rothman High School for 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, summaries of staff, parent and student survey results, and meeting minutes were also examined for this study. The data from these sources were analyzed according to the criteria suggested by Hodder (2000), in order to appropriately consider different contexts relevant to the documents. These include the context in which the documents and records were first developed, and the context in which they will be interpreted for the research. Documentary evidence obtained from the various school improvement plans, survey results and meeting minutes were used in this case study to complement the information obtained from the focus group discussions and the individual interviews, providing corroboration of the data.

An analytic reporting style (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003) was used in the final writing of this research study. This style was employed to present the data in a way that demonstrated its consistency with the conceptual model for the study, and involved the use of multiple charts and graphs, as well as quotations from the comments of the participants.

Limitations of the Study

The conceptual model for this study presents a number of factors that could be considered to influence the development of teachers' conceptions of social justice and

their subsequent actions (see Figures 3 and 4). The research was conducted as a single case study, and as such the findings that are reported are subject to limitations that result from being based on events which occurred at a particular school, at a particular time, and under particular circumstances.

According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2003), a research study's findings are generalizable to the extent that they can be applied to individuals or situations other than those in which the findings were obtained, but the generalizability of case study findings is problematic. According to Merriam (1998), the generalizability of case study research becomes problematic when the concept of generalization is not framed to appropriately reflect the assumptions underlying qualitative inquiry. Merriam argues that "The general lies in the particular; that is, what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered" (p. 210). Stake (1995) agrees, pointing out that the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts is important in creating understanding. He states that "... people can learn much that is general from single cases. They do that partly because they are familiar with other cases and they add this one in, thus making a slightly new group from which to generalize, a new opportunity to modify old generalizations" (p. 85).

The research outlined in this study is subject to the limitations of case studies described by Merriam (1998), and Stake (1995). The relatively small set of data obtained from this single case study places limits on the certainty with which the research questions may be answered. In addition, the connection between the interview protocols and the conceptual model presented in this study is not as strong as it could be. Therefore, it should be noted that the interpretations of the data provided in this thesis are

presented as tentative and rather fragile preliminary notions that may potentially serve as suitable topics for future studies. It should also be noted that the interpretations contained in this thesis represent only one possible interpretation of the data, and that these interpretations were undoubtedly influenced by the values and viewpoints of the researcher.

CHAPTER FIVE

Description of the Setting

The research described in this thesis followed a single case study design, to permit the development of rich, in-depth understanding of one school's improvement initiatives. This chapter provides descriptive information about the nature of the school selected as the site of the study, and about the journey towards school improvement charted by the principal and teachers during the years 1998 – 2005. This chapter responds to the third of the four research questions which were outlined in Chapter 1.

> Research Question 3: What are the school improvement initiatives which were designed and implemented by the teachers?

The chapter begins by providing a brief physical description of the school, accompanied by a summary of data regarding the nature of the school's students, teachers and parent community. The rationale driving recent changes at the school is outlined, followed by a description of school improvement initiatives which were implemented. The chapter concludes with a look at barriers and supports for change which were identified by the study participants, and a summary of factors leading to the sustainability of school improvement initiatives. Throughout this and subsequent chapters, the term *teacher* is used in reference to all the participants, including the principal of the school, Joe Masterson. In the province of Manitoba, principals and teachers are members of the same professional association, the Manitoba Teachers' Society. Principals are not viewed as serving just a managerial function, but are expected to be educational leaders

as well. This requires that the actions of the principal serve educational purposes designed to improve student learning.

The School

The school division in which Rothman High is located serves a diverse student population in a large urban geographic area. The division employs 1000 teachers in 40 schools, and offers both English and French Immersion programs. As well, it has an increasing number of refugee families and students studying English as an additional language. There are six other high schools in the division in addition to Rothman.

Rothman High School is situated in an older residential area of the largest urban centre in Manitoba, Canada, and is surrounded by a church, a few small businesses, an elementary school, and residential homes. The families in the area served by the school represent a cross-section of lower and middle class income levels, and include an increasing number of immigrants and persons of aboriginal descent.

Upon approaching Rothman High (a pseudonym), one first observes a grouping of low, grey, octagonal buildings joined to each other by a series of rectangular passages. Once inside, the school's unique pod-like formation becomes more evident. All sections of the school appear similar, and first-time visitors may be confused by the many sets of stairs required to access all three floors of the split-level structure. Pale blue signs are liberally used throughout the building to provide direction to various classrooms, the office, and gymnasium. The hallways are lined with large, framed photographs of former graduating classes, dating backwards from the present day to 1962, when the school was built. The overall impression created is of an older school which had been reasonably

maintained. It is clean, with freshly painted walls in shades of blue and well polished tile floors.

During the first three decades of its existence, Rothman High cultivated a reputation as the more academic school among a trio of high schools in its neighborhood. In the 1990s, a series of organizational changes led to the closing of a nearby high school which offered technical and vocational courses, and Rothman High absorbed its student population. As a result, Rothman's enrolment increased to approximately 480 students, and the scope of student abilities and needs broadened considerably.

Rothman High provides courses in the Manitoba Senior Years English Program and the Manitoba Senior Years French Immersion Program. Rothman High School offers all of the required courses required by the province of Manitoba for the awarding of a high school diploma. Students are required to attain a minimum of 28 credits. Within the Senior Years English Program, 15 of these credits are for required courses including English language arts, mathematics, science, geography, history, and physical education/health education. The other 13 credits are optional credits which represent a range of course choices in areas such as music, drama, art, home economics, French, metalworking, woodworking, computer applications, and accounting, among others. The Senior Years French Immersion Program requires the completion of 4 credits in Français is addition to the 15 credits required in the English Senior Years Program. Except for English language arts, all of these compulsory courses have French as the language of instruction. Students in the French Immersion Program must complete 9 optional credits in order to obtain the required total of 28 credits required for graduation. These credits may be completed in either the French or English language.

Rothman High School employs a number of strategies designed to meet the needs of students who were not attaining their learning potential. For example, the programs for some students are modified according to the guidelines set out by the provincial Department of Education in the publication *Individual Education Planning: A Handbook for Developing and Implementing IEPs* (1998). The guidelines in this publication indicate that a modified (M) course designation may be used for "...Senior Years students with significant cognitive disabilities who benefit from curricula developed or approved by Manitoba Education and Training, provided that the curricular outcomes have been modified significantly to meet the student's unique learning requirements" (p. 2.4). Students must have received a psychological assessment by a qualified school psychologist in order to be placed on a modified program. These students still require 28 credits to graduate from high school, but the course content can be adapted according to the needs of the student. Each student on a modified program has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) designed by school personnel. An IEP consists of a "...written document developed and implemented by a team, outlining a plan to address the individual learning needs of students" (Manitoba Education and Training, retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/specedu/iep/).

In the early 1990s, the Rothman created a program within the school that was designed to provide remedial assistance for students encountering academic or behavioural difficulties. This program, known as the Learning Centre, was staffed by the school resource teacher and some instructional assistants (paraprofessional aides). Students were referred to this program by classroom teachers or the school's administrators, and were able to work on one or more courses outside of the regular

classroom setting. Students were able to obtain course credits in the Learning Centre. Approximately 80 students in the school were working on one or more courses through the Learning Centre.

The Students

> *I would say that one of the issues at Rothman would be the fact that we have an at risk population. By that I mean that we have a lot of kids who experience learning difficulties. They come to us with a variety of needs with respect to learning, to teaching. They also come to us more and more with major gaps in their learning, in their skill sets, so we're faced with having to try and plug those skills back in. We are seeing more and more kids who are needy in an emotional sense as well. That can interfere with learning. There are more mental health issues cropping up, and more kids coming to us from low income situations, whether it be from families who are on some form of assistance, or single parent families who are having trouble making ends meet, or who are the working poor. All of those factors tend to enter into the challenges that kids face.* (Joe Masterson, principal of Rothman High, Comment 1)

Joe's description of the difficulties faced by some of the students attending Rothman High (Table 4) was echoed by all of the teachers interviewed (Joe and the teachers are represented by pseudonyms). Each cited concern regarding data collected by the school which revealed that more than 60 percent of its past graduates did not pursue post-secondary education, and of those who did, fewer than 25 percent persisted past the first year. All the teachers viewed the students at Rothman as representing a different demographic than students who attended other high schools "across the highway". These

schools were located in a newer, more upscale housing development on the other side of a major thoroughfare, and served families which enjoyed a higher socio-economic status than those sending their children to Rothman High. Teacher Pierre Peloquin captured the sentiments of the teachers and the principal regarding the nature of the students attending Rothman.

> *Our clients have higher needs. I think the socio-economic status of our kids is substantially different from those other two schools. I'm sure they have their wealthy and poor, much as we do, but I think that we have a higher range of high needs kids in the sense that they have needs coming in to our building based on economics, based on the education they've gotten up until now, based on whether their parents are readers who value education. Also, based on the vast amount of minorities and ethnic groups we have coming in to this school, white people are in the minority.* (Comment 2)

Another teacher, Frank Spence, adds:

> *There are kids who suffer physical and emotional abuse. They suffer sexual abuse, they suffer from court battles, and troubles with the law. Some kids have drug dependencies.* (Comment 3)

The teachers attributed the weak academic skills evidenced by many of the students to factors such as poor home environments, the prevalence of school division policies advocating social promotion up to Grade 8, and student transiency among schools.

Table 4

Participant Comments Describing Students at Rothman High

60% of students do not go on to post-secondary studies
Lots of students with learning difficulties
Weak literacy skills
Kids who have been socially promoted, and then hit the credit system
Low socio-economic status compared to neighbouring schools
Large number of aboriginal and other ethnic minorities
A high needs population
An at-risk population
Kids are needy in an emotional sense
More students presenting mental health issues today
Fairly high rate of kids who are transient
Many dysfunctional families
Kids who suffer sexual, physical, and emotional abuse
Kids who have troubles with the law

The Teachers

Rothman High employed a full time principal and vice-principal, and a staff of 32 teachers. The teachers, all of whom were Caucasian, represented a full range of ages and experience, from young novices to mature teachers with over 30 years of experience. The principal, Joe Masterson, came to Rothman in 1996, having previously held a position as principal of a very large secondary school in the northern part of the province. The vice-

principal was an experienced educator with a background in Special Education, who was in her first year at Rothman. She was the fourth vice-principal to serve at the school in the past five years. The school was experiencing a period of high staff turnover, the result of retirements, maternity leaves, reassignments, and sick leaves. During the year this study was conducted (2004-2005), six and one-half teaching positions were being filled by teachers on term contracts. The teachers involved in this study included the principal of Rothman, and four teachers randomly selected from a list of names provided by the principal selected from the total of 32 staff members. The principal selected teachers to place on this list of names based on the criteria outlined to him by the researcher. These criteria included knowledge of the school's improvement initiatives over the past five years, and some actual involvement in the design and implementation of these initiatives. Specific information about each of the participants is provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Study Participants

Participant	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience	Years at Rothman	Teaching Area
Joe Masterson	M	31	9	Principal
Frank Spence	M	32	10	Science
Ruth Caldwell	F	15	13	Law, History
Pierre Peloquin	M	21	3	English
Louise Mah	F	16	9	Science

The school improvement initiatives which occurred at Rothman High involved everyone on staff, albeit to varying degrees. The School Improvement Plan 2000-2001 reports that "All professional staff are involved in the school's improvement efforts. Each staff member has volunteered to serve on a committee or working group" (p. 2).

Some staff members chose to assume active leadership roles by serving as committee chairpersons, while others participated as members of committees. Some teachers were not actively involved in the school's committee structure, but chose to contribute to the school improvement initiatives by developing new curricula, researching teaching and learning strategies, or developing new initiatives within their own classrooms. When questioned regarding their reasons for becoming involved in the school's improvement programs, the teachers indicated that they had each been directly asked to participate by taking on responsibilities such as chairing a committee, or joining a group of staff investigating a particular issue.

> *I was asked right at the beginning to be a part of it. We had a steering committee, and I was asked to chair a committee. So right from the beginning I've been involved.* (Ruth Caldwell, Comment 4)

> *A few years back, a group of teachers had this vision of developing a teacher advisor group, and employability skills portfolios, and I kind of liaised with them, and got involved with that. I became involved with the academic support program as well.* (Louise Mah, Comment 5)

Well, my role in the school every year is to sit down with Joe and talk about school plans, at the divisional level and the provincial level, and then we do it with MSIP, and that's how we get our funding from MSIP. (Pierre Peloquin, Comment 6)

The Parents

The teachers described the parents of students attending Rothman as being very supportive of the school. They remarked that telephone calls home to request assistance in dealing with student issues surrounding attendance, attitude, poor work habits or performance were uniformly met with appreciation, gratitude, and action. Frank Spence commented on the relationship he observed between the parents and the teachers at Rothman High:

I think if I were to characterize it in one word, it would be trust. They trust us daily to take care of our kids, and they trust us to make the right decisions for them. Most of those parents do. You phone home, there's action. Again, that's not always, but most of the time they are thankful that you phoned, and that you care about their child. It's nice to have that kind of feedback from the parents. It's like, "We trust you guys – thanks for doing a good job". (Comment 7)

In April 2003, focus group discussions were organized by the school to solicit comments and opinions from parents of students attending Rothman. The results of these discussions revealed that parents felt the school was a safe, welcoming place for their children and themselves. They perceived the teachers to be respectful, dedicated and

caring, and the school administrators to be competent and accessible. They voiced concerns regarding the low number of parents attending Parent Council meetings, and stated that they wanted to see more programming for special needs students, and that current levels of programs were maintained in the school.

Seeds of Change at Rothman High

According to the teachers interviewed, Rothman High's current journey of school improvement began in 1996, at which time 12 teachers and the principal left the school (41 percent staff turnover), and Joe Masterson began his tenure as principal. Prior to that time, school improvement efforts had centered on developing mission statements and setting yearly goals. The teachers described their involvement in this process as being somewhat superficial, and they felt little ownership for the resulting plan. Frank Spence recalls:

> *The former management by objectives or whatever you want to call it was somewhat Draconian. We set the goals, but 'they', whoever 'they' were, were the ones who actually sat and looked at what was going on. There wasn't a lot of dialogue back and forth.* (Comment 8)

In September 1996, Joe Masterson came to Rothman High. His arrival coincided with the implementation of several new policies and procedures introduced by Premier Gary Filmon's Conservative government in the documents *Renewing Education: New Directions – A Blueprint for Action* (1994); *Renewing Education: New Directions – The Action Plan* (1995a); *and Renewing Education: New Directions – A Foundation for Excellence* (1995b). One of the new policies required schools to develop and submit

annual plans to their divisional offices in October. These plans were collated by the school division into a divisional plan which was submitted by October 30th each year to Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. Joe chose to involve the staff members in the development of the school plan, and teachers' opinions were solicited. The staff planned an annual retreat each September, and the development of the priorities for the school plan formed the focus of these retreats. As Frank explained:

> *We've been fortunate to have someone like Joe, who very much listens to what we have to say, and takes that to heart, and works with us to improve the school.* (Comment 9)

Joe recalled that the teachers' priorities in the early stages (1996 – 1998) of his tenure as principal focused on improving the school building and facilities:

> *I would say that school improvement efforts always seem to start with the physical. That was no exception in this building. People were more concerned or focused on creating a better physical environment or climate...signage, painting, and those sorts of things.* (Comment 10)

As a result of these early discussions, the school was repainted, and new signs were posted throughout the school to provide direction to various classrooms. The planning focus then shifted to the development of a collegial spirit among staff members.

> *We moved into staff recognition, and welcoming of new people on to the staff, orientation, that kind of thing. Those were the early foci for school improvement in this building, and that gradually evolved into the current focus on teaching and learning.* (Joe Masterson, principal, Comment 11)

Two years after Joe became principal at Rothman, he suggested that the school staff members prepare a proposal to receive funding for school improvement from the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP). This was a non-profit, non-governmental school improvement organization which had operated in Manitoba since 1991, to provide financial, technical and consultative support to schools undertaking various improvement initiatives. The school's proposal was accepted, and in 1998 Rothman High entered into a working partnership with MSIP that was still continuing at the time of this study in 2005. The next stage of Rothman's school improvement initiative began at this time.

The Rationale for Change

During discussions with the principal and teachers at Rothman, the participants were asked about the reasons the staff members decided to embark upon school improvement. The teachers offered the following thoughts:

> *Sixty percent of our kids are not going to post-secondary, so what are they doing? Well, they are entering the workforce. And what skills do they have, leaving our building, to enter the workforce?* (Pierre Peloquin, Comment 12)

> *We did research into the Senior 1 program, and our big reason to do it was that we were having so many kids coming in from Grade 8 without basic skills* (Ruth Caldwell, Comment 13)

It concerned how we would want students to view themselves, and to kind of affirm their belief in self, and to build their own confidence (Louise Mah, Comment 14)

To build connections and get students involved (Ruth Caldwell, Comment 15)

Additional impetus for change came from sources outside the school. The school planning process that had been recently mandated by the government affected the nature of the changes which were undertaken at Rothman, because school plans were required to reflect divisional and provincial priorities. Pierre Peloquin noted the pressures created by this requirement:

...we said, OK, this is what they are saying, so let's narrow our focus to reflect what they want, and we did that at our retreat. We had all that information available, so when we started the whole process of re-tooling our plan, we used that as a template to help us. (Comment 16)

Ruth Caldwell observed that:

My impression is that we have a few more guidelines. We are told what we can and can't do, by the department, by the division. Our mission statement has to fit under that umbrella. (Comment 17)

In order to accomplish what they believed should be done at the school to meet the needs of the students, the teachers attempted to achieve a balance between the demands placed upon the school by the division and the province, and their own

priorities. The staff members organized a two or three day planning retreat early each fall in order to establish the plan for the year. As Pierre explained,

> *We walk a fine line in between everything. We set what we want to do, the department tells us what they want to do, and then the division tells us what they think the focus of the division should be.* (Comment 18)

Societal trends such as globalization, technological advancement, the corporate agenda for education, and the emphasis on accountability all played a role in shaping the school improvement initiatives which were undertaken at Rothman. Principal Joe Masterson described how the influence of corporate business affected the education system in Manitoba and specifically Rothman High. He noted that much of what is included in high school course curricula is driven by the priorities of members of organizations such as the Conference Board of Canada. He remarked:

> *There has been a real effort in society to try and make schooling relevant to certain things, like our marketplace economy, and what employers are looking for.* (Comment 19)

Joe connected the priority accorded to the education agenda of employers with the current emphasis on accountability and outcomes in schools.

> *We are being compared to each other around the world, with* PISA [Programme for International Student Assessment] *tests and so on. This has had a major impact, and you can see different jurisdictions struggling with the whole accountability piece. It's standardized testing and so on. It has shaped the way we do business. Now we have provincial standards tests that eat up enormous amounts of time and energy in our system.* (Joe Masterson, Comment 20)

Joe recognized the impact that advances in media communication and technology have had on education, as events such as the 2005 tsunamis in Thailand, or the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 are instantaneously brought into the homes and lives of students.

> *There is more a sense of being global citizens these days. Kids are more aware of that, and educators certainly are. At this school kids went to enormous lengths to raise money, and they raised a lot of money for tsunami relief elsewhere in the world.* (Joe Masterson, Comment 21)

The teachers observed that in addition to television, many families now had computers and internet connections in their homes, which granted the students access to more information.

School Improvement Initiatives at Rothman High

Over a seven year period (1998 – 2005), the staff at Rothman collected data regarding the beliefs and opinions of the students, teachers and parents. This data shaped the nature and direction of the various school improvement initiatives. The staff at Rothman sought to obtain feedback about changes that had been made, and to learn about areas which would require attention in the future. Thus, although their long term goals remained constant, short term objectives and strategies evolved.

The school improvement plan at Rothman High focused on three main goals which were developed in 1998 from survey data which were collected by the school with the assistance of MSIP. Teachers, parents, and students were asked to provide their opinions about the school, and the survey results were considered by staff members at a

school retreat held in the fall of 1998. These goals remained constant at Rothman right up to the time of this study in 2005.

The goals were:

1. To build a school community that is interactive, responsive and accountable;
2. To improve the academic success of all students;
3. To prepare students for the school-to-work transition (Rothman High School School Plan, 2004)

Following a staff retreat in 1998, staff members at Rothman formed 13 working committees, and created a steering committee that included the chairpersons of these committees, as well as the school's principal, vice-principal, and the MSIP coordinator assigned to work with the school. It quickly became apparent that this structure was too large to be workable, so the following year the structure was reduced to seven committees, which made the steering committee more manageable.

The school improvement initiatives at Rothman which were planned around the school's three main goals are summarized in the next section of this chapter.

Goal 1

The first of Rothman's three goals is aimed at building a school community that is interactive, responsive and accountable. In the early years of Rothman's improvement initiatives, efforts to achieve this goal focused on physical changes to the school, such as painting the interior walls of the building, and erecting new direction signs in the hallways. Principal Joe Masterson commented about this early improvement activity:

I would say that school improvement efforts always seem to start with the physical. That was no exception in this building; people were focused on creating a better physical environment and climate, with signage, painting, all of those sorts of things. (Comment 10)

Another early activity at Rothman was designed to make new staff members quickly feel at home in the school. Efforts to accomplish this involved the development of a welcome package for new teachers, which included the presentation of a Rothman High School tee-shirt to each staff newcomer. This practice was still continuing at the time of this study.

Rothman instituted the practice of distributing recognition pins to students who were considered by staff members and other students to have made outstanding contributions to the school in some way.

The teachers at Rothman examined the orientation process that was in place for receiving students new to the school. Finding this process lacking in a number of areas, the staff members began to revamp the process. Gradually, over a number of years, the orientation process began to incorporate elements such as staff visits to neighboring schools to speak to the eighth grade students who were scheduled to attend Rothman the following year. Tours of the school were arranged in the spring for these students, and opportunities were provided for them to meet their prospective teachers.

Efforts were made at Rothman to strengthen the involvement of students in aspects of planning and operating the school. The Student Council electoral structure was revamped to include more students, and students from the Student Council were asked to serve on a number of school committees, and to attend Parent Council meetings.

The Parent Council and the Student Council worked together to establish a student run café.

In an effort to create an interactive, responsive and accountable school, the staff and administration at Rothman collected and used data periodically throughout the years. This was done through the administration of surveys and by conducting focus discussion groups with staff members, parents and students. The parent focus groups were facilitated by members of the Parent Council who had received the appropriate training.

One of the more major improvement initiatives used to meet Goal 1 was the establishment of Teacher Advisory Groups (TAGs) at Rothman. Planning for the establishment of Teacher Advisory Groups began in 1998, and the groups began meeting the following year. Joe Masterson summarized the rationale for developing a system of TAGs:

> *Teacher advisory groups were established in order to have one familiar face for the kids to relate to during their four years at Rothman. It's the TAG teacher they go to with the evidence they collect for their employability skills portfolios. It's the TAG teachers that lead discussion groups around student issues and concerns.* (Comment 23)

When first established in 1999, each TAG was composed of approximately 17 students from Senior 1 to Senior 4, and one teacher. This structure was changed in 2002, so that two teachers met with approximately 30 students. This shift was introduced to provide continuity for the students in their involvement with their TAG teacher. Even if one of the two teachers left the school, the remaining teacher would still be there. Also,

teachers new to Rothman, or teachers there on short term contracts, could be paired with more experienced TAG teachers.

The TAG system evolved as efforts were made to improve it. Initially, teacher advisory groups met once a month during students' spare periods, but attendance became an issue as students expressed resentment about giving up their spares. The decision was made in 2003 to change the meeting time for TAG to avoid student spares. This was accomplished by compressing the daily schedule once every month, so that no classes were cancelled, but each class was shorter than normal. This resulted in time left at the end of the day for TAG meetings. More recently (2003), a house system was put into place to strengthen the TAG structure. The house system was coordinated by the Student Council, and this linking of TAG and the house system enhanced Student Council involvement at the school. In 2003 the staff members at Rothman began to consider structuring TAG as a credited course, and instituting compulsory attendance. At the time of this study, these changes had not been formalized.

The role of the TAG teacher changed over the years, and gradually came to involve more and more functions. In later years (2003 – 2005), the TAG teachers met monthly with their TAG group students to monitor their adjustment to their year's courses and workload, but also supervised additional special TAG meetings scheduled for specific purposes, such as working on student Employability Skills Portfolios, or reviewing students' academic progress at each reporting period.

Goal 2

The second school improvement goal at Rothman was to improve the academic success of all students. Although the Learning Centre already existed in the school as a strategy intended to assist students encountering academic or behavioural difficulties, some of the teachers expressed concern that the Learning Centre grouped students together in a setting outside the regular classroom, in a fashion consistent with the educational practices known as tracking and streaming. *Tracking* or *streaming* refers to the grouping of students by ability. This practice has been criticized for creating greater learning opportunities for high-performing students at the expense of their lower-performing peers (Oakes, 1985). Ruth Caldwell commented about the use of the Learning Centre at Rothman to stream students:

> *These students are not considered able to succeed in a classroom setting, so we remove them from the classroom and put them in the learning centre. In that way they become marginalized, because they associate their learning with that place, instead of a regular setting. It can work against them to be considered as kind of outsiders with their peers, and because there could be a concomitant lack of success academically. I'm not saying it's a wrong thing, I'm just saying that it could be interpreted as marginalizing a student.* (Comment 65)

The staff members were concerned about high levels of student course failures at the Senior 1 level. Efforts were directed at restructuring the Senior 1 program. Students were grouped together so that each Senior 1 class received all instruction on core academic courses from a team of two teachers. Students spent less time traveling among various teachers, and were able to establish a stronger bond with the few teachers they

did have. Teachers also established common approaches to dealing with problems such as student lates, absences, and incomplete homework. Data collected in 2002 revealed these restructuring efforts had a positive effect on student success. Data from 2001 indicated that the failure rate in Senior 1 core courses was 14 percent, but the failure rate had dropped to eight percent in 2002.

Other aspects of Rothman's school improvement initiatives aimed at achieving Goal 2 involved developing a better understanding of the cultural differences of aboriginal students. A staff in-service session was organized on this topic. Rothman also established an association with the Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Career Awareness Committee, and through this organization placed two aboriginal students into internship/mentorship programs with local employers.

The teachers at Rothman structured their staff professional development sessions with a view to improving the academic success of all students. In the first few years, the staff examined approaches to differentiated instruction. Particular focus was given to the "...issue of adaptation and accommodations" (Rothman High School Improvement Plan, 2001) to meet the needs of "...the academically and socio-emotionally needy" (Rothman High School Improvement Plan, 2003). In later years, the focus grew to include an examination of assessment and evaluation practices. Pierre Peloquin recalled this evolutionary shift:

> *We took a look at our teaching practices and the various types of teaching methods out there. We talked about differentiated instruction. We pushed on, and we said, "OK, if this is what we are doing in terms of our teaching strategies to*

get to our audience, then how are we evaluating?" So the second year, we started to look at evaluation. (Comment 24)

In the more recent years at Rothman, the improvement initiatives included strategies to develop a literacy plan for the school. During 2004-2005, the school established a literacy committee in order to conceptualize the literacy needs of the school. Some staff members also visited another school to study their literacy program. The principal of Rothman, Joe Masterson, described the efforts of the staff in the area of literacy:

Well, we have a working group of teachers in the building who, by working with the rest of the staff, tried to arrive at a definition of literacy. This involves determining what we mean when we are talking about literacy. Now they're exploring different strategies, that they will bring back to the staff. It is cross curricular – it's everybody's concern, not just the English teachers' concern. They're also looking out to other schools that have fairly well-developed literacy programs, to get ideas. We've spent part of this year on it, and it's based on the previous several years' work, because we've spent a lot of time on assessment in the past couple of years - assessment and evaluation, as well as differentiated instruction, so the work is just starting in terms of putting a literacy strategy in place in Rothman. I guess good things take time. (Comment 25)

Goal 3

The third goal established to drive the school improvement initiatives at Rothman focused on preparing students for the school - to - work transition. The rationale for the choice of this goal is explained in the 2002 Rothman High School Improvement Plan:

> *The catalyst for introducing the goal of improving the school-to-work transition of Rothman students came out of a survey conducted a number of years ago in which students indicated that Rothman did not prepare them well to take their place in the workforce. As a result, the question was posed: What can be done to change this? In response, school-to-work transition became a major thrust of Rothman's school plan, the School – to – Work Committee was struck, and the current program has been developed in response to this perception/reality.* (2002 Rothman High School Improvement Plan, p. 5.)(Comment 26)

The School-to-Work program at Rothman is a multi-faceted initiative designed to address the goal of preparing students for transition from school. It is a four year program which includes the development of an Employability Skills Portfolio by every student, as well as a series of activities at each grade level from Senior 1 to Senior 4 which were designed to increase the relevance of the students' school-based learning to their lives beyond school.

The School-to-Work activities became an integral part of various school curricula. Senior 1 featured the Take Our Kids to Work initiative, which was part of the English Language Arts course ELA10F. In Senior 2, students participated in Career Cruising as part of their Geography course GEO20F. Job shadowing formed a part of the Senior 3 English Language Arts course ELA30S, and in Senior 4, each student was required to

participate in an exit interview. These interviews highlighted the students' Employability Skills Portfolios, which the students presented to a panel of local business and community members. The portfolios contained work samples representative of the students' skills and accomplishments during their four years at Rothman High.

School Improvement Analogies

As the teachers at Rothman worked through the various challenges related to their school improvement initiatives, they developed a series of analogies which seemed to reflect the way the staff perceived the change process. Initially, the metaphor of a bus ride was used to describe the school improvement journey. As stated in the 2003 Rothman School Plan, "This ride took us on a few retreats and to a lot of in-services". Occasional frustration with the change process was captured in this bus analogy, as staff members recall colleagues joking with each other by stating "Get on the bus or we'll run you over!"

In 2001 the bus analogy was "retired". In its place, the metaphor of a tree was used to illustrate the school improvement process at Rothman. In this metaphor, the 'roots' of the tree referred to factors which drove the school improvement initiatives, such as the nature of the students, divisional and provincial plans, and various other data. Growth up the tree trunk was seen as being spurred by new initiatives which were undertaken by the school. This new growth spread out to form branches and blossoms on the crown of the tree, reflective of the many strategies utilized to achieve the new initiatives. Established improvement initiatives which became embedded in the programs of the school were viewed as the fruit of the tree, which fell to the ground to fertilize the

soil and continue the growth process. A simplified version of this School Improvement Tree is presented in Figure 5.

Joe Masterson reflected on the two school improvement metaphors which have been used at Rothman.

> *The planning process has become a cyclical thing within the school. It is an organic process in that sense. It is the tree, where things come up through the roots, and then as they come to maturity, they are realized in the crown of the tree. Some drop into the soil, and are embedded, while others fall away, but are drawn back into the roots, rethought. So it is quite different than when the bus analogy was first used here, where a bright and shiny bus had been built and was sitting in the parking lot waiting for people to get on and turn over the motor and get people on board. That has given way to the organic view of how change happens. (Comment 27)*

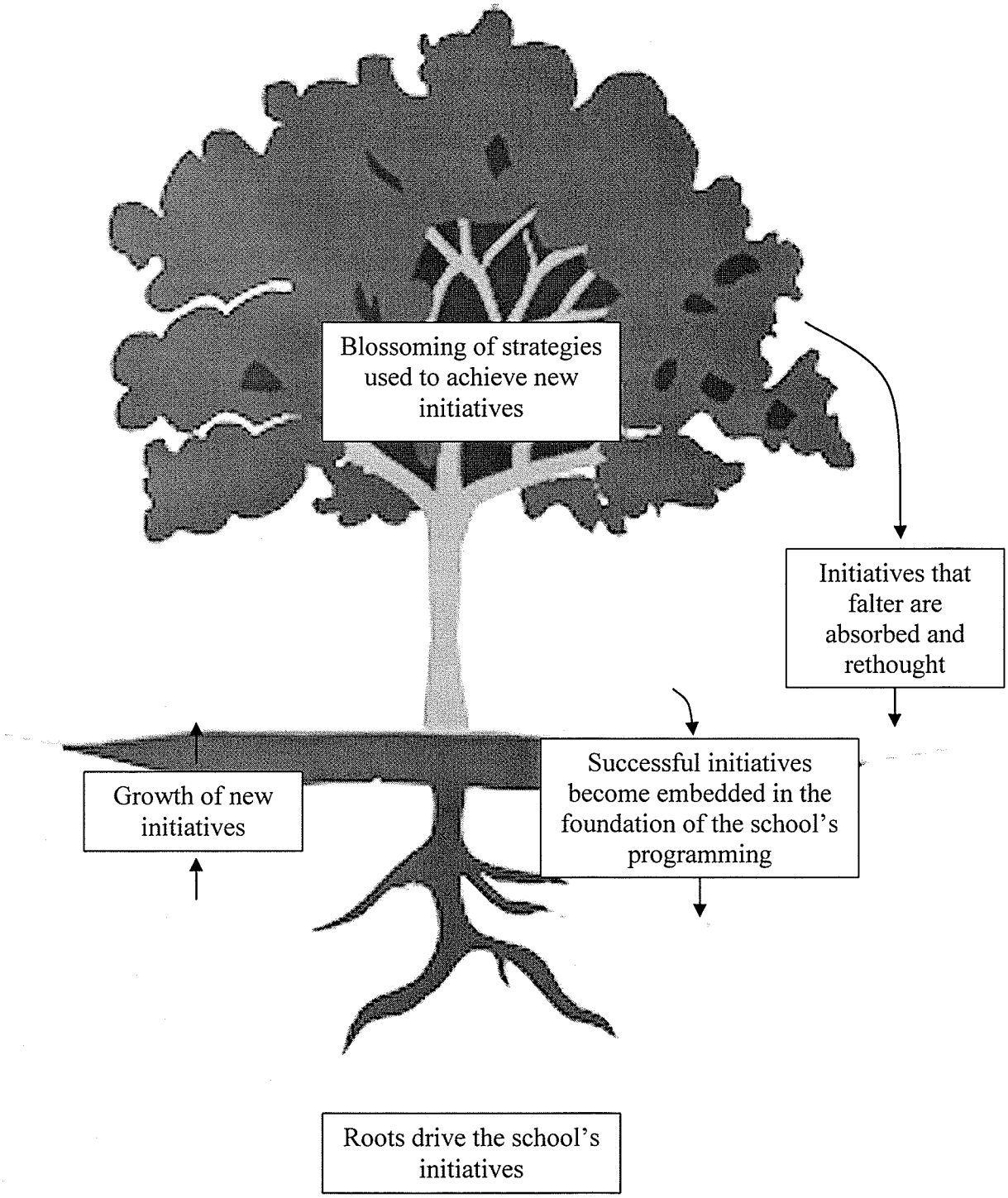

Figure 5. School Improvement Tree. (Adapted by staff members at Rothman High from Bailey, 1996. Reprinted with permission.)

Supports for Change at Rothman High

In discussing the process of change which has occurred at Rothman High over the past seven years, the teachers referred to three factors which they viewed as contributing to the direction and momentum of the school's improvement initiatives. These factors were (a) the dialogic nature of the school's culture, (b) the responsiveness of the school's administrators, and (c) the contributions by the staff of the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP).

Dialogue

As the teachers recalled their involvement in planning yearly goals for the school, a definite trend became evident. The locus of planning shifted to become more centered within the school, particularly after the mid 1990s, with the advent of the provincial requirement for annual school plans, and the arrival of Joe Masterson as principal. Schools were mandated to develop school goals, and Joe actively solicited staff involvement in the development process. Frank Spence reflected upon the value of staff involvement in the planning process:

> *The process you go through is really helpful, more than anything else. Sitting down as a staff, and getting an opportunity to put your life on hold, to take a couple of days and go, OK, what do we want to do this year at Rothman High School has been a tremendous benefit. The more times I do it, the bigger the benefit I realize.* (Comment 28)

The teachers acknowledged that not all staff members valued involvement in the dialogic process. Some viewed it as too time consuming and tedious. Ruth Caldwell attributed some of this reluctance to teachers' lack of experience. She explains:

> *I don't think a lot of the staff have had the opportunity to do what we've done for a number of years. It's really new for a lot of them. If you look around the staff table at who we had at the retreat this year, we had a lot of brand new teachers, and a lot who are new to our school and new to our division. So, as Frank said, it is a process, and it you haven't experienced the process, I don't think you can appreciate it.* (Comment 29)

Responsive School Administration

The crucial role of the school's administrators in creating an atmosphere conducive to collaborative planning and decision making was recognized by the teachers interviewed at Rothman. Each of the teachers mentioned Joe's openness and responsiveness, and expressed appreciation for his willingness to listen. Frank captured the sentiments of the teachers in this regard with these comments:

> *Our administration has always been supportive. They listen, and often what you say is worth something, because there is action taken. As a teacher, you can't ask for much more than that. We've been fortunate to have someone like Joe, who very much listens to what we have to say, takes it to heart, and works with us to improve the school.* (Comment 30)

The participants made very little mention of support received by Rothman from

the school division. This may have been because they were not in regular contact with the divisional administration. Joe Masterson, the principal of Rothman, indicated that although the early improvement initiatives taking place at Rothman were school based, the later initiatives were supported by the school division in a number of ways. The school division allocated $9000.00 of divisional money to Rothman to support school improvement projects each year, beginning in 2003. The division also organized professional development activities which supported the efforts of staff members at Rothman to further their understanding of student assessment and evaluation. Joe commented upon these divisional activities:

> *This is part of a division wide discussion that is happening this year. One of the board priorities for this year was to develop a division wide approach, or policy if you will, on evaluation and assessment. Now we'd already started to look at that as a staff, because we had concerns in that area. The division brought the schools together earlier in the year for group discussions that brought people together from different schools across the division, to talk about assessment and evaluation, and to share perspectives and views. The division has also communicated very clearly some guidelines around assessment outlining what they would expect with respect to assessment. There's an in-service coming up on the 11th. Alfie Kohn is coming to town. He is going to be talking about all of this stuff, and then in the afternoon, staffs will be back together, reflecting on the dialogues we've had this year, and in our situation, the conversations we've had in previous years about assessment and evaluation.* (Comment 31)

Contributions of the Manitoba School Improvement Program

The Manitoba School Improvement Program Inc. (MSIP) was involved with the staff members at Rothman High for five years, beginning in 1997. MSIP provided technical, consultative, and financial support to the school during this period of time. Upon approval of a school improvement proposal to MSIP, Rothman became eligible for a multi-year grant which provided funds to support the school's improvement efforts. These funds paid for release time to enable teachers to meet for planning purposes, and to access professional development opportunities. The funds also covered costs associated with preparing, analyzing and interpreting the surveys conducted by the school with teachers, parents and students.

One aspect of the role played by the Manitoba School Improvement Program in the school improvement process was to provide a combination of "pressure and support" (Earl et al., 2003, p. 5) for schools engaged in school improvement initiatives. The teachers acknowledged the value of the support provided by MSIP in assisting with data collection, strategic planning, implementation of new initiatives, and evaluation. They indicated that while MSIP was forthcoming with praise for the school's engagement in the change process, it was the insight gained from critical comments provided by MSIP which were most valued.

> *We wanted a little more critical feedback. You know, "Yeah great, pat us on the back for following our plan, but what aren't we doing? What did we say we were going to do, and what aren't we doing?"* (Pierre Peloquin, Comment 32)

I think what MSIP does is provide us with our critical friends, who come back and go "By the way, remember you said this?" That's what I really like about the whole process. There is someone who is not directly connected to the every day life of Rothman ... who is pulling on your shirt tail and going "Remember?" And you go, "Oh, Yeah." For me, that's been a very good exercise. (Frank Spence, Comment 33)

Barriers to Change at Rothman High

The challenges involved in planning and implementing school change were frequently mentioned by the teachers and principal of Rothman High. These challenges included factors such as (a) the chronic shortage of time, (b) staff resistance to change, and (c) high levels of staff turnover. Table 6 presents a summary of the supports and barriers for school improvement described by the participants.

Table 6

Supports and Barriers to School Change

Support	Barrier
Dialogue	Time
Responsive school administration	Staff resistance to change
Contributions of MSIP	High level of staff turnover

Time

All of the individuals interviewed recognized the heavy time demands which engagement in the school improvement process required. Although each of the participants acknowledged the importance of group dialogue in planning and implementing school changes, finding the time needed frequently proved problematic.

> *There is a limited amount of time for staff to get together to talk about these things.* (Pierre Peloquin, Comment 34)

Ruth Caldwell spoke passionately about the impact of time pressures on her daily life as a teacher:

> *Besides the marking work, we're getting all sorts of other work thrown at us. When you have 210 kids, and you are teaching seven different subjects, and some of the subjects are combined grade levels, and you have at-risk kids, and you have no Instructional Assistants, and you are on 5000 committees, and you never have a lunch hour or prep, how do you do it? It gets very overwhelming.* (Comment 35)

Louise Mah expressed similar frustrations regarding the shortage of available time:

> *In reality, I need a 38 hour day, and I feel compromised in the job that I do, because I'm trying to carry so much of it, because I feel those are the needs of my students.* (Comment 36)

Staff Resistance to Change

Throughout the past seven years, the resistance of some staff members to the proposed changes at Rothman has proved to be a significant impediment. Not all staff members were willing to agree that change was needed, and some chose to actively contest the new directions of the school. Pierre Peloquin recalls:

> *It was a slow process. Staff is reluctant to change. There are those people who say, "I've done it this way, and I'm going to continue to do it this way, because it works for me". We had challenges getting other people on board, and I think we still have challenges within our building, getting people to see that some of the initiatives we are trying are valid.* (Comment 37)

Staff members were also resistant to change because they had been inundated with changes in the past. Louise commented:

> *We've gone through a number of changes, and I think I'm probably battle weary from all the changes that have taken place over the last 5-6 years. Especially changes in staffing and administration, because that really impacts on the things that you do in the school. We would start something, and it would maybe go for a year or two. Then, with the changes, something else would be prioritized, and that would go.* (Comment 38)

High Levels of Staff Turnover

Some of the staff members who initially opposed the changes were no longer at the school, as a result of retirements or re-assignment. Rothman experienced a great deal of change in staff membership during the past few years, and this was viewed as a barrier

to change by the teachers. Louise Mah explained her opinion of the impact of high staff turnover at Rothman on school improvement:

> *I think overall the main barrier has been the staff changes that have occurred within our school, so that the continuity has not been there. It was interrupted, and had to be re-established all the time, so you were losing an essential part every time you had to kind of re-establish the priorities and the goals, or re-direct them.* (Comment 39)

Another problematic aspect of staff change at Rothman was the high number of teachers assigned to the school for periods of one year or less, on term teaching contracts. The staff complement consisted of 32 full time teacher equivalent positions, and out of that, six and a half positions were filled by term contract teachers. This number represented nearly a fifth of the staff, and created a significant impact on the school improvement efforts being implemented by the school. The term teachers did not harbour the same level of commitment to the school goals as did members of the staff who had been there for longer periods of time, or who planned on being there for several more years. Ruth Caldwell commented on this situation:

> *When I look around at the staff, we have a lot of term teachers. They don't have a real stake in it* [school improvement]. *They know they are here short term. One or two may be back next year, but the rest, in all fairness to them, are only here until June, so how much are they going to throw themselves into it? They do a good job in their classrooms, but they are not tying into a school plan, a big project, or a long term goal.* (Comment 40)

In addition to the high rate of staff turnover, there were frequent changes in the administrative staff at the school. Although Joe had been at Rothman for nine years, there had been a succession of three different vice-principals in the four year period just prior to this study. At the time this study concluded in May 2005, it was announced that Joe was retiring, and the vice-principal was being re-assigned to the division office, so that a new administrative team would be in place for the upcoming school year. The teachers felt that these types of administrative changes presented a further barrier to school improvement, because priorities shifted and were redefined.

> *There is always this transitioning, so that you don't have the same momentum, and the new people don't have that understanding of what the original objectives were and how it should be working, and so it kind of gets redefined.* (Louise Mah, Comment 41)

A further consequence of frequent staff changes concerned the continuity of school improvement initiatives and programs. The teachers noted that as staff positions became filled by new people, the teachers' understandings of their responsibilities and expectations became confused, with the result that

> *...some of the things we thought were ingrained maybe are not. People may be thinking that things are not part of their job or responsibility anymore, but it hasn't got picked up elsewhere either, like this year, all of a sudden, none of our kids went to the Career Symposium. We worked hard at this, and now it's not happening, because somewhere along the way, the people who were supposed to do it didn't do it for whatever reason.* (Ruth Caldwell, Comment 42)

Frequent staff changes also contributed to the development of conflict between one teacher's goals and the overall school goals. This conflict was articulated by Louise Mah, as she described her frustration with the shifting of school priorities which accompanied staff and administrative changes at the school. She explained that after investing her energies in supporting school priorities only to see them shift, she decided that she needed to:

> *...start looking out for my own interests and needs. I didn't feel that I was fulfilling my goals in terms of wanting to bring environmental values and sustainability issues to the students, so I really refocused my efforts. I sometimes think "Oh, that was a bit selfish", but it had to happen. I just felt that I needed to redirect some of my energies so that it linked to what I was doing in the classroom.* (Comment 43)

Although Louise sensed an obligation to support the overall school goals, her personal frustration with the shifting of priorities which resulted from the frequent staff and administrative changes caused her to retreat from whole-school improvement activities to an initiative primarily focused within her own classroom. If this type of action were to be adopted by enough other teachers at Rothman, the school's improvement initiatives would be severely compromised.

Sustainability of Change

A major challenge to the long term implementation of school improvement initiatives concerns the sustainability of the changes that are made. Schools are notoriously resistant to change (Earl et al., 2003; Fullan, 2003). The teachers at Rothman

acknowledged the difficulties inherent in planning for sustained change, and they incorporated into Rothman's school improvement programs a number of features designed to address this issue.

Wherever possible, program changes were embedded in the course curricula at the school. This strategy was used with the School-to-Work program that was first implemented at Rothman in the late 1990s. Embedding the activities in the curricula distributed responsibility for the program to all the teachers in the building who were assigned to teach the courses. The teachers felt that this created a broader base of support for the program, since more teachers became familiar with the units. The teachers also believed that embedding the units in courses that students were required to complete in order to graduate provided the School-to-Work program with an additional aspect of respectability.

Just as the teachers viewed the high level of staff and administrative turnover at Rothman as a barrier to first implementing school change, they recognized the potential impact of staff changes on the sustainability of their school's improvement initiatives. The teachers described two strategies they used to fill the void created by the loss of staff members. Firstly, teachers new to Rothman were provided with appropriate orientation sessions in September, so that newcomers were able to become familiar with the history of the school's improvement initiatives, their goals and objectives, and the nature of the various programs. Secondly, newcomers were invited to assume leadership roles within the school quite quickly. Several teachers new to the school served as members of school improvement committees, and a few, such as Pierre, had accepted roles as chairpersons of committees within one or two years of their arrival at Rothman.

The staff members at Rothman were very conscious of the need to involve as many teachers as possible in the school's improvement initiatives. The teachers who had assumed leadership positions created opportunities for newcomers to move into these roles. Ruth Caldwell commented on this strategy for sustainability:

> *Well, I've backed off completely now. I train new staff, like when we have orientation sessions at the beginning of the year. I work with new staff, and educate them on the School-to-Work program and the portfolios. I am still very much a support system for the projects, but they are totally embedded in the courses now. They are not projects on their own anymore.* (Comment 44)

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the school improvement initiatives designed and implemented by the teachers at Rothman High School during the years 1998-2005. These initiatives were designed to address three school goals. The first goal focused on building a school community at Rothman that was interactive, responsive and accountable. The school improvement initiatives that were designed and implemented to address this goal included (a) physical improvements to the building such as painting and new signage in the halls, (b) expanded Student Council structures and functions, (c) enhanced Parent Council involvement, (d) the establishment and continued improvement of a teacher advisory system for all students, and (e) a restructuring of the Senior 1 orientation process.

The second goal was intended to improve the academic success of all students. The school improvement initiatives that were designed and implemented to enhance this

goal included (a) restructuring the Senior 1 program, (b) development of common teacher strategies for dealing with student lates, absences and incomplete homework, (c) data collection and analysis regarding student attendance and failure rates, (d) developing a deeper understanding of aboriginal cultural differences, (e) developing an increased understanding of differentiated instructional strategies, (f) developing an increased understanding of evaluation and assessment methodologies, and (g) developing a literacy plan for the school.

The third goal included in Rothman High School's improvement plan was to prepare students for the school-to-work transition. The School-to-Work program was the major initiative that was designed and implemented to attain this goal. It contained components such as Employability Skills Portfolios, Job Shadowing, Career Cruising, and the Take our Kids to Work program.

The description of the school improvement initiatives at Rothman High School provided in this chapter is intended to address the third research question which was presented in Chapter 1. Although the first of the research questions (How do teachers' conceptions of social justice influence the teachers' involvement in school improvement initiatives and their teaching practices?) and the fourth question (How do the school improvement initiatives attempt to address distributive and cultural injustices?) are closely linked to the descriptions of the initiatives provided in this chapter, the analysis of the improvement initiatives required to answer these research questions will be provided in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER SIX

Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice

Social justice is described in this thesis as involving the principles and norms of social organization which reflect society's responsibility to create structures that protect the dignity of individuals, and provide equal consideration to all people according to their needs, talents and choices (Groome, 1998; Miller, 1976; Vincent, 2003; Young, 1990). Two paradigms of social justice, distributive and cultural, were described in Chapter 2, accompanied by the argument that consideration of both paradigms contributes to a fuller understanding of social justice.

The purpose of the research described in this thesis was to investigate teachers' conceptions of social justice, and the impact of their conceptions upon the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives aimed at helping students at risk of not fulfilling their educational potential. The information presented in this chapter is derived from the analysis of one hundred and thirty-six single-spaced pages of transcripts obtained from interviews with five staff members at one school.

Chapter 6 begins with a summary of comments by the principal and the four teacher participants from Rothman High which reveal aspects of these individuals' personal definitions of social justice. Subsequent sections of the chapter discuss and analyze the data that reflect the participants' understandings of distributive and cultural justice, their particular views of education, and the discourses of academic achievement to which they subscribe.

For the purpose of the descriptions and analyses offered in this thesis, segments of the transcribed interview data will be examined in meaningful units (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003, p. 453) referred to as *comments*. In this study, a comment is defined as a section of text data selected from interviews, focus groups or school documents obtained during this study which contains one item of information that is comprehensible even if read outside the context in which it is embedded. This section of text may be a phrase within a sentence, a sentence, a paragraph, or a longer section of text.

Teachers' Definitions of Social Justice

During the individual interviews conducted as part of the data collection strategies for this thesis, the principal and teacher participants were asked to explain what the term *social justice* meant to them. Their responses to direct questioning about the meaning of this term communicated an impression of hesitancy and uncertainty. This was conveyed to the researcher by the participants' physical movements such as downward glances, their shuffling of chairs, and stammering speech patterns. The participants indicated that in their daily routines at the school, the term social justice was not commonly used. They appeared unfamiliar with the meaning of the term, as evidenced by the following comments.

> *I don't know that I have a good definition. I'm not sure how we define the social justice thing.* (Pierre Peloquin, Comment 45)
>
> *I don't have any idea to be honest with you. I really don't have a handle on it, that word, phrase or definition. I've heard it bantered around.* (Frank Spence, Comment 46)

Ruth Caldwell stated that although she did have a definition of social justice, she was concerned about its adequacy:

> *Well, I have a very clear definition in my head, but it might not be the same as yours. When I think of social justice, I don't even think of education. I don't think there is social justice. But I might be coming from a completely different working definition. Maybe it's my law background, I don't know.* (Comment 47)

Ruth attributed the origin of her definition of social justice to the curriculum of the Law course she had taught for several years. She explained that in the course, she routinely presented her students with moral dilemmas to consider. These were usually based on articles she located in the local media, and were of a controversial nature designed to stimulate debate among her students.

> *When we have debates in our law class, we say OK, here's an example of a fellow who commits homicide, gets one day in jail, and the one day is time served the day he shows to court. Then you get another fellow who helps a loved one commit suicide, and he gets 10 years in jail. Is that justice? No.* (Ruth Caldwell, Comment 48)

The agitated tone in Ruth's voice as she spoke conveyed her frustration with the obvious injustice portrayed in this example. She indicated that it was her frustration with such injustice which prompted her statement that she did not think there was such a thing as social justice.

Although the teachers expressed uncertainty when asked to define the term social justice, some did refer to their personal perceptions of the intent of social justice. Louise

Mah described her understanding of social justice as a sense of awareness. She felt this awareness of social justice was shared by other teachers.

> *I think teachers are aware. I wouldn't have labeled it social justice, but I think there is an intuitive response from every teacher with whom I've ever worked. If there seems to be an inequity or an imbalance between groups, it will become apparent, and it will be addressed. Teachers here seem to be very action oriented.* (Comment 49)

Teachers' Discourse Regarding Social Justice

During the focus group discussions and personal interviews conducted over the course of this research, the participants' conversations frequently included references to aspects of social justice. These comments regarding social justice are included in the next section of this chapter. In order to aid in understanding how the teachers conceive of social justice, the comments are examined for evidence of distributive and cultural paradigms of justice, and for the influence of monocultural and multicultural perspectives of education as described by Fleras and Elliott (2003). The teachers' comments are presented using Gale and Densmore's (2000) framework (see Figure 3 in Chapter 2) which describes the discourses of deficit, disadvantage and differences (Types 1, 2, and 3). Teachers' perceptions regarding actions which marginalize or dominate students are explored, as are their perceptions of actions which recognize student differences in ways consistent with enlightenment and empowerment views of education

Discourses of Deficit, Disadvantage and Type 1 Difference

Gale and Densmore (2000) describe the educational discourse which focuses on student *deficit* as conceiving of student learning in discrete and quantifiable terms. Social context is viewed as irrelevant. It is expected that individuals will vary in academic achievement, since innate intellectual differences exist. The deficit discourse of academic achievement and failure reflects a monocultural view of education (Fleras and Elliott, 2003) which maintains that children of the poor and non-white are inferior and less able to succeed in school (Shields, 2004). Those individuals who remain poor or in some way disadvantaged are considered either to be not trying hard enough, or to be lacking the talent to succeed.

The discourse of *disadvantage* suggests that students who are weak academically have experienced cultural and economic deprivation as the result of inferior home backgrounds (Gale and Densmore, 2000). Students from such homes are considered to be lacking proper values, stimulation, and motivation. Education policies founded on a discourse of disadvantage typically attempt to modify cultural practices in order to assimilate poor and non-white students. The motivation for such actions rests on the belief that if students can be changed to align with the norms of white, middle-class society, they will gain more opportunities for success.

The *Type 1* discourse of *difference* described by Gale and Densmore (2000) is based on two monocultural assumptions aimed at eliminating notions of group diversity. The first assumption is that all individuals have universal needs, and any differences which may exist between individuals are not meaningful. This assumption is based on the idea that all people share a natural equality and common humanity, and therefore

should all receive the same treatment. The second assumption underlying the Type 1 discourse proposes that the differences between groups are not meaningful, and may in fact be divisive, prompting the adoption of strategies aimed at the assimilation of differences into the mainstream.

Actions resulting from the discourses of deficit, disadvantage and Type 1 difference tend to promote the marginalization and domination of individuals (Fleras and Elliott, 2003; Fraser, 1997; Young, 1990). During the interviews and focus group discussions conducted for this thesis, the participants made several comments regarding the educational rights of students, the learning needs of students, and what students deserve. These comments are included in the next section of this chapter, accompanied by possible interpretations linking the comments to the monocultural and multicultural perspectives of education as described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) and the discourses outlined by Gale and Densmore (2000).

Teachers' Understandings of Rights

In his discussion of distributive justice, Miller (1976) refers to student rights, needs and desert as criteria to guide the morally proper distribution of benefits and burdens among society's members. Miller defines rights as being legal, institutional or moral in nature. The principal of Rothman High, Joe Masterson, spoke about one aspect of the *legal* right of students in Manitoba to attend public school in his description of the attendance policy in force at Rothman:

> *We have a separate policy for kids who are below the age of sixteen. We report attendance on those kids, and the expectation is that they continue in their classes. From sixteen and beyond, there's a process which most high schools*

follow in which there is a phone call home after so many absences, a letter after so many more, a meeting, and perhaps a contract around staying in the class. If the student persists in the skipping, they could be withdrawn, and no-credited in the course...if you were challenged on withdrawing a student from a course just based strictly on attendance, then you probably wouldn't have a leg to stand on. (Comment 50)

The attendance policy referred to by Joe was designed to uphold the legal right of the students to attend school until the minimum age of sixteen, as provided by the laws of the Province of Manitoba. The policy is concerned with "...the recognition and protection of legal and other customary rights" (Miller, 1976, p. 25). Miller denotes the recognition and protection of such rights to be reflective of *conservative* justice that is intended to preserve the status quo of a social order over time. The emphasis on school attendance conveyed by the law requiring compulsory school attendance until the age of sixteen reflects the belief that all individuals should attain an education as a necessary prerequisite to achieving an adequate standard of living. A relevant assumption is that students who do not complete high school are less likely to achieve economic independence. This assumption reflects the discourse of deficit and disadvantage, since it is assumed that students not attending high school until at least the age of sixteen would be severely disadvantaged in the job market.

Rothman's attendance policy may be therefore interpreted as consistent with a monocultural view of education, because it reflects Fleras and Elliott's (2003) definition of monocultural education as involving aspects of educational practice that are intended to reproduce the existing social order.

Fleras and Elliott (2003) define multicultural education as schooling that seeks "...to incorporate all students by modifying existing content and protocols to ensure better involvement and success" (Fleras and Elliott, p, 335). The policy mentioned by Joe deals only with the attendance of the students. Although student attendance is a prerequisite for the success of multicultural education, its mere existence does not ensure greater student involvement and success. An attendance policy alone cannot constitute multicultural education.

Miller (1976) includes *moral* rights in his criteria of distributive justice. He defined moral rights as "...the rights one derives from a promise or other non-legal agreement" (p. 26). Some teachers referred to the moral right of all students to receive an education, as illustrated by this excerpt from a conversation with Frank Spence:

> Researcher: *Do you think that all the kids who come to this school, or any school for that matter, are entitled to, or deserve, the same type of education?*
>
> Frank: *Oh, for sure, there's no question in my mind.*
>
> Researcher: *What about kids who are representative of different ethnic minorities, or different cultural minorities? How do you think they're being served by our educational system?*
>
> Frank: *I think they used to be, at one time, especially the ESL* [English as a Second Language] *kids. I think that's waning now. There are some kids that have language issues. Ethnicity in this building is something that is a reality. Every class you teach is the United Nations. The way I approach it is from an approach of respect. If we can build a rapport, a mutual respect, then I think that*

what most kids realize is that I am here to help them learn, no matter who they are, no matter where they are from. (Comment 51)

Frank's comment appears to indicate his recognition of our society's promise of an education for all students, regardless of individual characteristics such as race, class and gender. However, education may reflect aspects of a monocultural or a multicultural perspective. If the goal of providing all students with an education is to incorporate culturally different students more effectively into the mainstream culture and society, the existing monocultural social order is conserved.

The belief that all students are morally entitled to an education can be based on the two monocultural assumptions that form the basis for the Type 1 discourse of difference described by Gale and Densmore (2000). Frank's comment (see Comment 51) in which he states that by building a rapport with students, he can "... help them learn, no matter who they are, no matter where they are from" may be interpreted as an indication that he is influenced by the Type 1 discourse of difference.

In response to the same question regarding the rights of students, Pierre Peloquin and Louise Mah agreed that all children were entitled to an education, but they made comments that suggested some students were less able to succeed in school. They expressed concern that students who were experiencing learning difficulties were not receiving the compensatory programs they needed in order to achieve academic success. Pierre stated:

Well, I believe they are entitled to it [an education], *but whether they get it or not is the next question. The reality of the situation is that some kids fall through the cracks. We aren't aware of their needs.* (Comment 52)

Louise commented:

...maybe different kids have different needs for different types of education. (Comment 53)

These comments may be indicative of Pierre's and Louise's belief in the discourses of deficit and disadvantage. Both teachers appeared to deem some students as lacking the talent needed to succeed in school, or requiring some type of additional supports. However, because of the limitations of this study, further probing on this issue in future research would be required in order to determine teachers' beliefs with greater certainty.

Teachers' Understandings of Student Needs

Miller (1976) refers to need as a lack or deficiency, which may result in injurious consequences to the individual if not remedied. In order to learn about the needs of their students, the teachers at Rothman employed several strategies, including (a) visiting the neighborhood feeder schools to assess the grade 8 students who would be starting Senior 1 at Rothman the next year, (b) presentations by administration, school counselors and resource teachers at staff meetings to familiarize all teachers with the needs of the students, (c) subject area and grade group meetings among teachers to discuss student needs, and (d) surveys of parents, students, and past graduates of the school.

Pierre Peloquin discussed information gleaned from school survey results which described the rates at which graduates of Rothman sought post-secondary training:

Our data in the school is saying that only 33% of our kids are going on to post-secondary education, so what are we doing for the remaining 67-70% of kids that are in this building? (Comment 54)

Pierre's comment indicates that he has questions about how well the school has been meeting the needs of the students choosing not to pursue post-secondary education. It is possible that Pierre's concern about the large proportion of graduates not pursuing post-secondary training reveals the influence of monoculturalism, embodying the assumption that students who seek further education after high school will be more likely to attain an acceptable standard of living in our society. In accordance with this assumption, students who choose not to continue with training after graduation are perceived as deficient and disadvantaged with respect to job opportunities and life chances.

Pierre's concern about the large proportion of graduates not pursuing post-secondary training might also be interpreted as his recognition that existing school programs and practices need to be changed to better meet the needs of these graduates.

Pierre outlined some of the challenges he encountered as he tried to meet the needs of students:

We had a kid last semester. We had no idea that he was closer to a special needs kid than a mainstream kid, because no file came along with him. So, he sat in a 30S Lit. class last semester...I questioned his abilities. I thought, "Well, you're just a lazy kid." The kid was not lazy, it was just the fact that he wasn't understanding. So, are we meeting those needs? No, that was poorly done on our part, in the sense that these kids fall through a crack. We tend to teach to the

middle, and address the lower end and the lower needs, but we don't necessarily ever get to those advanced kids, and I'm always conscious of that. I try and do my best to facilitate that. For those kids who I think are far ahead of me, I give them special attention in the sense that I say "You've done this already, so keep moving". I have just done individual programs with them, and I will continue to do so. (Comment 55)

The influence of monoculturalism is evident in Pierre's description of students as having advanced, middle or lower level abilities. This categorization of students implies that academic performance is determined by innate ability and effort, which reflects the discourse of deficit outlined by Gale and Densmore (2000). As these authors point out, teachers who adopt the discourse of deficit "...tend to hold lower expectations for those students whom they perceive to have limited ability" (p. 111), and choose to give them less difficult tasks. Pierre indicates that he is conscious of the need to "...get to those advanced kids". This statement reveals that he does conceive of students as having advanced, middle or lower level abilities.

The teachers were candid about some of the difficulties they encountered as they tried to meet student needs. Louise Mah commented on the problems resulting from a lack of adequate resources:

I think that there's only so much that we can do. If we have the resources to address the differences, so that we can provide equally to all, then what educator wouldn't be supportive of it? However, the reality is that often we are very

limited in what we can actually do at the school level, because everything we do is tied to the numbers. (Comment 56)

Louise's concern with recognizing student differences in order to provide equally for all may be interpreted as being consistent with the monocultural perspective of the Type 1 discourse of difference, which argues that all individuals can succeed if given the opportunity.

Ruth Caldwell also appeared to subscribe to the monocultural practice of providing compensatory programming, and offered comments which expressed concerns about the misuse of school resources by students who falsely claimed to need assistance:

> *...but there are real needs and then there are made up needs. I think we have real needs for which we do not have the resources. However, I think that there are a lot of kids who play the game, and get resources and suck the energy of the staff we do have who don't really need them. They are looking for an easy way out. Whether academic need comes from a social- emotional place or a learning disorder, those kids legitimately need our help, and the IA's* [instructional assistants] *help, and resource help, and student services help. We are so limited in those resources. We have lazy kids who say, "I'll just go down to the resource room, and I'll get so and so to dictate a test, and I'll get my rubber stamped credit." That has been allowed to happen in this building, and it kills me, because we have kids that can't read, who need someone to sit with them to help them, and there just are not the resources for these legitimate cases. It is frustrating the hell out of the teachers*. (Comment 57)

Principal Joe Masterson recognized the need for accommodations by staff members in order to meet the needs of all students. He stated:

> *You have to give some kids more resources and more support than other kids, or it is inherently unfair.* (Comment 58)

This comment seems to reveal the influence of Gale and Densmore's (2000) discourse of disadvantage in Joe's reference to providing more resources and support for some students as compensation for economic or social shortfalls. Joe's comment suggests that he recognized different resources are required to achieve the goal of treating all individuals the same.

Teachers' Understandings of Student Desert

Miller (1976) describes the criteria of desert as being dependent upon the actions and personal qualities of the individual. Within education the context of desert is evident in the awarding of grades and scholarships congruent with the actions of the individual student. Capacity is another criteria for the determination of desert, and it is this criterion which appeared to dominate Ruth's conversation as she explained her understanding of ways in which the school dealt with the issue of student capacity and desert by tracking or streaming students into different program levels:

> Ruth: *I think school can be about equal but different opportunities. That is why we accommodate modified students. They should be given the same opportunities, but they really are getting a different type of education. I'm just trying to think of some of the kids I have on IEPs.* [Individual Education Plans] *They are doing work which is similar but not the same.*

Researcher: *And why is that?*

Ruth: *Because they can't.*

Researcher: *So would you say they are being given the same opportunity to have an education?*

Ruth: *Well, yes and no. You see, they won't be able to go to university with an M* [modified] *designation, but they will be getting their high school education. They still are having the opportunity to hear the same things, to do the same kinds of things in the classroom, but because of whatever their needs are, they are not really given the same opportunity.*

Researcher: *So are they given additional resources?*

Ruth: *Yes.* (Comment 59)

Conflict Among Rights, Needs and Desert

The teachers' conversations demonstrated their awareness of conflicts which exist among the criteria of rights, needs and desert. Pierre described the tension he felt as he tried to provide personal attention to all his students, while at the same time attempting to address the needs of those who required a greater share of his time:

As a classroom teacher it is frustrating for me, because I know that I need to be with that [needy] *kid more often than I am, but if I have thirty other bodies in here, I'm stretched thin.* (Comment 60)

Pierre continued by articulating his thoughts about a strategy commonly used in schools that involved the use of instructional assistants to provide help for students:

Pierre: *There's an educational assistant in there helping him to read the material.*

Researcher: *So that's an example of a kid who is going to get more resources than the others?*

Pierre: *To a certain extent.*

Researcher: *Is that socially just?*

Pierre: *Yeah, because we are meeting his needs. On the other hand, because he's getting more, are the others losing out? Maybe.*

Researcher: *I asked you earlier if you thought every student should get the same in terms of educational resources, and you said yes.*

Pierre: *Of course they should, but is it reality that they do? No, it isn't.*

Researcher: *So some are entitled to more because...?*

Pierre: *I wouldn't say they are entitled to more. They probably need it, you know. And can we meet those needs as a public school system? I don't think so.* (Comment 61)

Pierre's concern that he must accommodate all students with an equal amount of his time may be interpreted to reflect the influence of a Type 1 discourse of difference which advocates treating all people the same. However, Pierre also showed that he was affected by the discourses of deficit and disadvantage with his comments regarding the compensatory practices used in schools to assist students deemed disadvantaged or deficient.

Ruth spoke about situations that arose in the school involving conflict between the competing criteria of needs and desert:

You get a student who is busting her butt, making all the effort, doing the homework, coming on spares, squeaking by with a C, but earning it. Then you get

the student who is belligerent, mouthy, gets kicked out of class, hangs around the halls, drops in the learning centre for a couple of classes, and gets rubber stamped a 50. Is that justice? No! (Comment 62)

Ruth admired the hardworking student who plodded along to achieve a C grade. Ruth believed that this student deserved to pass because of the effort expended (criteria of desert). The mouthy, belligerent student who was placed in the learning centre and received a passing grade was the beneficiary of compensatory programming geared to assist students experiencing deficits or disadvantages in a manner consistent with a monocultural view of education (criteria of need).

Teachers' Perceptions of Marginalization and Domination

Young (1990) refers to the domination of one culture over others as cultural imperialism. She considers this to involve the universalization and establishment of a dominant group's experiences and culture as the norm, resulting in the suppression of other group's perspectives. When individuals or groups are considered to be outside the dominant culture, marginalization can occur as these individuals experience material deprivation, curtailment of rights, and loss of opportunities. According to Fleras and Elliott (2003), this type of assimilationist dynamic situates cultural domination as an integral part of monoculturalism, and supports the direct or indirect marginalization of individuals and groups. Fleras and Elliott note that "In linking power with culture, schooling and education have evolved into a site for the reproduction of social inequality by denying equal opportunity and fostering outcomes at odds with certain minority students" (p. 335).

Louise Mah described students at Rothman she perceived as being disadvantaged and deficient:

> *These students have been identified as having learning disabilities, and they really can't function in a normal classroom setting. They had failed; they were repeating the course. They are struggling learners, and they have reading disabilities. I had one [student] in a grade nine class who was reading at a grade three level. They have identified learning problems, and a history of not being successful. At home, the parents or guardians are not able to discipline, so the students are used to operating within parameters that are ill-defined. Basically, they can get away with what they want. They are setting the tone, and they place themselves into that situation when they come into the school as well.* (Comment 63)

Frank provided a poignant example of the type of disadvantaged home environment experienced by some of the students at Rothman:

> *I have a girl who comes late every day because she is the primary caregiver for her brother. Her mom works nights and doesn't get home until 8:00, and her brother's bus comes at 8:20. She's my top student. At fourteen, she is responsible for being the primary caregiver for most of the night for a kid who is in elementary school.* (Comment 64)

This girl has been marginalized by the restrictions she experiences as a result of being the primary caregiver for her young brother. She has lost the opportunity to engage in age appropriate social activities, extra-curricular activities at school, or even to arrive at class on time in the morning. Her teacher considers her situation to be unusual, and

outside of the norm for girls her age, which further contributes to the marginalization she experiences. The marginalization of students is one of the unfortunate consequences resulting from discourses of deficit and disadvantage.

Some of the actions taken by the staff at Rothman that were driven by the discourse of deficit involved the lowering of expectations for students, and the streaming of students into special programs. Ruth commented about the use of special programs at Rothman:

> *These students are not considered able to succeed in a classroom setting, so we remove them from the classroom and put them in the learning centre. In that way they become marginalized, because they associate their learning with that place, instead of a regular setting. It can work against them to be considered as kind of outsiders with their peers, and because there could be a concomitant lack of success academically. I'm not saying it's a wrong thing, I'm just saying that it could be interpreted as marginalizing a student.* (Comment 65)

Louise Mah also discussed the placement of students who were struggling academically at Rothman. She revealed mixed feelings about special programs, because although she believed that they offered the students greater opportunities for learning, she expressed concern that they marginalized students, and therefore were inherently unjust:

> *We put these students into a special program. OK, it's a done deal, and off they go and they're in this special program. That to me is a social injustice.* (Comment 66)

Frank Spence spoke about the marginalizing effects of learning deficiencies he observed with some of the students at Rothman:

I see kids who have been identified at an early age as ADD [attention deficit disorder], *ADHD* [attention deficit hyperactive disorder] *or any number of things, who have become dependent on having another person there. They cannot work independently, even if they have the capability of doing it.* (Comment 67)

Joe Masterson alluded to the discourse of disadvantage which affected students when he spoke of the impact on students of a school's inability to recognize various learning styles:

Well, they're certainly marginalized in the sense that if you don't find the key to unlock their learning style, so they can actually learn, they are marginalized because they are not getting the same opportunity as other kids would to learn and succeed and advance. (Comment 68)

Another factor that Louise and Ruth perceived as contributing to student marginalization concerned the choices made by students. Louise commented:

It can work against them to be considered as kind of outsiders with their peers. For instance, the 'trench coat' kids, you know? I'm not even talking about school activities, but activities that they may become involved with outside of school. Perhaps it is their choice of dress. In expressing their individuality they sometimes choose to be a little outrageous, which tends then to ultimately marginalize them. (Comment 69)

Ruth remarked that one of her biggest challenges was getting students into the classroom. She noted that several students would come to school, but would not attend classes. She commented that this habitual absenteeism contributed to students' marginalization, and resulted from their desire for

...attention or stimulation in various forms, whether it's emotional, intellectual or whatever. They are looking for it somewhere, whether it is in the halls, or the peer group they hang out with outside of the school. (Comment 70)

When the principal and teachers at Rothman High voiced their thoughts and opinions about the disadvantages experienced by students, their comments revealed that they perceived students were marginalized by factors such as (a) home environments, (b) teacher expectations, (c) school programming decisions, (d) learning styles, and (e) personal choices.

Ruth offered her opinion of how some students were marginalized by the type of home environments they experienced:

It may be a home where they haven't got positive reinforcement or they are told they are stupid or lazy or whatever. I mean, even as adults we are told that, but with kids, well, you know, if my dad says that I'm a big dumb ass, then I guess I must be. So, that does come into the classroom. (Comment 71)

Ruth observed that some teachers at Rothman had lowered their expectations for students experiencing these types of home environments, and she believed that this contributed to their marginalization. She remarked:

I think maybe it lies in the expectations. Maybe we don't expect them to be smart, or to succeed or achieve, and then they think themselves that they can't achieve or they're not smart. I think we sometimes look at our kids and say, "Oh well, they're from foster homes", or "Well, it's a single parent", or "Oh well, it's a welfare family". We don't expect much of them. I had a discussion with another colleague about politeness and respect. I spoke about how the kids don't open the

doors if you are walking in with your hands full. The colleague said, "Well, you know, they aren't used to that, they have never had that role modeled". I said, "Exactly! So why are we saying they don't have to do it?" It doesn't matter what your income is, or if you have one parent, two parents or no parents, you can still have standards and respect. I just fight tooth and nail with some colleagues about this, because we are doing our students a disservice by not expecting that from them. (Comment 72)

The discourses of deficit and disadvantage that can result in marginalization also contribute to the domination of individuals and groups by fueling the monocultural belief that the disadvantaged are best served by assimilation into the dominant culture of Western society. The teachers at Rothman appeared to acknowledge and accept the cultural and economic domination of minorities by white cultural values. They seemed to subscribe to the belief that everyone should attempt to fit in with the dominant culture, as illustrated by this comment from Pierre:

We are all Canadians, whether you are from Ethiopia or whether you were born here 26 years ago. You come to our country, and yeah, there is some acclimatization time that is needed, but kids adapt far quicker than the adults do. They get with the program very quickly. Some of our foreign kids have done far better than our domestic kids. I read recently that Canada does fairly well in terms of education. We are setting the bar very high for the rest of the world. (Comment 73)

Frank expressed similar sentiments as he reflected on recent curricular changes he had observed:

It seems to me like the curriculum is going more towards understanding the world in science. It doesn't matter who you are, or where you come from. An equation of sodium and chlorine is always going to form salt. A simple example, and maybe one that isn't as important to somebody who's just arrived in Canada, but everybody uses salt. (Comment 74)

These comments by Pierre and Frank may be interpreted to mean that they believe the assimilation of mainstream academic values by immigrant students is important for their success. In these comments, neither teacher acknowledged the potential hardships faced by students immersed in a school setting based on different cultural values. Pierre expressed the belief that he was acting in a fair and just manner by treating all of his students the same. He spoke of giving each of them a 'fair shot' at handling the subject matter, so that they would have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Researcher: *When you talk about the kids who come here, do you see any of the students as being marginalized in any way?*

Pierre: *No, I don't think so, not really. They may have their own perceptions of what's marginalized and what isn't, but I don't think so. I don't perceive them that way as their teacher. They walk in the door, and I give them as fair a shot as anybody else.*

Researcher: *Are they marginalized by their economic situation, or by their homes, culture, ethnicity, or any other factors?*

Pierre: *Sometimes all of those factors. Sure. I think depending on the scope of economics and the scope of their ethnic background, yeah, their experiences are very different. On the other hand, kids are like sponges, and they will absorb as*

much as you give them, so even if they have this perception that they might not be as good, or marginalized, their own abilities, ultimately, they can go as far as they wish. We give them as much as they can possibly handle, or at least I would hope all my colleagues do. I try and challenge mine as much as I possibly can. Set that bar high, and expectations will be met. (Comment 75)

Although these teachers' comments suggested their belief in the benefits of cultural assimilation for students, they made other comments which alluded to the consequences of failing to recognize cultural differences. Frank illustrated the tension generated by the clash of assimilationist views with concerns about the appropriateness of practices which promoted assimilation. He stated:

I'm not sure what the right answer is. I think that there are a number of social issues that we do try to impose on kids that may or may not be appropriate for them and where they come from. (Comment 76)

The contradictory nature of the comments made by some of the participants regarding the domination and marginalization of students suggests that this is an area worthy of further investigation in future studies. The data gathered in the course of this research is insufficient to adequately address the subtleties of these contradictions.

As described in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Young (1990) and Fraser (1997) consider marginalization and domination to be indicators of injustice. The principle of recognition, rather than marginalization and domination, is central to the paradigm of cultural justice that is articulated by Fleras and Elliott (2003), Fraser (1997), Gale and Densmore (2000), and Young (1990). Fraser states that "...every struggle against injustice .... implies demands for both redistribution and recognition" (p. 12). Fleras and

Elliott (2003) maintain that achieving recognition of how dominant perspectives shape political opinions, class, role and racial self-image will promote the development of consciousness of one's self as a social being, and contribute to understanding the many ways in which a group's differences are structured through power relations in social and historical contexts. The teachers' comments which are indicative of Type 2 and Type 3 differences (Gale and Densmore, 2000) are described in the next section of this chapter, and provide examples of the presence of the principle of recognition in certain aspects of the teachers' conceptions of social justice.

Discourses of Type 2 Difference

The *Type 2* discourse of *difference* described by Gale and Densmore (2000) places emphasis on the positive aspects of diversity. The cultural traditions of groups are celebrated, romanticized and endorsed following the belief that social harmony and tolerance are enhanced when people learn about other cultures. The perspective of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) as *enrichment* encompasses the assumptions and actions consistent with Gale and Densmore's (2000) Type 2 discourse of difference.

The enrichment perspective of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) is intended to reach all students, rather than just minority students. It is focused on challenging prejudice by educating students about cultural differences. Multicultural education for all students is endorsed as a way to increase awareness of diversity and to cultivate an appreciation for the unique contributions of diverse groups to society. Attempts are made to enrich the curriculum through the addition of special

'multicultural awareness' days, classroom projects that reflect multicultural themes, and the study of specific cultures. As noted by Fleras and Elliott, the enrichment model of multicultural education promotes "...greater tolerance, enhanced sensitivity, and more harmonious intercultural relations" (p. 336). However, the enrichment model fails to initiate major institutional changes, or to challenge racism within and outside the school.

An example of the enrichment model of the acknowledgement of cultural differences was mentioned by Louise as she spoke of celebratory cultural activities she witnessed at an elementary school where she taught prior to coming to Rothman:

> *When I was at Heron Elementary* [a pseudonym] *we had a full day powwow, and a lot of our students who were aboriginal or Metis were participating. It was just wonderful. So, it's not like we don't try to address the needs, it's just sometimes it's the students who put up the barriers, and they don't want that. They don't want to be identified as different, so you have to respect that too.* (Comment 77)

Louise explained her belief that the diverse cultural practices of some students should be respected within the school setting:

> *They should be allowed to wear what they are comfortable in, because what is important is the learning of the skill. If you are on a field trip, and you have a Muslim student with you who wants to take a prayer mat, because at a certain time of the day he may want to do a prayer, it should be understood that the student can do that comfortably. They can go to a secluded area, make their prayers, and then come back and join the group.* (Comment 78)

Pierre discussed curricular changes he had observed which were designed to address perceived gender differences in the academic performance of girls in the areas of mathematics and science, and of boys in language arts:

> Pierre: *I think it* [gender related academic differences] *has been a socially hot topic. The level of expectation is different for everybody, and so are those needs being met? I think they have been met. We're starting to see through the data that girls are surpassing the boys now, in many ways.*
>
> Researcher: *So what do you think has made the difference?*
>
> Pierre: *Well, the language arts curriculum hasn't changed that much, other than the fact that they've gone to outcomes. But if we look at the math and science curricula, they have been changed to make them more girl friendly. The scores are reflecting that now.*
>
> Researcher: *What about in language arts? Have you seen changes in your teaching career to try to make it more boy friendly?*
>
> Pierre: *Yeah, to a certain extent I have. I also look for materials that are a little more male oriented. I see that as part of my job.* (Comment 79)

Discourses of Type 3 Difference

Type 3 is the final discourse of *difference* described by Gale and Densmore (2000). The Type 3 discourse of difference outlines a rationale for creating a more inclusive dialogue examining and understanding the social processes used to generate the standards for judging the relative worth of a social group. This rationale is based on the assumption that socio-cultural differences are mediated by social relations based on

economic exploitation. Rather than promoting the assimilation of diverse groups into the mainstream norm, this discourse argues that groups deserve to be involved in processes that ensure their inclusion in public life. Type 3 discourses of difference are reflected in both the *enlightenment* and the *empowerment* perspectives of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003). However, the nature of involvement by group members suggested in the Type 3 discourse of difference varies significantly between the enlightenment and the empowerment perspectives of multicultural education.

The enlightenment view of multicultural education suggests that the structures of schooling need to be analyzed in order to properly understand the reasons for differential academic achievement, as do the arrangements that position different groups of people as unequal with one another. The ways in which power relations operate within different contexts require analysis to understand how they affect individuals. The enlightenment view of multicultural education suggests dealing with differences by instituting prejudice reduction programs and attempting to remove discrimination by deepening the understanding of group differences.

Pierre related an incident which happened in his classroom that indicates the unwillingness of the staff members at Rothman to tolerate blatant racism. The intolerance for racism is interpreted in this study as an action consistent with the enlightenment perspective of multicultural education.

> *With out and out racism, and things like that, we just nip it in the bud. Kids are very conscious of it, more so than ever before. Some kid made a comment in my class today, and another one of them pounced on him, saying, "That's racist, you can't say that". In actual fact it was, and I didn't say anything, I just let them go*

off on him. I think they are very, very conscious of the different races within our culture, and maybe they're more tolerant than ever before, of the needs and the differences. (Comment 80)

Joe Masterson reflected the enlightenment perspective of multicultural education as he discussed the importance of educators understanding the culture and needs of aboriginal students:

You have to be aware of the cultural differences with kids. If the English teacher forces an aboriginal student to read aloud in class, and they refuse, they are not intending to be disrespectful or disobedient. It's just not part of their cultural experience. The Phys. Ed. teacher who forces an aboriginal girl to change for gym in a common change room with all the other girls, and expects that kid to come to class in clothing that doesn't cover her limbs, well, in aboriginal culture, that may not be acceptable. It's an embarrassment for those kids. You have to understand where they are coming from, and then work with it. (Comment 81)

Joe provided a further example of the enlightenment perspective with his account of how the school division within which Rothman was located had hired two employees who were designated as aboriginal consultants. Joe referred to the role played by these individuals:

The division has aboriginal consultants, who are available to work with people around cultural differences. It's something you have to keep working on, educating people about cultural differences. (Comment 82)

Science teacher Louise Mah referred to strategies used by teachers at Rothman High that were designed to reduce disparity among students when she spoke of using different methodologies for teaching and evaluation to meet student needs:

> *I think by using different methods of assessing and evaluating and different strategies for teaching and learning, it* [educational disparity] *is addressed to some extent.* (Comment 83)

Louise felt that using differentiated instructional and assessment methodology was an appropriate way to deal with students who demonstrated obvious differences in learning styles and abilities. She and the other teachers spoke of adapting programs and assessment tools to meet the needs of a variety of students, rather than pushing the students to fit into a 'one size suits all' educational format.

Joe recognized some individuals were unequally positioned to take advantage of their education, and that actions directed at redressing systemic inequalities were necessary. Joe shared his recollection of a conversation he had as a young teacher with a former superintendent:

> *Her daughter Susan was in high school at the time, and I had her as a student. She said to me, "Look, I really don't care how you teach Susan, she can learn at the bottom of a coal skuttle. What I care about is how you reach those kids who are not like Susan, who don't have the same advantage in terms of learning." It's about ways to help support and bring up kids who have those difficulties, so that they're on a similar plane as the Susans of the world.* (Comment 84)

The empowerment view of multicultural education advocates "...providing a platform for minority stories to be told in their own voices, while repudiating the white-

centeredness of school knowledge as the only form of culture" (Fleras and Elliott, 2003, p. 337). The empowerment style of multicultural education is focused directly on the needs of minority students, and is predicated on the belief that monocultural school systems are failing minority pupils. Students may be viewed as members of a minority due to factors such as race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, or economic status, among other possible factors. The empowerment perspective promotes a school context that capitalizes on the strengths and learning styles of minority students as a basis for achievement. It recommends several strategies for dealing with minority student differences. Some of these strategies suggest creating culturally safe places within the school system for these students, or even the establishment of separate schools.

Pierre Peloquin spoke of some of his beliefs about listening to the voices of students, which may be interpreted as reflecting an empowerment view of multicultural education.

> *I like to believe that if we're talking about social justice for students, that we give them choice within our system, so that they can make choices. I like the idea that kids have a voice within their school to say that these are the things that we like and dislike about our school. I think choice is a huge component of my social justice for students.* (Comment 85)

Ruth expressed the opinion that the school was not doing enough to meet the needs of some minority students:

> *We have a fairly large aboriginal component within our school population, and yet I do not see any real differentiation of programming or anything that does really reach out to address the cultural needs of the group, other than the*

aboriginal consultant coming in maybe once a month to have a luncheon with the kids or something like that. (Comment 86)

Although Ruth was able to see the advantages of an empowerment model of education in which the aboriginal students would function as a distinct group within the school's population, she felt that the students might be unwilling to go that far. She commented:

I can see from the aboriginal perspective that maybe there is an inequity that we have not addressed. However, they have put up barriers, in that maybe they are keeping themselves safe by not becoming a differentiated group. (Comment 87)

Ruth described an initiative she hoped to start at the school which she felt would begin to address the cultural needs of the aboriginal students:

We have a perfectly good courtyard here that could be developed into a meditation garden. We need to provide more places where students could go to become a little more reflective, to identify with the medicine wheel. I just recognize that this would suit our clientele, to have something that would build community, that would give them the opportunity to identify with their culture. (Comment 88)

Summary of Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice

The previous sections of this chapter reported several comments by the participants that provide some insight into the teachers' discourse regarding social justice. These comments were presented according to the framework suggested by Gale and

Densmore (2000), which describes educational discourses of deficit, disadvantage, and differences (Types 1, 2, and 3).

In total, 39 comments were reported. Figure 6 presents an overview of these comments, identifying the teacher who spoke each comment, the discourse of academic achievement suggested by the comment, the underlying view of education, and the social justice paradigm framing the comment. Figure 7 presents a participant profile summary of the percentages of the 39 comments made by the teachers according to the categories of discourses of deficit, disadvantage, and difference.

Analysis of the interpretation of the data contained in Figure 6 indicates that the discourse of academic achievement suggested in 59 percent of the comments (23 of 39 total comments) concerns deficit and disadvantage. Figure 7 indicates that the all five of the participants made comments which appear consistent with this discourse. The distribution of comments reflecting the discourse of deficit and disadvantage is as follows: Joe, three comments; Frank, four comments; Louise, five comments; Ruth six comments, and Pierre five comments. It appears that the teachers all consider academic achievement to be related to conditions influencing students' ability to learn, such as innate intelligence, or to skills and capabilities gained in enriched and supportive home environments. Strategies used at Rothman High School such as streaming students into special remedial programs or learning centers are referred to by the teachers in comments 55, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, and 71. The practice of lowering expectations of students and providing additional resources and supports were discussed by the teachers in comments 57, 59 and 72. This illustrates the use at Rothman of actions considered by several

authors (Banks, 2001; Fleras and Elliott, 2003; Gale and Densmore, 2000) to be the predicted result of discourses of deficit and disadvantage.

Comment	Speaker	Discourse	View of Education	Paradigm
50	Joe	Deficit and Disadvantage	Monocultural	Distributive
51	Frank	Type 1 Difference	"	"
52	Pierre	Deficit and Disadvantage	"	"
53	Louise	"	"	"
54	Pierre	"	"	"
55	"	"	"	"
56	Louise	"	"	"
57	Ruth	"	"	"
58	Joe	"	"	"
59	Ruth	"	"	"
60	Pierre	Type 1 Difference	"	"
61	"	Deficit and Disadvantage	"	"
62	Louise	Type 1 Difference	"	"
63	"	Deficit and Disadvantage	"	Cultural
64	Frank	"	"	"
65	Ruth	"	"	"
66	Louise	"	"	"
67	Frank	"	"	"
68	Joe	"	"	"
69	Louise	"	"	"
70	Ruth	"	"	"
71	"	"	"	"
72	"	"	"	"
73	Pierre	"	"	"
74	Frank	"	"	"
75	Pierre	Type 1 Difference	"	"
76	Frank	Deficit and Disadvantage	"	"
77	Louise	Type 2 Difference	Enrichment	"
78	"	"	"	"
79	Pierre	"	"	"
80	"	Type 3 Difference	Enlightenment	"
81	Joe	"	"	"
82	"	"	"	"
83	Louise	"	"	"
84	Joe	"	"	"
85	Pierre	"	Empowerment	"
86	Ruth	"	"	"
87	"	"	"	"
88	"	"	"	"
Total	39	Deficit and Disadvantage 23 Type 1 Difference 4 Type 2 Difference 3 Type 3 Difference 9	Monocultural 27 Multicultural 12 *enrichment 3* *enlightenment 5* *empowerment 4*	Distributive 13 Cultural 26

Figure 6. Summary of Comments Regarding Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice

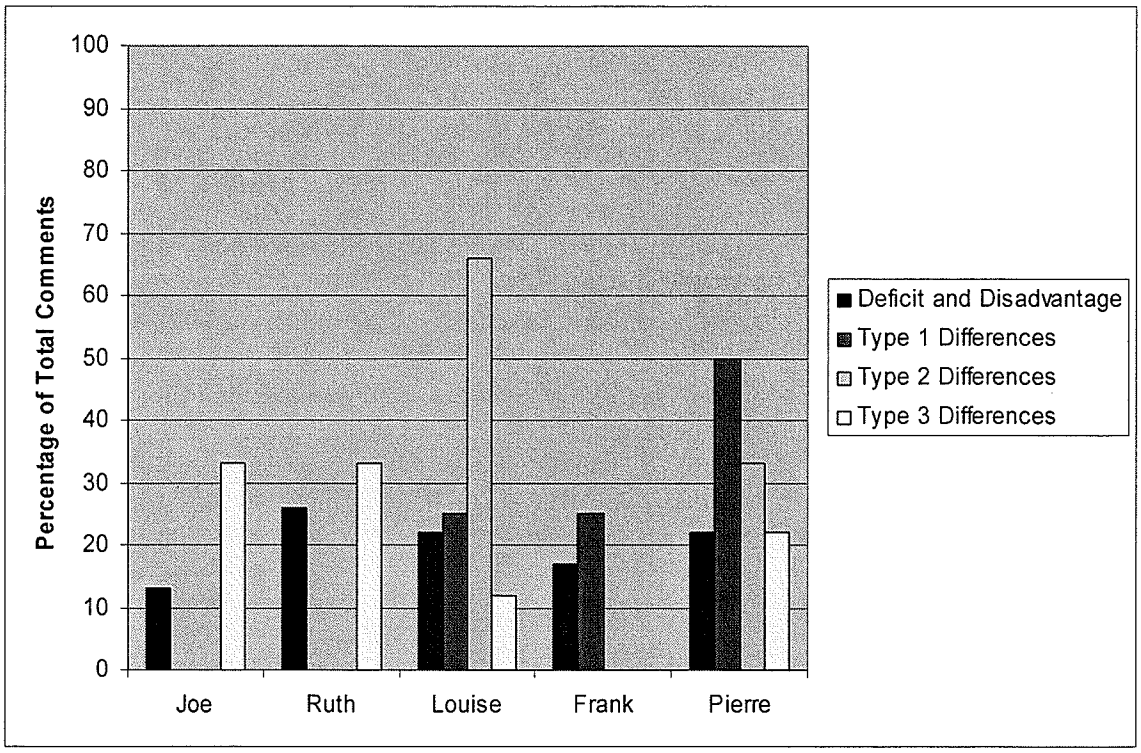

Figure 7. Bar Graph Showing the Percentage Distribution of Participant Comments by Discourse of Academic Achievement (n = 39)

Comments by the teachers that were interpreted as being consistent with a Type 1 discourse of difference were found in four of the remaining 39 comments (10 percent). Only three teachers made comments that seemed consistent with the Type 1 discourse of differences. As illustrated in Figure 6, these teachers were Frank (1 comment), Louise (1 comment), and Pierre (2 comments). The Type 1 discourse of difference emphasizes universal human characteristics that are common among individuals, and dismisses group differences as meaningless. Frank, Louise and Pierre appeared to have been influenced by this discourse. They demonstrated in comments such as 51, 61, 62, and 75 that they embrace a philosophy of 'colour-blindness', and attempt to treat all students the same by using standardized methods of teaching and assessment.

Figure 8 presents the distribution of the 39 comments from the teachers regarding their conceptions of social justice among the discourses of deficit, disadvantage, and the three discourses of difference (Types 1, 2, and 3). Altogether, the teachers' comments that were interpreted as being suggestive of a discourse of deficit and disadvantage (59 percent), and the comments indicating a Type 1 (10 percent) discourse of difference comprise 69 percent of the participants' comments.

Figure 2, which was presented in Chapter 2, illustrated the connection between the discourses of deficit, disadvantage and Type 1 difference, and a monocultural perspective of education. The finding that 69 percent (59 percent deficit and disadvantage plus 10 percent Type 1 difference) of the teachers' comments seemed to involve discourses of deficit, disadvantage, and Type 1 difference would indicate that a monocultural perspective may be dominant in the teachers' conceptions of social justice.

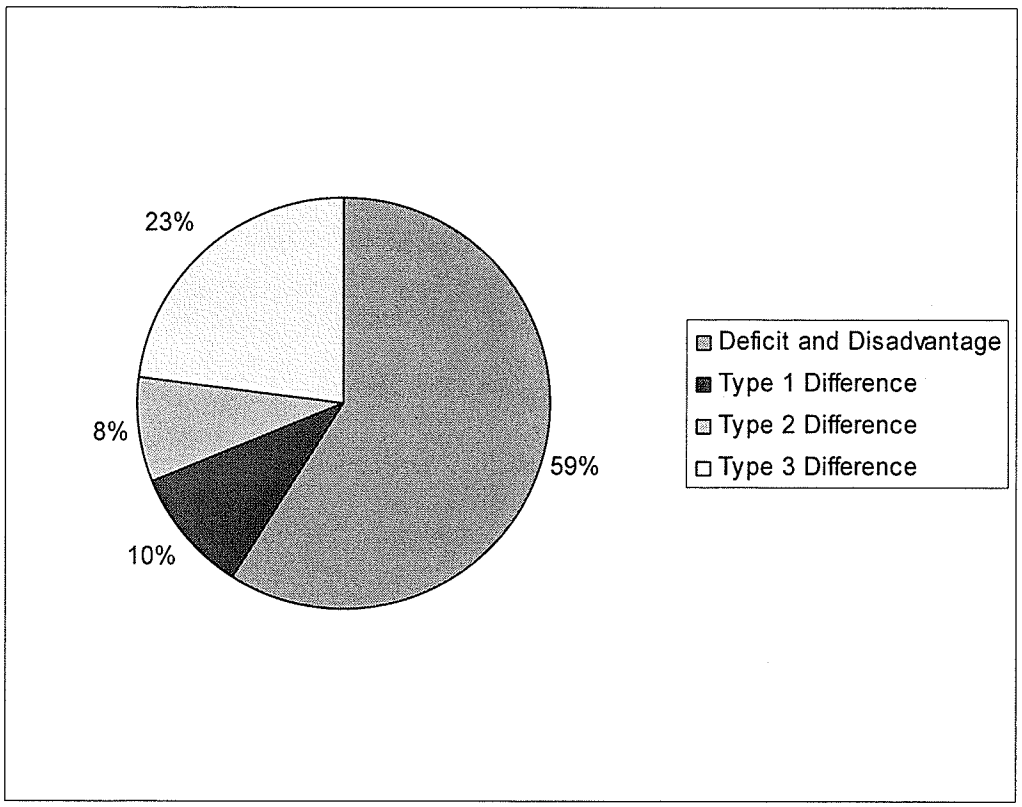

Figure 8. Circle Graph Showing the Percentage Distribution of Teacher Comments by Discourse of Academic Achievement (n = 39)

Figure 9 suggests that this is the case. The influence of the monocultural perspective appears in 69 percent of the teachers' comments (comments 50-76).

Figure 8 illustrates that eight percent of the teachers' comments are reflective of the Type 2 discourse of difference that is consistent with the enrichment perspective of education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003). The teachers that made comments consistent with the Type 2 discourse of difference include Louise (2 comments) and Pierre (1 comment). The remaining 23 percent of comments revealed the influence of the Type 3 discourse of difference that corresponds to views of multicultural education described by Fleras and Elliott as enlightenment and empowerment. The teachers making these comments include Joe (3 comments), Louise (1 comment), Ruth (3 comments), and Pierre (2 comments).

Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of the 12 comments (31 percent) influenced by the discourses of Type 2 and 3 difference and teachers' educational views which appear consistent with multicultural education. As indicated in Figure 8, all three of the multicultural views suggested by Fleras and Elliott (2003) are evident in the comments. The enrichment perspective of multicultural education is observed in three comments (25 percent), the enlightenment perspective in five comments (42 percent), and the empowerment perspective is noted in four comments (33 percent). These findings are illustrated in Figure 10.

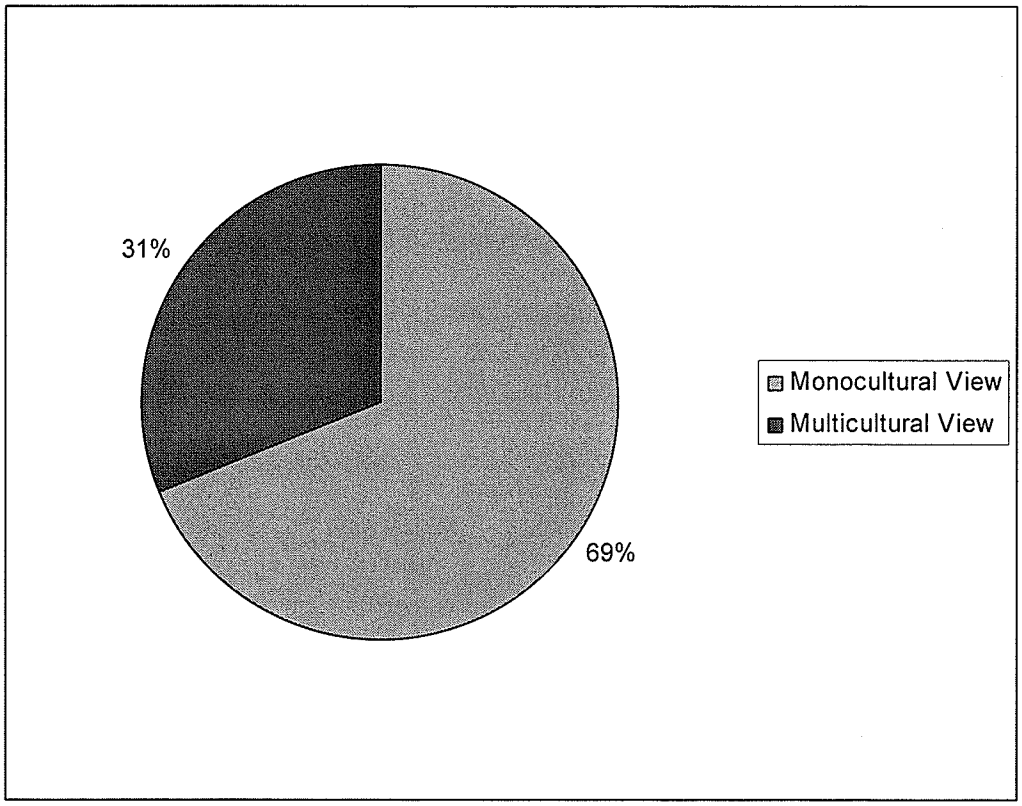

Figure 9. Circle Graph Showing the Percentage Distribution of Participant Comments by Monocultural and Multicultural Perspectives of Education (n = 39)

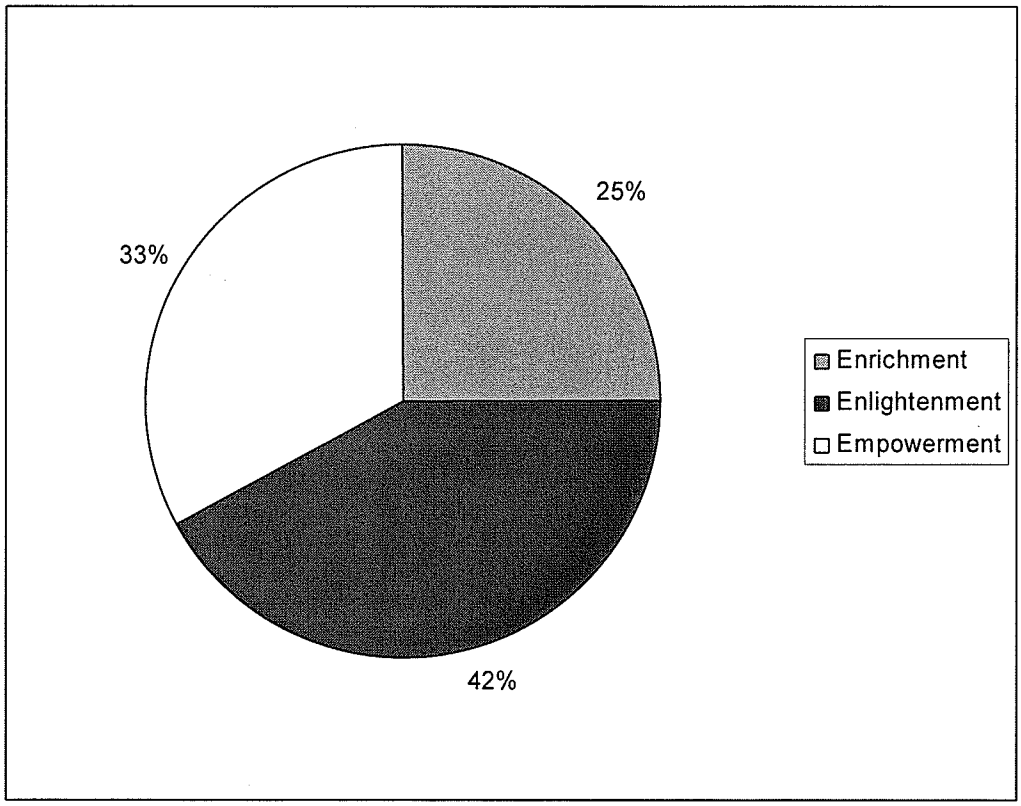

Figure 10. Circle Graph Showing the Percentage Distribution of Participant Comments by Perspective of Multicultural Education (n = 12)

Figure 10 illustrates that three comments (25 percent) seem to reflect a discourse consistent with Type 2 differences that consider individual and group diversity as intrinsically positive. The teachers making these comments were Louise (2 comments) and Pierre (1 comment). This discourse contributes to the use of teaching strategies and activities that focus on enrichment, such as the celebration of ethnic foods, holidays and cultural heroes, as described by the teachers in comments 77, or which affirm differences, such as comments 78 and 79.

The final nine comments referred to in Figure 10 reflect a Type 3 discourse of difference that focuses on how socio-cultural differences are mediated by social relations. The multicultural perspectives of education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) as enlightenment and empowerment are consistent with the Type 3 discourse of difference.

Five of these nine comments (42 percent) reflect the enlightenment perspective of multicultural education. This perspective promotes the examination of structures that position groups as unequal, and is evident in comments 81 – 84 made by Pierre, Joe and Louise. Other actions consistent with an enlightenment perspective advocate for the inclusion of anti-racist and prejudice reduction programs, as discussed by Pierre in comment 80.

Teachers expressing the empowerment view of multicultural education advocate for the presence of minority voices in decision making processes as indicated by Pierre in comment 85, and to promote the creation of culturally safe places for minority students, such as those described by Ruth in comments 86 – 88.

Earlier in this thesis social justice was described as encompassing both a distributive and a cultural paradigm. The rationale for structuring a definition of social justice around these two paradigms is that a context for social justice must extend beyond the morally proper distribution of benefits and burdens among society's members. The definition of social justice must also include references to the wider context of "...institutional rules and relations.... action, decisions about action, and provision of the means to develop and exercise capabilities" (Young, 1990, p. 16).

Figure 11 illustrates that of the 39 comments from the teachers that conveyed their discourses of academic achievement and their views of education, 13 comments (33 percent) originated from a distributive paradigm of social justice that focused on the criteria of rights, needs and desert described by Miller (1976). All of the comments reflecting the distributive paradigm of justice are derived from a monocultural view of education. All five participants made comments reflective of the distributive paradigm; this distribution of comments is illustrated in the participant profiles chart presented in Figure 13.

The remaining 26 of the total 39 comments (67 percent) illustrated in Figure 11 are derived from the cultural paradigm of social justice. Within this paradigm, 14 comments (54 percent) refer to monocultural discourses of deficit, disadvantage, and Type 1 difference. The remaining 12 comments (46 percent) are derived from a multicultural perspective of education involving Type 2 and 3 discourses of difference. Figure 12 illustrates this distribution.

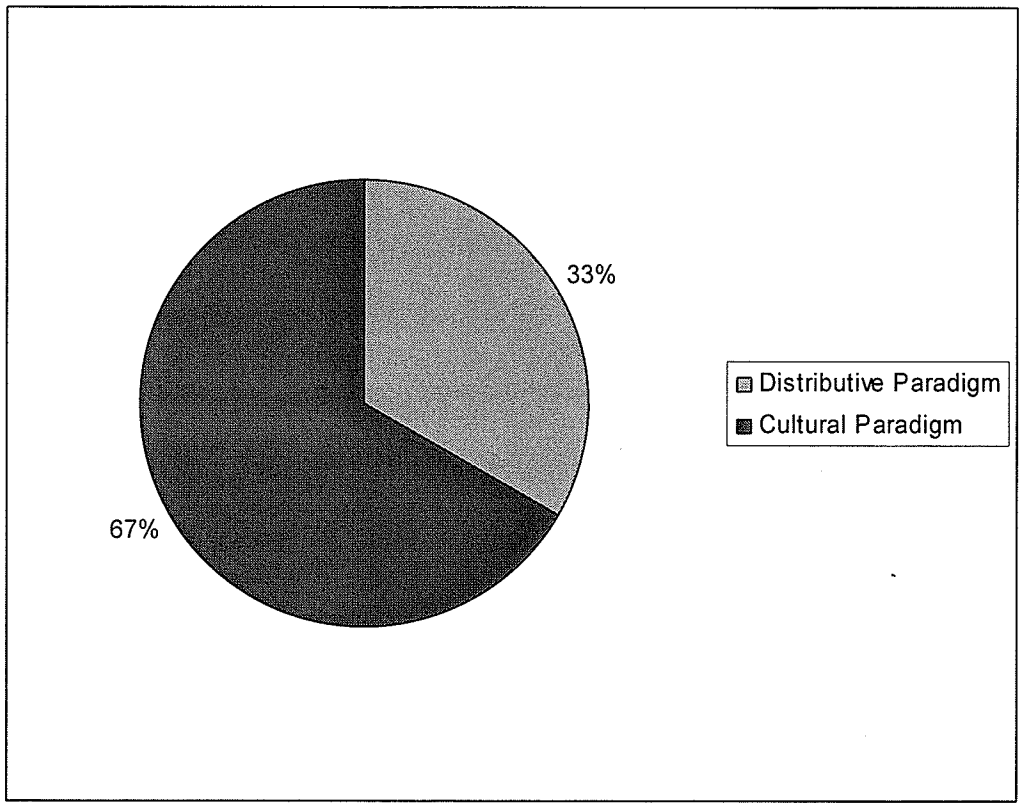

Figure 11. Circle Graph Showing Percentage Distribution of Participant Comments by Paradigm of Social Justice (n = 39)

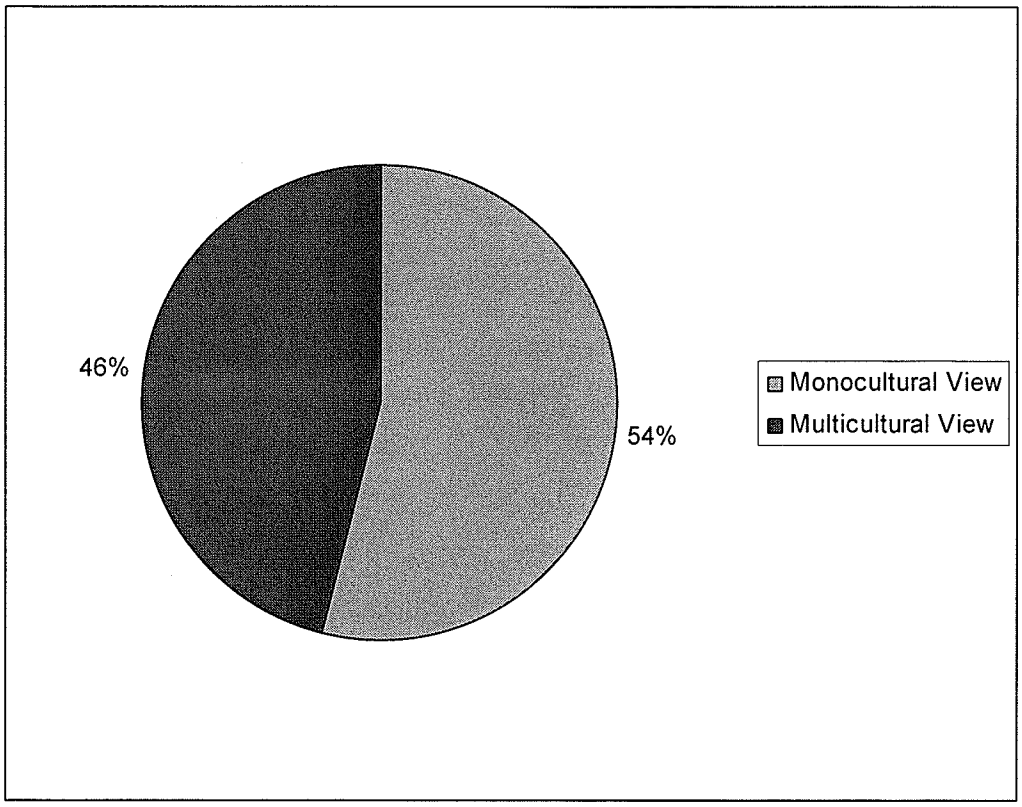

Figure 12. Circle Graph Showing Percentage Distribution of Participant Comments within the Cultural Paradigm of Justice by Monocultural and Multicultural Views of Education (n = 26)

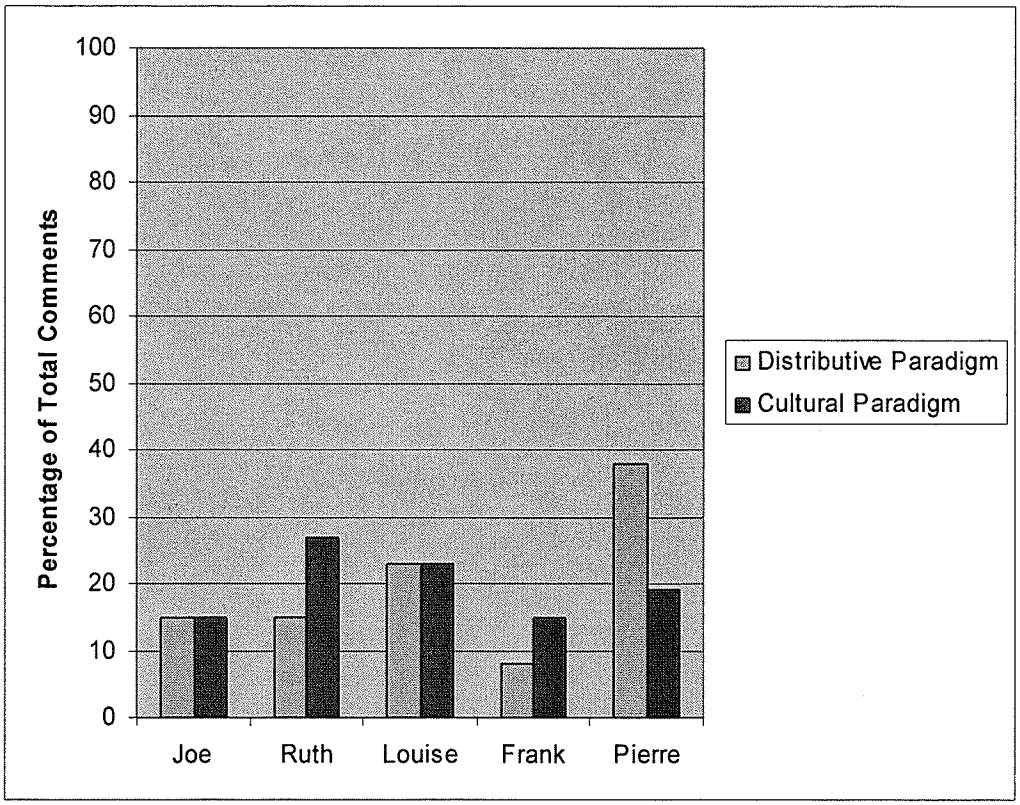

Figure 13. Bar Graph Showing the Percentage Distribution of Participant Comments by Paradigm of Social Justice (n = 39)

All of the participants made comments that reflected the influence of the cultural paradigm. As is evident in Figure 13, Joe's comments reflected an even balance of both paradigms. Ruth's comments within the cultural paradigm are almost double those in which she referred to distributive justice. Louise, like Joe, displayed an even balance in her comments between the two paradigms. Frank's comments reflected the cultural paradigm almost twice as frequently as the distributive paradigm. Pierre's comments revealed the opposite result. His comments referring to the distributive paradigm appeared twice as frequently as did comments reflecting the cultural paradigm

Both the distributive and the cultural paradigms of social justice were reflected in comments by the participants that invoked the discourses of deficit, disadvantage, and Type 1 difference. Only the cultural paradigm was reflected in the teachers' comments using the Type 2 and 3 discourses of difference.

The analysis of the teachers' comments regarding their conceptions of social justice presented in this chapter reveals the dominance of a monocultural view of education and the discourses of deficit and disadvantage in two-thirds of the participants' descriptions of student achievement. The influences of a multicultural view of education and Type 3 discourses of difference involving actions embodying strategies for enlightenment and empowerment were observed in approximately one-third of the teachers' comments. The impact of these influences on the actions of the teachers at Rothman High School will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Influence of Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice

The second of the four research questions for this study focused on the examination of how teachers' conceptions of social justice influence their practices and the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives. According to Brown (2004), *praxis* is a Greek word that means moving back and forth in a critical way between reflecting and acting on the world. This synergy between reflection and action is an integral part of the conceptual model undergirding this study.

The first section of this chapter examines how the teachers' conceptions of social justice influenced their decisions to become engaged in the school improvement initiatives at Rothman High School. The next section describes the monocultural and multicultural influences within the teachers' conceptions of social justice on their practice. The final section of the chapter explores the impact of the teachers' conceptions of social justice on the design and implementation of the school's improvement initiatives.

Influences on Teacher Engagement

The conceptual model for this study outlined in Chapter 3 suggests teachers' actions are influenced by their conceptions of social justice. This part of the chapter examines how conceptions of social justice may have influenced the teachers' decisions

to become involved with the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives at Rothman High School.

Figure 8 (see Chapter 6) indicates that 59 percent of the teachers' comments about particular discourses of academic achievement were interpreted in this study as being reflective of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage. Examination of the explanations offered by the participants regarding their reasons for becoming involved in school improvement initiatives at Rothman High School seem to mirror this finding. Several comments that were first reported in Chapter 5 are repeated here to illustrate this consistency:

> *I would say that one of the issues at Rothman would be the fact that we have an at risk population. By that I mean that we have a lot of kids who experience learning difficulties. They come to us with a variety of needs with respect to learning, to teaching. They also come to us more and more with major gaps in their learning, in their skill sets, so we're faced with having to try and plug those skills back in. We are seeing more and more kids who are needy in an emotional sense as well. That can interfere with learning. There are more mental health issues cropping up, and more kids coming to us from low income situations, whether it be from families who are on some form of assistance, or single parent families who are having trouble making ends meet, or who are the working poor. All of those factors tend to enter into the challenges that kids face.* (Joe Masterson, principal of Rothman High, Comment 1)

Our clients have higher needs. I think the socio-economic status of our kids is substantially different from those other two schools. I'm sure they have their wealthy and poor, much as we do, but I think that we have a higher range of high needs kids in the sense that they have needs coming in to our building based on economics, based on the education they've gotten up until now, based on whether their parents are readers who value education. Also, based on the vast amount of minorities and ethnic groups we have coming in to this school, white people are in the minority. (Pierre Peloquin, Comment 2)

There are kids who suffer physical and emotional abuse. They suffer sexual abuse, they suffer from court battles, and troubles with the law. Some kids have drug dependencies. (Frank Spence, Comment 3)

Sixty percent of our kids are not going to post-secondary, so what are they doing? Well, they are entering the workforce. And what skills do they have, leaving our building, to enter the workforce? (Pierre Peloquin, Comment 12)

We did research into the Senior 1 program, and our big reason to do it was that we were having so many kids coming in from Grade 8 without basic skills (Ruth Caldwell, Comment 13)

It concerned how we would want students to view themselves, and to kind of affirm their belief in self, and to build their own confidence (Louise Mah, Comment 14)

As was indicated in Figure 6 (see Chapter 6), all of these comments were interpreted as reflective of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage, and indicative of a monocultural view of education. The teachers appear to have been motivated to participate in the school improvement initiatives in order to assist students whom they perceived as being disadvantaged socially, economically, intellectually or academically.

Joe Masterson suggests that some of the teachers initially became involved in order to improve the physical appearance of the school. As reported in Chapter 5 he stated:

I would say that school improvement efforts always seem to start with the physical. That was no exception in this building. People were more concerned or focused on creating a better physical environment or climate...signage, painting, and those sorts of things. (Comment 10)

It is possible that the desire of teachers to improve the appearance of the building is a result of the dominance of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage in the teachers' conceptions of social justice. The teachers may have felt that improving the physical space of the school would help to compensate for the disadvantaged home backgrounds of the students.

Ruth Caldwell offers a comment suggestive of a different motivation to explain her involvement. She states that she became involved so that she could help "To build connections and get students involved" (Comment 15). This comment reveals reasoning

more consistent with Gale and Densmore's (2000) dialogic democracy of emotions, and the cultural paradigm of justice. It is reflective of a multicultural view of education that incorporates a focus on the Type 3 discourse of difference that speaks of enlightenment and empowerment.

Some of the teachers indicate that they became involved with the improvement initiatives because of Joe's leadership style. The teachers remark that his style was very different than that of the previous administration because, unlike his predecessor, he included teachers in the running of the school.

> *The former management by objectives or whatever you want to call it was somewhat Draconian. We set the goals, but 'they', whoever 'they' were, were the ones who actually sat and looked at what was going on. There wasn't a lot of dialogue back and forth.* (Frank, Comment 8)

Aspects of distributed leadership are evident in the involvement of teachers as chairpersons of school committees such as those responsible for developing and maintaining the teacher advisor groups, the school-to-work program, the data collection strategies, the entire school improvement program, and the staff professional development program. Ruth recalls how she was initially approached by Joe to become involved in the school improvement initiative:

> *I was asked right at the beginning to be a part of it. We had a steering committee, and I was asked to chair a committee. So right from the beginning I've been involved.* (Ruth Caldwell, Comment 4)

Frank speaks of how appreciative he is of Joe's inclusive manner.

We've been fortunate to have someone like Joe, who very much listens to what we have to say, and takes that to heart, and works with us to improve the school. (Frank, Comment 9)

Our administration has always been supportive. They listen, and often what you say is worth something, because there is action taken. As a teacher, you can't ask for much more than that. We've been fortunate to have someone like Joe, who very much listens to what we have to say, takes it to heart, and works with us to improve the school. (Frank, Comment 30)

The involvement of staff members in the decision making processes at the school suggests a possible consistency with the dialogic democracy of social space (Gale and Densmore, 2000) that endorses shared leadership and devolved responsibility. It is also reflective of the practice of rational discourse (Brown, 2004). Successful models of devolved leadership require this sort of organized talk (Rusch, 2005). In Chapter 5, the teachers at Rothman refer to the dialogic processes at the school in the following comments.

The process you go through is really helpful, more than anything else. Sitting down as a staff, and getting an opportunity to put your life on hold, to take a couple of days and go, OK, what do we want to do this year at Rothman High School has been a tremendous benefit. The more times I do it, the bigger the benefit I realize. (Frank Spence, Comment 28)

We wanted a little more critical feedback. You know, "Yeah great, pat us on the back for following our plan, but what aren't we doing? What did we say we were going to do, and what aren't we doing?" (Pierre Peloquin, Comment 32)

In summary, the teachers' comments suggest that the reasons for their involvement in the school improvement initiatives at Rothman were based on: (a) the desire to help needy or disadvantaged students succeed in school; (b) to build connections with students, and (c) a response to the leadership opportunities offered by the principal.

Influences on Teacher Practice

In this part of the chapter, possible influences of teachers' conceptions of social justice on their teaching practices will be explored. The discussion will be structured around the two views of education described by Fleras and Elliott (2003), the monocultural and the multicultural views of education.

The Influence of a Monocultural View of Education

Fleras and Elliott (2003) use the term monocultural education to refer to aspects of educational practice which are intended to reproduce the existing "...ideological and social order" within our society (Fleras and Elliott, p. 335). As these authors point out, by "...linking power with culture, schooling and education have evolved into a site for the reproduction of social inequality by denying equal opportunity and fostering outcomes at odds with certain minority students" (p. 335). Students experiencing difficulty in school are frequently streamed into lower-level programs which may restrict

access to higher education and certain areas within the job market, and minority students are over-represented in such programs (Oakes, 1985). It has been demonstrated that teachers frequently hold lower expectations for these students (Oakes).

A monocultural view of education is characterized by the discourses of deficit, disadvantage, and Type 1 differences (Gale and Densmore, 2000). As was illustrated in Figure 9 (see Chapter 6), 69 percent of the teachers' comments dealing with their conceptions of social justice seemed to reflect a monocultural view of education. This finding suggests that the teachers' practices may be influenced by a monocultural view of education.

Figure 8 (see Chapter 6) indicated that 59 percent of the comments from the teachers that deal with their conceptions of social justice appeared to reveal the presence of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage. One of the actions consistent with these discourses involves lowering academic and social expectations for students deemed to be academically deficient or disadvantaged (Gale and Densmore, 2000). Ruth offered this comment describing her observations regarding the actions of some of the teachers at Rothman:

> *I think maybe it lies in the expectations. Maybe we don't expect them to be smart, or to succeed or achieve, and then they think to themselves that they can't achieve or they're not smart. I think we sometimes look at our kids and say, "Oh well, they're from foster homes", or "Well, it's a single parent", or "Oh well, it's a welfare family". We don't expect much of them. I had a discussion with another colleague about politeness and respect. I spoke about how the kids don't open the doors if you are walking in with your hands full. The colleague said, "Well, you*

know, they aren't used to that, they have never had that role modeled". I said, "Exactly! So why are we saying they don't have to do it?" It doesn't matter what your income is, or if you have one parent, two parents or no parents, you can still have standards and respect. I just fight tooth and nail with some colleagues about this, because we are doing our students a disservice by not expecting that from them. (Comment 72)

Pierre also alludes to lowered expectations of students in his discussion of how teachers geared their instruction to a level they believed appropriate for the 'middle' and 'lower end' students:

...We tend to teach to the middle, and address the lower end and the lower needs, but we don't necessarily ever get to those advanced kids, and I'm always conscious of that. (excerpt from Comment 55)

A second action suggestive of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage involves the use of tracking or streaming procedures at Rothman which group and label students thought to be deficient or disadvantaged. Frank and Ruth both refer to this practice:

I see kids who have been identified at an early age as ADD [attention deficit disorder], *ADHD* [attention deficit hyperactive disorder] *or any number of things.* (Frank Spence, excerpted from Comment 67)

Ruth: *I think school can be about equal but different opportunities. That is why we accommodate modified students. They should be given the same opportunities, but they really are getting a different type of education. I'm just*

trying to think of some of the kids I have on IEPs. [Individual Education Plans] *They are doing work which is similar but not the same.*

Researcher: *And why is that?*

Ruth: *Because they can't.*

Researcher: *So would you say they are being given the same opportunity to have an education?*

Ruth: *Well, yes and no. You see, they won't be able to go to university with an M* [modified] *designation, but they will be getting their high school education. They still are having the opportunity to hear the same things, to do the same kinds of things in the classroom, but because of whatever their needs are, they are not really given the same opportunity.*

Researcher: *So are they given additional resources?*

Ruth: *Yes.* (Comment 59)

A third action that was interpreted as based on the discourses of deficit and disadvantage involves the establishment of special programs providing remedial instruction for students. Ruth and Louise refer to the existence of such programs at Rothman in comments outlining their concerns:

These students are not considered able to succeed in a classroom setting, so we remove them from the classroom and put them in the learning centre. In that way they become marginalized, because they associate their learning with that place, instead of a regular setting. It can work against them to be considered as kind of outsiders with their peers, and because there could be a concomitant lack of

success academically. I'm not saying it's a wrong thing, I'm just saying that it could be interpreted as marginalizing a student. (Ruth, Comment 65)

We put these students into a special program. OK, it's a done deal, and off they go and they're in this special program. That to me is a social injustice. (Louise, Comment 66)

Another action suggestive of a monocultural view of education reflects the Type 1 discourse of difference. This discourse is based on the assumption that all individuals have the same universal needs, so that differences between groups are not meaningful. Actions reflecting this discourse advocate a philosophy of colour-blindness, implying that fairness is achieved by treating all people the same. Figure 8 (see Chapter 6) indicated that 10 percent of the teachers' comments regarding conceptions of social justice appeared to reflect this discourse.

Pierre describes some actions reminiscent of the Type 1 discourse of difference as he explains how he tries to be fair to all of his students by treating everyone the same:

We are all Canadians, whether you are from Ethiopia or whether you were born here 26 years ago. You come to our country, and yeah, there is some acclimatization time that is needed, but kids adapt far quicker than the adults do. They get with the program very quickly. Some of our foreign kids have done far better than our domestic kids. I read recently that Canada does fairly well in terms of education. We are setting the bar very high for the rest of the world. (Comment 73)

The Influence of a Multicultural View of Education

Fleras and Elliott (2003) describe three perspectives within the multicultural view of education. The first of these, the enrichment perspective, is suggested in the assumptions voiced by some of the teachers regarding the intrinsic value of human diversity. The participants spoke of programs and curricular units they used which were intended to celebrate and affirm cultural differences:

> *When I was at Heron Elementary* [a pseudonym] *we had a full day powwow, and a lot of our students who were aboriginal or Metis were participating. It was just wonderful. So, it's not like we don't try to address the needs, it's just sometimes it's the students who put up the barriers, and they don't want that. They don't want to be identified as different, so you have to respect that too.* (Louise Mah, Comment 77)

The adoption of an enrichment view of education at Rothman is plausible, since the numbers of students of aboriginal descent choosing to attend the school had increased to 10 percent of the total student population of 480. Other activities at the school which reflect an enrichment perspective include the staff in-service sessions which were held to increase the teachers' awareness of the cultural differences of aboriginal students. Joe refers to these in his interviews:

> *You have to be aware of the cultural differences with kids. If the English teacher forces an aboriginal student to read aloud in class, and they refuse, they are not intending to be disrespectful or disobedient. It's just not part of their cultural experience. The Phys. Ed. teacher who forces an aboriginal girl to change for gym in a common change room with all the other girls, and expects that kid to*

come to class in clothing that doesn't cover her limbs, well, in aboriginal culture, that may not be acceptable. It's an embarrassment for those kids. You have to understand where they are coming from, and then work with it. (Joe Masterson, Comment 81)

The division has aboriginal consultants, who are available to work with people around cultural differences. It's something you have to keep working on, educating people about cultural differences. (Joe Masterson, Comment 82)

The remaining two perspectives described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) within the multicultural view of education are enlightenment and empowerment. In the book *Just Schooling*, Gale and Densmore (2000) present a dialogic framework that examines some specific aspects of schooling in which actions supportive of the enlightenment and the empowerment perspectives of multicultural education may occur. The framework is organized into four realms, placing relationships between the student and the teacher at the center, and then moving outwards towards the whole school and its community. Within each of these four realms Gale and Densmore identify particular dispositions, or *dialogic democracies*, which they view as principles for guiding socially just practices in schools.

The dialogic democracies provide a suitable heuristic tool for the consideration and analysis of comments made by the participants that may be interpreted as reflective of the enlightenment and empowerment views of multicultural perspectives of education. The heuristic use of the dialogic democracies in this thesis is validated by the interdependency evident among (a) the four dialogic democracies, (b) the enlightenment and empowerment views of multicultural education, and (c) factors described by several

other authors (Brown, 2004; Noddings, 1986; Rusch, 2005; Shields, 2004) as relevant to the attainment of social justice. These factors include the centrality of relationships, rational discourse, and transformative learning and leadership.

Table 7 illustrates the interdependency of the dialogic democracies, views of multicultural education, and factors considered by several authors to contribute to the attainment of social justice in schools. An example of this interdependence is that within the democracy of social space, it is suggested that course content dealing with people's struggles and achievements be included in the curriculum to assist students in developing an understanding of oppression and exploitation. Understanding the effects of oppression and exploitation upon individuals and groups requires engaging in rational discourse, and reflects the enlightenment perspective of multicultural education.

Table 7

Interdependency of Dialogic Democracies, Views of Multicultural Education and Factors Fostering Social Justice

Dialogic Democracies	Views of Multicultural Education	Factors Relevant to Attaining Social Justice
Democracy of Emotions	Enlightenment and Empowerment	Centrality of Relationships
Democracy of Social Space	Enlightenment and Empowerment	Rational Discourse
Democracy of Systems and Routines	Empowerment	Transformative Learning/Leadership
Democracy of Scale	Empowerment	All of the Above Factors

Comments made by the teachers that deal with daily life in their classrooms are interpreted in this study as falling within the first dialogic democracy described in Gale

and Densmore's (2000) framework, the *democracy of emotions*. This area encompasses dispositions displayed by teachers regarding teacher-student relations. Gale and Densmore suggest that in socially just classrooms, "...teachers are responsible for modeling democratic dialogue and interchange with students, and for building supportive relationships based on mutual trust and respect" (p. 148). Actions consistent with these dispositions include (a) connecting the discourses of classrooms and schools to the students and communities, (b) establishing continual dialogue and interchange with students and parents, and (c) including students in decisions regarding the learning to be done. These types of actions are congruent with the enlightenment and the empowerment views of multicultural education.

All of the teachers interviewed mentioned the caring attitude towards students displayed by the staff members at Rothman. Frank comments:

> *What goes on in everybody's classroom is for the good of the entire building. I've worked in places where that is totally not the case. The teacher closes the door, and they have their stuff, and what goes on out in the hallway, they don't care. That is not the case at Rothman. I don't know, like I think that at this school, one of our biggest strengths is that it is a welcoming place. I have kids all the time say that they feel safe here. The more that I work here, the more I realize that we have a very challenging clientele, but it is so rewarding.* (Comment 89)

Ruth also remarks about the manner in which the staff members at Rothman attempted to connect with students:

> *I guess a major strength of the school is the intimacy. It is a smaller school, so the low student numbers are a real bonus. So are the energies and enthusiasm of*

the teaching staff, and the commitment to student success. It's not just academic success – we are not just teachers here – it is a total role, a very holistic approach to student management, in that we look after their emotional needs as well as their academic needs, and their development as people. We try to have a vision in that we try to anticipate what the student will need down the road, not just when they are students here. (Comment 90)

The term *active trust* is used by Gale and Densmore (2000) to refer to the willingness of teachers to give of themselves. The attitude displayed by Ruth as she describes Rothman's program of student employment portfolios aptly illustrates this disposition:

Portfolios are my baby, absolutely. I poured my guts into them. I totally believe in them. What I saw them do for the kids' self-esteem, and to link their learning, was incredible. Joe and I have had conversations about this before, and I actually came to tears, well, not tears, but misty eyed when I was doing one of my presentations about portfolios to a new principals' group. There are a number of the students whom you would have looked at and just written them off. Their growth by doing that activity, that project... their self-esteem went from them literally sitting shrugged over in class, to just beaming...(Comment 91)

Mutuality refers to teachers knowing their students and the students knowing themselves and their teachers. Pierre recounts ways in which the teachers at Rothman became familiar with the students:

Because we have this turnover of staff, we always start every year by talking about the clientele. It is a good refresher for all of us to hear what type of people

we have, and I think even over the three years our clientele has changed. We always get our resource people and our guidance people to give us a description of the type of kids we have coming to this school. It is a huge range, from kids who are reading at a Grade 3 level, to kids who are reading at the university level and beyond. (Comment 92)

Joe adds his thoughts regarding the importance of knowing the students:

Well, we've spent a lot of time working on understanding our clientele. I mean that's where you have to start – you need to understand the demographics, you need to understand the needs, you need to understand the challenges that are coming in with these kids. We have put considerable energy into doing that. And then, you have to take a look at how you meet the needs of those kids. What is it that you have to do that will address those challenges, address those needs. In terms of how we plan and how we do business, the basic idea is to establish relationships with kids, so that once you have that relationship, and you can understand, and there is a mutual respect there with that kid. Then the kid can learn something from you. (Comment 93)

The third disposition within the democracy of emotions involves the concept of *negotiated authority*. This concept focuses on the use of dialogue among students and parents to enable teachers to earn trust and respect. Louise recalls the emphasis she placed on this with students:

I guess my main effort would be in establishing a connection with the students first, and then it becomes a norm. The acceptance becomes the norm, and we hope then that it goes out into the student population. (Comment 94)

Several of the teachers spoke about the importance of offering appropriate apologies in building their relationships with students. Pierre stated:

> *We are human beings, and we are not infallible. If we make mistakes, we should apologize. In my experience, when I've made mistakes, and made apologies, the kids accept me far better. It's an easy relationship to have. It's not rocket science.* (Comment 95)

Joe offers his insights regarding the role of apologies in developing negotiated authority:

> *The notion of apologizing when appropriate speaks to the understanding that our folks have of making oneself vulnerable. That's part of entering into a relationship with other people. You have to have that vulnerability, in order for that relationship to ring true.* (Comment 96)

Pierre recalls negotiating with his Senior 3 students regarding the choice of a novel for the class:

> *I handed out a novel this morning, thinking, "OK, we'll do* Animal Farm*. All the kids looked at it and said, "We read this in Grade 7". I thought to myself, "What are the Grade 7 teachers teaching a Grade 11 curriculum for?" So, I said, "Fine, give them back to me". I took them back. I could have forced them to read it again, because it was five years since they read it, but I figured that would be like pulling teeth. So, I handed out a different novel.* (Comment 97)

The second realm of dialogic democracies outlined by Gale and Densmore (2000) concerns *democracy of social space*. In a manner consistent with the enlightenment and the empowerment perspectives of multicultural education, this disposition values public

dialogue, and advocates according groups their own voices through actions leading to self-organization, self-expression and self-development. The establishment of Teacher Advisor Groups (TAG) may be interpreted as an action consistent with the democracy of emotions in that it was intended to increase the strength of the relationship between teachers and students. The TAG program at Rothman High was also driven by the desire of staff members to create opportunities for students to voice their thoughts and opinions about the school, and so may be considered consistent with the democracy of social space as well. Frank spoke about the opportunities created by the TAG system for hearing the opinions of the students:

> *I guess one of the pieces that was really important was the whole student voice piece, that allowed kids a say. You are actually asking the kids, "OK, what's going on in this building, what are some of the things you'd like to see improve?" And so, it put everybody in a position to take some ownership of what went on at Rothman.* (Comment 98)

Louise recalls how the idea for a project to support the sustainability of water resources emerged from ongoing dialogue with students:

> *Well, we attended a youth forum about the power of one. This is what my students have kind of been exposed to. There is one girl who spoke to the group about her involvement with the landmine issue. The workshop itself was exposing them to all kinds of different issues, and how even the voice of one can make a difference. So we came back and we've been kind of discussing all of these projects that were going to be related to issues of water sustainability.* (Comment 99)

Gale and Densmore (2000) describe the actions of teachers within the disposition of democracy of social space as encompassing more than "...simply exposing students to traditional bodies of knowledge or to the skills required to secure a skilled job" (p. 149). Instead, by including content in the curricula which deals with people's struggles and achievement, teachers help students understand how groups who are oppressed or exploited can resist injustice. The class debates organized by Ruth Caldwell regarding the meaning of social justice (see Comment 48) are suggestive of this type of strategy. She describes another example in the following excerpt from her interview:

> *We talk a lot about the proposal for two healing lodges, one in northern Manitoba, and one in southern Manitoba. We discuss what society is doing with these women, shipping them off to some derelict old building in Portage la Prairie. Are we really helping them? We talk a lot about restorative justice, we talk a lot about traditional ways of dealing with justice, and a lot of it is based on old aboriginal theories. (Comment 100)*

Democracy of systems and routines comprises the theme of the third dialogic democracy described by Gale and Densmore (2000). They suggest that the democratization of schooling will require systems characterized by social reflexivity, responsiveness and devolved responsibility. They suggest that educators should challenge bureaucratic administrative practices and excessive standardization procedures in order to respond to students with sensitivity and flexibility. Actions involving shared responsibility for decision-making among teachers, administrators, parents and students, and featuring a commitment to rethinking and reworking accepted wisdom contribute to

building the democracy of systems and routines. These actions are consistent with an empowerment view of multicultural education.

Pierre spoke about the distributed leadership model used at Rothman:

I've liked being here the last three years, because I think there is a shared leadership thing that is very strong in this school, and I think that Joe has done a very good job of allowing us as professionals to lead in the directions we think the school needs to go. (Comment 101)

The teachers described several examples of their involvement in decision-making processes at Rothman. Pierre recounted the committee structure used at the school to develop the school plan each year:

It [the school plan] *comes from the working committees within the school. We had six prior to this year, and we've trimmed it down to four. Usually every year we have a staff retreat right at the beginning of the school year, and really that's where the plan comes from. We develop it based on our discussion at that retreat. We take a look at what we have done in the past, what data we collected, what it was showing us, and then we develop a plan. The P.D.* [professional development] *committee sets up the retreat every year. This year we took three days. It was amazing.* (Comment 102)

Louise described how she became involved in the school improvement initiatives that focused on establishing teacher advisor groups and employability skills portfolios:

A few years back, a group of teachers had this vision of developing teacher advisor groups and employability skills portfolios. I liaised with them, and got involved. I felt quite strongly about it. I felt that it was a really good way of

connecting with students. At that point, I think one of our surveys had indicated that there was some disconnection. We were looking for ways to improve our ability to keep the students happy in the school, and to become more successful. At that point, I became involved with the academic support program as well. (Comment 103)

Pierre recounted efforts made by the teachers to be responsive to the students' curricular needs as he recalled program changes the staff was contemplating making for the next school year:

When we look at reading and comprehension levels and their ability to write when they come to us, we see a great need for them to have enriched skills. We are taking steps to meet the needs of those kids by augmenting our programs within the building. We are looking at transitional types of programs for our Senior I kids. We've taken spares out of the equation, so we are eliminating spares and free time, and we've upped the number of options for the kids. For instance, we have three half-courses in Language Arts next year; journalism, mythology and drama. (Comment 104)

The final type of dialogic democracy concerns actions directed at democratizing community life, or the *democracy of scale*. Gale and Densmore (2000) describe this as affirming group differences within and outside of schools, in a manner that does not exclude or marginalize others, and that fosters multiple collectives and connections. Developing a democracy of scale relies on implementing all of the dispositions ascribed to the three previous dialogic democracies, but on a greater scale. As well, teachers are expected to view themselves as learners who become more able to "...identify with their

students as they struggle with new material and perspectives....and understand their students' lives, backgrounds and histories, and incorporate this knowledge into their pedagogy" (Gale & Densmore, p. 153).

A review of Rothman school documents made available to the researcher during the course of this study revealed that parents attended the monthly Rothman High School Parent Council meetings in very small numbers, and their responsibilities pertaining to decisions at the school remained at the level of advising the principal. These meetings served the purpose of aiding the in dissemination of information from the school, in conjunction with school newsletters and a web-site. Attempts were made to increase the level of inclusion of students, parents and the surrounding community at Rothman as part of the school improvement initiatives described in Chapter 5. Every two or three years, between 1998 and 2005, focus group discussions were conducted at the school with groups of parents (Appendix E), and with all students (Appendix F), in order to obtain opinions regarding the functioning of the school. An additional survey was completed with students on the topic of bullying (Appendix G). Although these activities were intended to gather data to aid in making decisions, the data collection process itself became a way of increasing the level of involvement of parents and students.

In discussions regarding the need to affirm differences among students without marginalizing them, Joe describes the challenge faced by the teachers at Rothman to meet the needs of students representing a wide range of abilities and skills:

> *Our challenge is how do we deliver a program to all of these kids that is fair for them, and raised the bar for all of them? That's difficult when you have that range in your classes. So that's where we started. We took a look at our teaching*

practices and the various types of teaching methods out there. We talked about differentiated instruction. (Comment 105)

Ruth shares her thoughts about recognizing differences:

When we talk about cultural differences, we are not just looking at our aboriginal students. We have a number of Muslim kids in our school, and perhaps I'm not doing enough to meet their needs. I try to address everything other than ethnicity too, such as sexuality, or talent, their creative selves. Their musical talents could be considered a culture. I may miss a few things there, but overall, when it comes to the person, I think I have a good sense of each of my students in that way. (Comment 106)

Pierre describes his observations of how the staff at Rothman tried to affirm differences:

We continue to re-examine who our clientele are. We're very conscious of who they are, and what they bring to our school, so we adapt programs if necessary, and we adapt individually, if necessary. (Comment 107)

Joe provides an example of the type of teacher learning that can occur as a result of recognizing student differences:

Joe: *With respect to the way that teachers are looking at their relationship with the students here, I had an individual who applied for a department headship. We went through the process, and in his interview this applicant made the observation that he had changed since coming to the school. He had changed because at first he didn't understand why students here needed support. Now he gets it, and he understands that all of our students need support in his particular*

subject area. In fact, he now runs a noon hour open house for any kid who wants to stop by for help. This is a big change.

Researcher: *So what so you think made the change in him?*

Joe: *Living the experience here, and dialoguing with colleagues.* (Comment 108)

In total, 20 comments (Comments 89 – 108) regarding teachers' actions that allude to the influence of a multicultural view of education were noted. Figure 14 presents an overview of these comments, identifying the teacher who spoke each comment, the dialogic democracy implied in the comment, and the underlying view of multicultural education noted for each comment. In addition, each comment is linked to one of the three factors cited by authors such as Brown (2004), Noddings (1986), Rusch, (2005) and Shields (2004) as being relevant to the attainment of social justice.

Analysis of the 20 comments (Comments 89 - 108) that are interpreted in this study as indicative of a multicultural view of education reveals distribution of the comments among the four dialogic democracies to be as illustrated in Figure 15. This figure indicates that 45 percent of the comments deal with the democracy of emotions, 15 percent with the democracy of social space, and 20 percent with each of the democracy of systems and routines and the democracy of scale.

The democracy of emotions refers to dispositions displayed by the teachers concerning the student-teacher relationship. It focuses on actions designed to build this relationship, and to develop connections with students (Comments 94 and 95). Dialogue with students and parents is encouraged, as is the inclusion of students in decisions regarding their own learning. The definition of this dialogic democracy also encompasses the willingness of teachers to give of themselves to the students and the

Comment	Speaker	Dialogic Democracy	View of Multicultural Education	Factor Relevant to Attainment of Social Justice
89	Frank	Emotions	Empowerment	Centrality of
90	Ruth	"	"	Relationship
91	"	"	"	"
92	Pierre	"	Enlightenment	"
93	Joe	"	"	"
94	Louise	"	Empowerment	"
95	Pierre	"	"	"
96	Joe	"	"	"
97	Pierre	"	"	"
98	Frank	Social Space	"	Rational Discourse
99	Louise	"	"	"
100	"	"	Enlightenment	"
101	Pierre	Systems and	Empowerment	Transformative Learning
102	"	Routines	"	And Leadership
103	Louise	"	"	"
104	Pierre	"	"	"
105	Joe	Scale	Enlightenment	"
106	Ruth	"	"	All of the factors
107	Pierre	"	"	"
108	Joe	"	"	"
				"
Sub-total		Emotions 9 Social Space 3 Systems and Routines 4 Scale 4	Enlightenment 7 Empowerment 13	Centrality of Relationships 13 Rational Discourse 7 Trans. Learning and Leadership 8
Total	20	20	20	28 (some factors appear in multiple dialogic democracies)

Figure 14. Summary of Comments Regarding Teachers' Actions Reflective of Dialogic Democracies

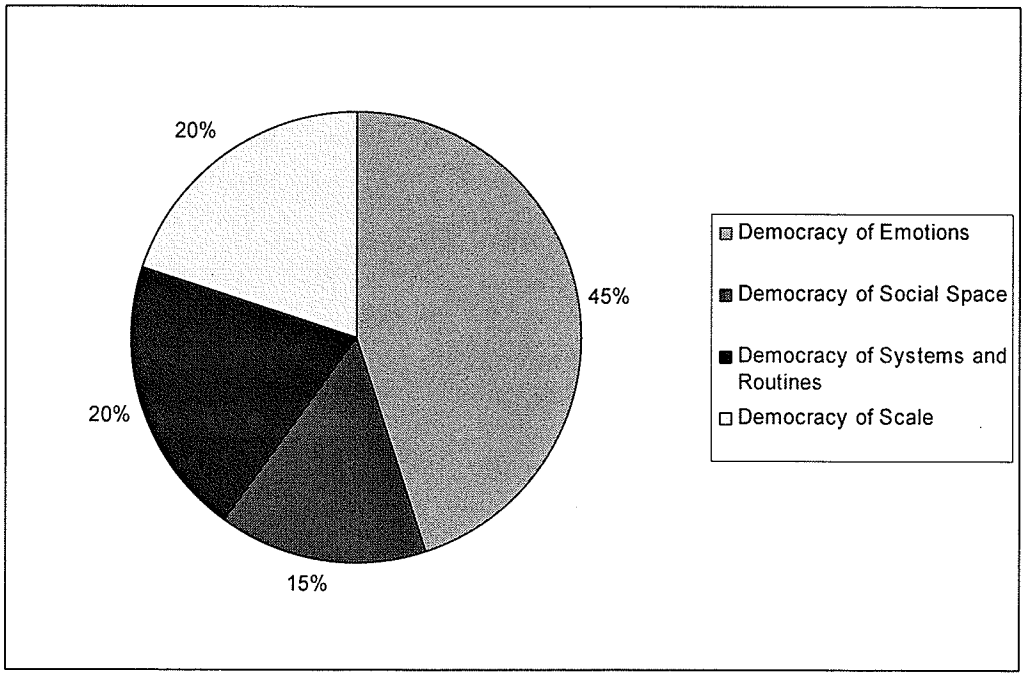

Figure 15. Circle Graph Showing the Percentage Distribution of Teacher Comments by Dialogic Democracies (n = 20)

school. The finding that 45 percent of the teachers' comments appear to concern the democracy of emotions may be explained by noting that the teacher dispositions attributed to this dialogic democracy are directly connected to the classroom. Perhaps more than any of the other dialogic democracies, this category reflects the essence of the teacher-student dynamic, and taps into the desire and passion of teachers to help students.

The democracy of social space appears to be implied in 15 percent of the teachers' comments. This category involves teacher dispositions regarding public dialogue, and the according of voice to individuals and groups. The democracy of social space encourages the building of understandings surrounding the effects of oppression and exploitation through awareness of people's struggles. This category represented the lowest portion of the teachers' comments. There are several possible explanations for this finding. Firstly, the according of personal and group voice to students is an area filled with conflict for teachers. While teachers may feel that students have a right to have their opinions heard (Comment 98), teachers may equate an increase in student voice with a decrease in their control of students' behaviour. Teachers may try to ease this tension between control and the according of voice by limiting the extent of student expression and organization to relatively unimportant areas of the school's functioning, such as food selections in the cafeteria, or the scheduling of school social events.

The second explanation for the low number of comments related to the democracy of social space relates to the interpretation of the comments that was presented in Figure 10 (see Chapter 6) that 69 percent of the teachers' comments revealed a monocultural perspective of education. This indicates that many of the teachers would likely

experience tension between their own monocultural views of education and dispositions consistent with the democracy of social space. Teaching a curriculum that promotes the discussion and awareness of minorities' struggles would be inconsistent with a monocultural view of education which maintains and promotes a Eurocentric view of the world.

The democracy of systems and routines, which is characterized by social reflexivity, responsiveness and devolved responsibility, is interpreted as being reflected in 20 percent of the teachers' comments. These comments include references to the involvement of teachers in the design and implementation of the school improvement initiatives at Rothman, such as the teacher advisory groups, the school-to-work program and the school literacy plan (Comments 103 and 104). The suggestion that one-fifth of the comments reflect the democracy of systems and routines may be interpreted as indicative of the high level of teacher involvement in leadership activities at the school (Comments 101 and 102). The teachers spoke positively about Joe's inclusive leadership style (Comments 8, 9, and 30). There appears to be a potential correlation between the leadership style practices by Joe Masterson and the level of teacher leadership at Rothman. The arrival of a new principal in the beginning of the next school year could increase or decrease the level of devolved responsibility at the school.

The final dialogic democracy, the democracy of scale, involves the presence of actions which affirm group differences, and foster multiple collectives and connections. Teachers are expected to view themselves as learners who incorporate their knowledge into pedagogy. Twenty percent of the comments about dialogic democracies appear to reflect characteristics consistent with the democracy of scale. Some of these comments

deal with strategies used at the school to affirm differences (Comments 105 and 106), while others illustrate the idea of teachers as learners whose teaching practices change as a result of their learning (Comment 107). Figure 16 provides a bar graph chart illustrating individual profiles of the participants' comments as they were interpreted in this study regarding the dialogic democracies. Joe's comments suggest the presence of the democracy of emotions and the democracy of scale. Ruth's comments allude to the presence of the democracy of emotions and the democracy of scale. Louise's comments suggest the presence of the democracy of emotions, the democracy of social space, and the democracy of systems and routines, while Frank's comments may be interpreted to show the presence of the democracy of emotions and the democracy of social space. Pierre's comments seem to indicate the presence of the democracy of emotions, the democracy of systems and routines, and the democracy of scale.

Influences on School Improvement Initiatives

The interpretations contained in this thesis regarding the descriptions of teachers' conceptions of social justice that were presented in Chapter 6 indicate the presence of both the distributive and the cultural paradigm of justice (see Chapter 6, Figure 11). Figure 6 (see Chapter 6) illustrated the suggestion that the distributive paradigm is reflected in monocultural views of education which utilize discourses of deficit, disadvantage, and Type 1 difference. In addition, Figure 6 suggested that while the discourses of deficit, disadvantage and Type 1 difference are also observable in the cultural paradigm of justice, discourses of Type 2 difference and Type 3 difference that promote the recognition of minority groups are congruent *only* with the cultural paradigm

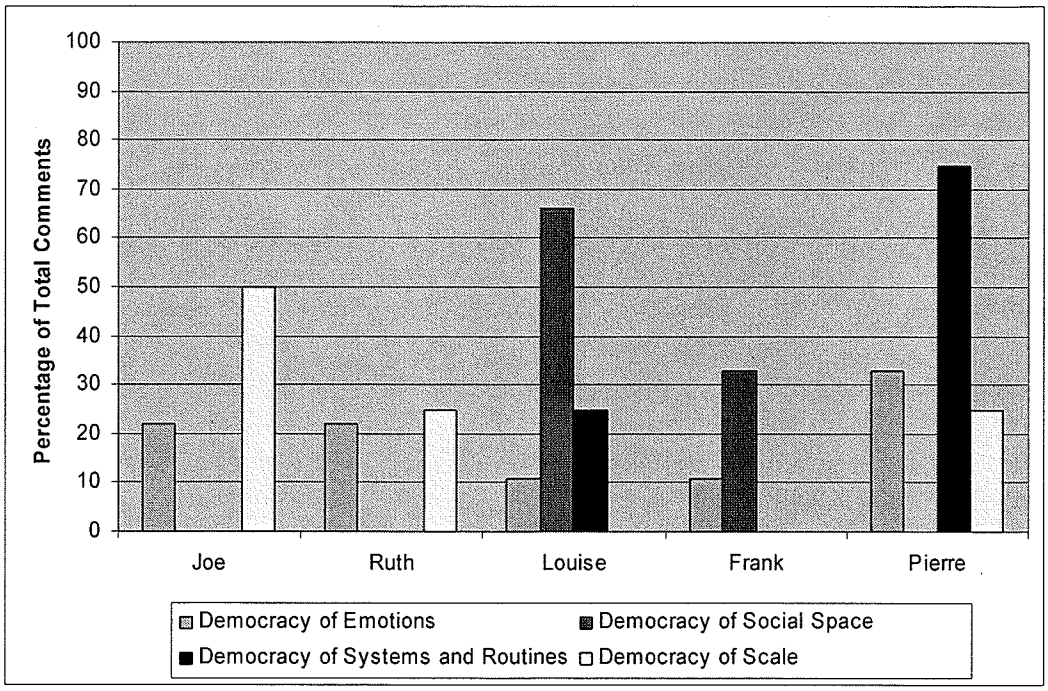

Figure 16. Bar Graph Showing the Percentage Distribution of Participant Comments by Dialogic Democracies (n = 20)

of justice. The potential implications of recognizing both the distributive and the cultural paradigm of justice are explored in this final section of Chapter 7, which examines the school improvement initiatives developed at Rothman High School between the years 1998 – 2005.

Chapter 5 included a summary of the school improvement initiatives at Rothman High School. These initiatives were designed to assist in the attainment of three school goals:

1. To build a school community that is interactive, responsive and accountable;
2. To improve the academic success of all students;
3. To prepare students for the school-to-work transition.

There were five initiatives designed to address the first goal of building an interactive, responsive and accountable school. The influence of both the distributive and the cultural paradigm seems evident in these initiatives. For example, the early efforts of the staff to improve the physical appearance of the building with new signs and fresh paint may be viewed as indicative of their desire to provide a clean, organized and pleasant environment for the students as a measure of compensation for home environments that the teachers perceived as disadvantaged. This could be interpreted as being consistent with a monocultural view of education based on a discourse of deficit and disadvantage.

The distributive paradigm also seems evident in the improvement initiative aimed at restructuring the Senior 1 orientation process for students. The teachers were concerned that too many students were arriving at Rothman lacking the necessary basic academic skills. In order to begin working with these students early in the autumn, staff

members began visiting the neighboring middle schools in the spring to obtain information about the students' skill levels. This could be interpreted as reflective of a discourse of deficit, since the teachers might use the information about students to form opinions about those they felt were capable, and those they felt were lacking in skills. On the other hand, if the teachers used the information they obtained in ways that enabled them to from stronger connections with the students, rather than to categorize and label students, the restructured Senior 1 orientation process could be seen as representative of the democracy of emotions.

The influence of the cultural paradigm of social justice upon the initiatives intended to address the school's first goal is evident in the efforts of the staff to expand the structure and function of the Student Council. These efforts are consistent with the intent of Gale and Densmore's (2000) democracy of social space, which places value on according groups their own voice through actions leading to self-organization, self-expression and self-development. Similarly, efforts to increase the involvement of the Parent Council in the school reflect the democracy of social space. Both of these initiatives are also representative of the democracy of scale. As indicated in Chapter 2, Gale and Densmore's four dialogic democracies act "...as principles to guide socially just practices in schools" (p. 144). The dialogic democracies represent a multicultural view of education (Fleras and Elliott, 2003) that is consistent with the cultural paradigm of social justice.

The establishment of Teacher Advisor Groups (TAGs) at Rothman is the final initiative that was designed to achieve the goal of building an interactive, responsive and accountable school. According to the teachers, the primary reason for the establishment

of TAGs was to create a stronger bond between the students and the school, by matching each student with the same TAG teacher for the entire four years of their high school experience at Rothman. This initiative appears consistent with Gale and Densmore's (2000) democracy of emotions, illustrating that the staff members recognized the importance of enhancing teacher-student relationships. It also seems reflective of the democracy of social space. The TAG initiative reveals the influence exerted by the presence of the cultural paradigm of justice in the teachers' conceptions of social justice.

The second goal at Rothman was to improve the academic success of all students. The influence of both the distributive and the cultural paradigms of social justice are evident in the seven initiatives designed to address this goal. The distributive paradigm may underlay the use of data collected at the school regarding attendance and student success. Although the rationale offered by the teachers for collecting and using this data suggested that it would be used to increase the teachers' knowledge of the students, and better their relationship with them, the collection of such data could have been influenced by the discourse of deficit and disadvantage. The results obtained from this type of data may have been used to guide decisions made by the staff regarding the tracking or streaming of students into special remedial programs, which are reflective of a distributive paradigm of justice.

Another initiative intended to improve the academic success of all students involved the restructuring of the Senior 1 program so that students were grouped and scheduled differently for their courses. Each Senior 1 class would receive all instruction on core academic courses from a team of two teachers, rather than traveling to a different teacher for each subject. This initiative may be interpreted as reflective of the democracy

of emotions (Gale and Densmore, (2000)), as it deals with the arena of student-teacher relations. The initiative was intended to strengthen the connection between students and the teachers, and thus seems to reflect the cultural paradigm of justice. However, the possibile influence of the distributive paradigm of justice is not precluded here, because decisions regarding how the students are selected for placement into classes could be guided by discourses of deficit and disadvantage.

Several of the initiatives designed to improve the academic success of all students focused on various in-service programs experienced by the teachers. One of these programs was intended to increase teachers' understandings of aboriginal students' culture. This initiative may be considered reflective of a Type 2 discourse of difference intended to describe various components of aboriginal culture. Other in-services dealt with building teachers' understanding of different instructional strategies, and more varied and authentic evaluation and assessment methodologies. These in-services may contribute to actions consistent with Gale and Densmore's (2000) democracy of systems and routines. Such actions involve a continuing commitment to rethinking and reworking accepted wisdom. The efforts of the teachers to re-think their usual practices of instruction and evaluation may be interpreted to constitute transformative learning (Brown, 2004), thereby altering their perceptions of student learning and achievement.

The third goal included in the improvement plan at Rothman High School was to prepare students for the school-to-work transition. The major initiative designed to address this goal is the multi-faceted School-to-Work program, which involved a series of activities at each grade level from Senior 1 to Senior 4. The intent of these activities was to increase the relevance of the students' school-based learning to their lives beyond

school. This intent seems reflective of the democracy of systems and routines, and may lead to transformative learning on the part of the students involved, as they are encouraged to create links between their personal lives, the school, and their futures as responsible citizens. Used in this manner, the school-to-work program could be considered to demonstrate the influence of the cultural paradigm of justice. However, if the school-to-work program is employed as a strategy to prepare students deemed by the school as unlikely or unable to pursue post-secondary training, it is more consistent with the distributive paradigm of justice and the discourses of deficit and disadvantage.

Figure 17 illustrates one possible interpretation of the influence of teachers' conceptions of social justice upon the school improvement initiatives at Rothman High School. This figure illustrates the proposition referred to in the preceding paragraph which proposes that the influences of both the distributive and cultural paradigms of justice may be observed in some of the improvement initiatives. The figure presents an overview of the influence of the teachers' conceptions of social justice on the school improvement initiatives at Rothman. Each of the three school goals are listed, accompanied by a description of the initiatives specific to each goal. The discourse of student achievement or the dialogic democracy suggested in each initiative is noted, as is the social justice paradigm in which it is based. For the initiatives that appeared to be based in the cultural paradigm, links to the appropriate factor relevant to the attainment of social justice are indicated. No links are indicated for initiatives based in the distributive paradigm, because the factors are not distributive in nature.

This chapter described the manner in which the teachers' conceptions of social justice influenced their decisions to first become involved in the school improvement

initiatives at Rothman High School, as well as the actual design and implementation of the various school improvement initiatives at Rothman High School. The chapter also explored the influence of the teachers' conceptions of social justice on their actions within the school and their classrooms.

School Improvement Goal	Improvement Initiative	Discourse of Student Achievement / Dialogic Democracy	Factor Relevant to Attainment of Social Justice	Social Justice Paradigm
Goal 1: To build a school community that is interactive, responsive and accountable.	Physical improvements to the building (painting and signage).	Discourse of deficit and disadvantage	Not Relevant	Distributive
	Expanded Student Council structures and functions.	Democracy of Social Space Democracy of Scale	Rational Discourse	Cultural
	Enhanced Parent Council involvement.	Democracy of Social Space Democracy of Scale	Rational Discourse	Cultural
	Teacher Advisory Groups.	Democracy of Emotions Democracy of Social Space	Centrality of Relationships	Cultural
	Restructured Senior 1 orientation process.	Discourse of deficit and disadvantage	Not Relevant	Distributive
		Democracy of Emotions	Centrality of Relationships	Cultural
Goal 2: To improve the academic success of all students.	Restructuring the Senior 1 program.	Democracy of Emotions	Centrality of Relationships	Cultural
	Use of common strategies.	Democracy of Systems and Routines	Transformative Learning	Cultural

Goal 2 (continued)	Use of data about attendance and student success rates.	Deficit and Disadvantage	Not Relevant	Distributive
		Democracy of Emotions	Centrality of Relationships	Cultural
	Understanding aboriginal cultural differences	Discourse of Type 2 difference	Centrality of Relationships	Cultural
	Understanding of differentiated instructional strategies	Discourse of deficit and disadvantage	Not Relevant	Distributive
		Democracy of Systems and Routines	Transformative Learning	Cultural
	Understanding of evaluation and assessment methods	Discourse of deficit and disadvantage	Not Relevant	Distributive
		Democracy of Systems and Routines	Transformative Learning	Cultural
	Developing a literacy plan	Discourse of deficit and disadvantage	Not Relevant	Distributive
		Democracy of Systems and Routines	Transformative Learning	Cultural
Goal 3: To prepare students for the school-to-work transition	The school-to-work program	Discourse of deficit and disadvantage	Not Relevant	Distributive
		Democracy of Systems and Routines	Transformative Learning	Cultural

Figure 17. Influence of Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice on School Improvement Initiatives at Rothman High School

CHAPTER EIGHT

Addressing Distributive and Cultural Injustices

The fourth research question driving this study explores how the school improvement initiatives implemented at Rothman High School address distributive and cultural injustices. This chapter suggests a possible response to the research question by examining each of the improvement initiatives implemented at Rothman according to a model outlining several possible remedies for social injustice suggested by Fraser (1997).

Affirmative Versus Transformative Remedies

In discussing possible remedies for injustice, Fraser (1997) distinguishes between strategies which are *affirmative* in nature, and those that are *transformative*. She describes affirmative solutions as those that are aimed at correcting the inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing their underlying generative framework. Transformative solutions are aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes by restructuring their underlying framework. She emphasizes that "The crux of the contrast is end-state outcomes versus the processes that produce them" (p. 23).

Fraser (1997) suggests a model which outlines four categories of possible responses to social injustice. This model includes both the distributive and the cultural paradigms of justice, and incorporates affirmative and transformative strategies. Her model is designed as a four-celled matrix (see Table 8), and serves as a framework for the adapted matrix presented in Table 9. This adapted matrix is based on Fraser's model, and

is intended to provide a tool for examining how the improvement initiatives at Rothman addressed distributive and cultural injustice.

In Table 9, the horizontal axis comprises the two types of remedies described by Fraser (1997), affirmation and transformation. The vertical axis includes remedies for the

Table 8

Fraser's Matrix of Remedies to Social Injustice (1997, p. 27)

	Affirmation	Transformation
Redistribution	*The Liberal Welfare State* surface reallocations of existing goods to existing groups; supports group Differentiation; can generate misrecognition	*Socialism* deep restructuring of relations of production; blurs group differentiation; can help remedy some forms of misrecognition
Recognition	*Mainstream Multiculturalism* surface reallocations of respect to existing identities of existing groups; supports group differentiations	*Deconstruction* deep restructuring of relations of recognition; destabilizes group differentiation

Table 9

Matrix of Remedies for Social Injustices in Education (adapted from Fraser, 1997, p. 27)

	Affirmation	Transformation
Redistribution	Surface reallocations of resources to individuals or groups; inequitable distribution of resource control	Deep restructuring of resource allocation; equitable distribution of resource control
Recognition	Surface reallocations of respect to existing identities of existing groups; supports group differentiations	Deep restructuring of relations of recognition; destabilizes group differentiation

aspects of injustice that correspond to the distributive and cultural paradigms of justice. The matrix suggests that distributive injustices are addressed through strategies involving redistribution, and cultural injustices are addressed by strategies that deal with recognition. The four cells of the matrix locate particular orientations towards strategies designed to address injustices. This matrix offers an approach for examining how the school improvement initiatives designed and implemented at Rothman High School addressed distributive and cultural injustices.

In Table 9, the cell on the matrix describing the remedy of *affirmative redistribution* refers to actions that attempt to achieve distributive justice without disturbing the underlying generative framework of the system that contributes to the creation of inequitable arrangements in the first place. This might include strategies designed to address perceived deficits and disadvantages of students, and could involve actions motivated by a desire to compensate for these deficiencies such as the streaming of students who are encountering academic difficulties into special programs.

Actions involving *transformative redistribution* are aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes by restructuring the underlying generative framework of the system. An example of an action that could be interpreted as consistent with this remedy to injustice involves the reallocation of funding control for schools located on First Nations reserve land from the Federal government to local aboriginal Education Authorities.

Affirmative recognition, as described in Table 9, involves actions that result in the superficial reallocation of respect and recognition for the identity of existing groups. Actions consistent with this remedy for social injustice might possibly include activities designed to enrich students' experiences with minority groups by celebrating the foods, holidays and heroes of other cultures. Such actions may be considered affirmative in nature because they support existing group differentiation, but do not encourage or direct the students to examine the underlying reasons for the inequalities that may exist.

Table 9 indicates that *transformative recognition* involves actions which facilitate the deep restructuring of the relations of recognition. This type of deconstruction forces the re-examination of the underlying cultural-valuational structure of schools, and leads

to the destabilization of existing group identities and differentiations. The de-segregation of schools in the United States in the 1960s could be considered as providing an example of transformative recognition.

Addressing Injustices at Rothman High School

Chapter 6 offered the preliminary suggestion that some injustices perceived to exist at Rothman High School might be attributable to the dominance of a monocultural view of education within the teachers' conceptions of social justice. A monocultural view of education facilitates the cultural indoctrination and social control of minority students (Fleras and Elliott, 2003; Hatcher, 1998; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997). It is characterized by the dominance of the discourses of deficit, disadvantage and Type 1 difference and is considered to facilitate an assimilationist dynamic. Examples of potential injustices observed at Rothman include the assimilationist beliefs held by the teachers which equate student success with the adoption of mainstream values. Although motivated by good intentions, these beliefs ignore the effects of the loss of culture on the identity of the students. The Learning Centre that was used at Rothman in an attempt to assist students encountering academic or behavioural difficulties resulted in students being streamed, and could be considered as illustrative of the dominance of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage.

Figure 18 presents a summary of the school improvement initiatives at Rothman, and based on the very preliminary categorizations described in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, situates each of the initiatives within the matrix illustrated in Table 9. In Figure 18, each of the school improvement initiatives is categorized as a remedy to social injustice that

may be representative of affirmative redistribution, affirmative recognition, transformative redistribution, or transformative recognition. Some of the initiatives are categorized as representing remedies that fit in two or more categories on the matrix. This occurs because the determination of whether an initiative embodies a particular category of remedy is dependent upon the actions of the teachers. For example, the initiative to send staff members to in-services to provide them with increased understanding of evaluation and assessment methodologies may be categorized as embodying either affirmative redistribution or transformative redistribution. If the teachers improve their understanding of assessment and evaluation methodologies but continue to assess students according to discourses of deficit and disadvantage, this represents affirmative redistribution. However, if the teachers use their new understandings to challenge and change practices that inappropriately label students as deficient or disadvantaged academically, this would indicate transformative redistribution.

Figure 19 illustrates one possible interpretation of how the improvement initiatives implemented at Rothman High School attempt to address distributive and cultural injustices at the school. The interpretation illustrated in Figure 19 is guided by the content analysis of the 108 comments as described in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Based on the analysis of this limited data set, Figure 19 indicates that 100 percent of the improvement initiatives attempted at Rothman were affirmative in nature. Actions involving strategies of affirmative redistribution appeared in 40 percent of the initiatives, while 60 percent of the initiatives involved strategies consistent with affirmative

recognition. No evidence of transformative redistribution or transformative recognition was suggested in any of the school improvement initiatives.

School Improvement Goal	Improvement Initiative	Remedy to Social Injustice
Goal 1: To build a school community that is interactive, responsive and accountable.	Physical improvements to the building (painting and signage).	Affirmative Redistribution
	Expanded Student Council structures and functions.	Affirmative Recognition
	Enhanced Parent Council involvement.	Affirmative Recognition
	Teacher Advisory Groups.	Affirmative Recognition
	Restructured Senior 1 orientation process.	Affirmative Recognition
Goal 2: To improve the academic success of all students.	Restructuring the Senior 1 program.	Affirmative Recognition Affirmative Redistribution
	Use of common strategies.	Affirmative Recognition Affirmative Redistribution
	Use of data about attendance and student success rates.	Affirmative Redistribution Affirmative Recognition
	Understanding aboriginal cultural differences	Affirmative Recognition
	Understanding of differentiated instructional strategies	Affirmative Recognition Affirmative Redistribution

Goal 2 (Continued)	Understanding of evaluation and assessment methods	Affirmative Recognition Affirmative Redistribution
	Developing a literacy plan	Affirmative Recognition Affirmative Redistribution
Goal 3: To prepare students for the school-to-work transition	The school-to-work program	Affirmative Redistribution Affirmative Recognition

Figure 18. Categorization of Rothman High School Improvement Initiatives by Remedies for Social Injustice in Education

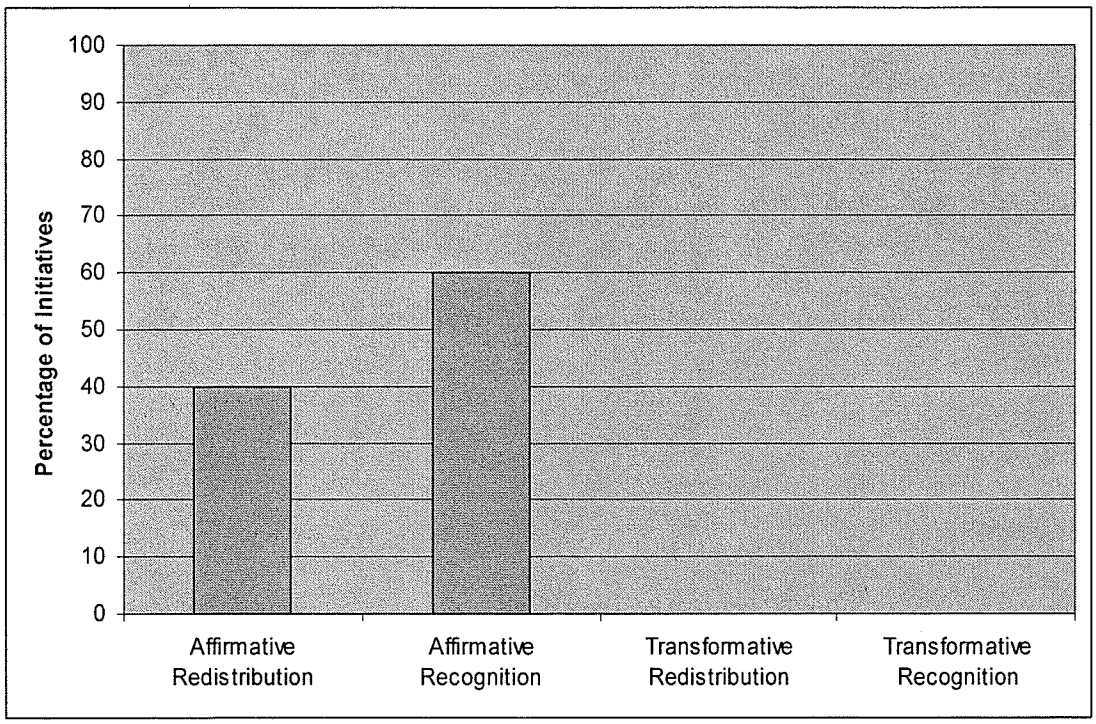

Figure 19. Bar Graph Showing the Percentage Distribution of Rothman High School Improvement Initiatives by Fraser's (1997) Matrix of Remedies for Social Injustice (n = 20)

What is the explanation for the apparent dearth of transformative remedies in Rothman's improvement initiatives? A possible answer to this question may be provided by referring once again to the interpretation of the teachers' conceptions of social justice described earlier in this study.

The analysis of the participants' comments regarding their conceptions of social justice, and how these conceptions were viewed as possibly influencing the design and implementation of the improvement initiatives at Rothman High School reveals the dominance of the monocultural view of education and the discourses of deficit and disadvantage (see Chapter 6, Figure 9). As pointed out by several authors (Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson and Zine, 2000; Fleras and Elliott, 2003; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997), the monocultural view of education facilitates the cultural indoctrination and social control of minority students. Through the linking of "...power with culture, schooling and education have evolved into a site for the reproduction of social inequality by denying equal opportunity and fostering outcomes at odds with certain minority students" (Fleras and Elliott, p. 335). Monocultural views of education are considered to promote an assimilationist dynamic that compromises the dismantling of discriminatory structures, resulting in reforms which re-affirm the status quo. Change initiatives therefore tend to be quite superficial.

The teachers' conceptions of social justice were interpreted as also reflecting aspects of a multicultural view of education. Strategies considered to be consistent with this view include actions for enrichment, enlightenment and empowerment. Actions for enrichment are widely accepted because they are non-threatening to the status quo. A celebration of diversity within the dominant culture has been shown to increase tolerance

and promote more harmonious relations (Fleras and Elliott, 2003), but ignores more substantive issues of equality. Enrichment strategies, such as the in-services held at Rothman to increase the teachers' understanding of aboriginal cultural differences, may thus be viewed as being affirmative in nature.

Actions reflecting the enlightenment view of education are described by Fleras and Elliott (2003) as involving the analysis and examination of structures that position societal groups as unequal. This perspective approaches diversity "...not as a 'thing' but as a relationship, both hierarchical and unequal" (Fleras and Elliott, 2003, p. 336). The enlightenment perspective is a necessary prerequisite to actions designed to empower minorities. When analyzed according to the matrix presented in Table 9, actions for enlightenment may be categorized as representative of either affirmative recognition or transformative recognition. The actions resulting from the improvement initiatives at Rothman seemed to result in the superficial reallocation of respect and recognition for groups already in existence, such as the Student Council and the Parent Council. There appeared little evidence of dialogue at Rothman that probed issues of equity and social justice overtly or deeply. As a result, it was suggested that the teachers and students did not explore how power shaped consciousness and meaning in society. The Parent Council members were included in more school activities, but no actions were taken to probe ways to provide access and voice for those parents for whom the formal Parent Council structure was inappropriate or intimidating.

The empowerment view of education has "... the potential to shift the very foundations of both education and society by transferring diversity to the center of the agenda" (Fleras and Elliott, p. 339). The empowerment view of education facilitates

actions designed to restructure the relations of recognition, and it is these types of actions that form the basis of transformative recognition. Transformative recognition requires the deconstruction of existing structures. The improvement initiatives at Rothman did not appear to attempt deconstruction at a deep level. All of the changes seemed to operate within the existing familiar parameters of the education system. The lack of efforts to change these structures is not surprising, considering the suggested dominance of the monocultural view of education in the teachers' conceptions of social justice. The existing structure of the system fits with the teachers' own views of education. It is the system they experienced as children, and in their opinion, appears to be working. Explanations regarding the lack of success for some students may found in the teachers' comments that were interpreted as invoking the discourses of deficit and disadvantage, which in turn suggest that the marginalization or domination of students was not perceived as a problem by the teachers.

CHAPTER NINE

Summary, Reflections and Implications

The research described in this case study examined the conceptions of social justice held by the principal and teachers at one school, and the impact of these conceptions upon the design and implementation of the school's improvement initiatives. Social justice was defined in this study as referring to the principles and norms of social organization at Rothman High School which reflect the school's responsibility to create structures that protect the dignity of individuals, and provide equal consideration to all people according to their needs, talents and choices. Using case study methodology, the research attempted to answer the questions:

1. How do teachers conceive of social justice as it relates to their students?
2. How do these conceptions influence the teachers' practices and the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives?
3. What are the school improvement initiatives designed and implemented by the teachers?
4. How do these initiatives attempt to address distributive and cultural injustices?

This final chapter will provide a summary of what was attempted in the research, what has been learned, and what new questions have been raised.

Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice: Summary and Reflection

The review of the literature presented in Chapter 2 provided descriptions of several factors considered in this study to exert influence upon the formation of teachers' conceptions of social justice. These factors include the monocultural and multicultural perspectives of education, particular discourses regarding student achievement, and the distributive and cultural paradigms of social justice. In order to develop an understanding of how teachers conceived of social justice, 108 segments of textual data (*comments*) were studied. These comments were selected from written transcripts of a focus group discussion and ten individual interviews conducted with five participants at one school, or were excerpted from various school documents such as annual school plans or meeting minutes.

Examination of 39 comments which contained references to how the participants conceived of social justice suggested a dominance of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage. There were also some comments which indicated the presence of the Type 1 discourse of difference. These discourses are all congruent with a monocultural perspective of education, which suggests that the teachers may have been influenced by this view. Analysis of the interpretation of the comments presented in this study regarding teachers' conceptions of social justice indicates that 69 percent seemed to reflect a monocultural view of education.

Analysis of the participants' comments related to their conceptions of social justice also suggested the presence of the discourses of Type 2 and 3 differences, although these discourses comprised only 31 percent of the comments. The multicultural perspectives of enrichment, enlightenment and empowerment were all viewed as being

represented within the comments reflective of Type 2 and 3 discourses of student achievement.

As interpreted in this study, the teachers' comments seemed to indicate that their conceptions of social justice contained aspects of both the distributive and the cultural paradigm of justice. The distributive paradigm appeared evident in 33 percent of their comments. In these comments, the participants spoke of issues related to the educational rights, needs, and desert of the students, all of which are congruent with a monocultural view of education. The cultural paradigm appeared to be reflected in 67 percent of the comments. These comments focused on issues of marginalization and domination, which are congruent with a monocultural view of education. The comments deemed reflective of the cultural paradigm also included issues involving recognition, which is congruent with a multicultural education perspective. The tentative observation that *none* of the comments reflective of Type 2 and 3 discourses of student achievement (enrichment, enlightenment and empowerment) are congruent with a distributive paradigm of justice lends support to the proposition that a definition of social justice must involve a broader conception than the fair distribution of goods and resources. The cultural paradigm of justice must be included so that the Type 2 and 3 discourses of difference and the multicultural perspective of education can be represented in the definition of social justice.

The perceived dominance of the monocultural perspective in the comments of the teachers regarding social justice may be partially explained by the fact that all participants in the study were members of society's dominant white sector. Actually, this was the case for nearly the entire staff at Rothman. The only non-white adults in the

building were two instructional assistants working with students who had obvious special needs. As pointed out by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) and Shields (2004), membership in society's dominant middle class tends to lead to acceptance of monoculturalism as the unquestioned standard. Structural aspects of race, class and gender oppression are frequently ignored in an unspoken agreement designed to eliminate potential causes of conflict and divisiveness (Hatcher, 1998). This desire for consensus supports the creation of a common culture, and suppresses questions about its political shortcomings and democratic failures. The result is a blind, almost unconscious acceptance of the superiority of Western culture.

Several authors argue that the origins of many aspects of education can be attributed to monoculturalism. For example, Osborne (2001) points out that historically, one of the main purposes of schooling was to transmit a common, Eurocentrically based set of values to all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, in the interests of nation-building. Rowan and Miskel (1999) refer to the traditional structure of education as "the grammar of schooling" (p. 368), which they describe as including the deeply embedded professional norms, regulatory systems and approved practices that direct school systems. The extreme resistance to change demonstrated by these norms, systems and practices accounts for the persistent presence of the monocultural view within education today (Shields, 2004). As Shields notes, in order to ensure social justice, educators must first recognize how norms, systems and practices restrict equity and justice, and then find ways to overcome these restraints.

The teachers interviewed for this study did not seem to convey an awareness of their own privileged status as members of the dominant class, nor did they appear to

recognize the ways in which this status benefited them. Shields (2004) describes the significance of this lack of awareness and recognition:

> ...we pathologize class differences by remaining silent about them as we perpetuate the implicit knowledge that certain lived experiences are more normal and hence more acceptable than others. It is well documented that the large majority of educators in developed countries come from what may be loosely called the middle class and, hence, may find it difficult to understand, communicate with, or develop meaningful relationships with students from working class families, children whose families receive social assistance, or those who live in other impoverished situations. The insidious part of this is that without even being aware of it, educators often make decisions about students' ability, programs, and suitable career paths based on class. (p. 120)

Although the participants were asked during their interviews if they saw any ways in which students were marginalized by the school, none of the participants appeared to connect their status as members of the dominant class to the possible marginalization of students. Perhaps the inclusion of interview questions structured to focus more directly on the issue of marginalization would have elicited different responses. This is an area that warrants further investigation in future studies concerning student marginalization.

The Type 1 discourse of difference supports the belief that all people share a natural equality based on their common humanity (Fleras and Elliott, 2003). The adoption of a philosophy of colour-blindness which attempts to treat everyone the same regardless of their race, religious background, gender, class or ethnicity was alluded to by Pierre (Comment 75). However, as pointed out by several authors (Kincheloe and

Steinberg, 1997; Shields, 2004; Troyna and Carrington, 1990), this focus on similarity obscures the ways cultural factors structure experiences for both those who are privileged members of society, and those who are not. When viewed through the lens of monoculturalism, diversity is considered an interesting and somewhat enriching layer that is applied over the surface of universal sameness. Awareness or acknowledgement of the dominance of Eurocentric culture as the reason for this sameness is uncommon. As a result, assimilation to the Eurocentric standard is viewed as the accepted norm. Pierre's metaphor of students as sponges, able to absorb as much as they are given and go as far as they wish could be interpreted as illustrative of this minimalist recognition of diversity.

Frank and Pierre made comments that seemed to express the monocultural belief that newcomers to Canada would be well served by quick assimilation into mainstream society (see Comments 73, 74 and 75). They appeared to imply that immigrant students who rapidly adapted to their new culture and achieved academic success would manage well, and they did not appear to recognize or acknowledge the toll on individuals of the cultural loss that could accompany this adaptation.

The Influence of Teachers' Conceptions of Social Justice: Summary and Reflection

Chapter 7 suggested how the conceptions of social justice held by the participants may have affected the design and implementation of the school improvement initiatives at Rothman High School. Possible evidence of this influence was noted in the comments of the teachers as they described their reasons for first becoming involved in the improvement initiatives. Several of the teachers indicated that they became involved in order to assist students whom they deemed lacking academic skills, or to be

disadvantaged socially or economically. These reasons could be viewed as reflective of the discourses of deficit and disadvantage, and would therefore be consistent with a monocultural view of education. Another reason described in the study for teachers' initial engagement in the improvement activities at the school involved a desire to build better connections with students. This reason was interpreted as indicative of the dialogic democracy of emotions, and is consistent with the cultural paradigm of justice. A third reason provided by the teachers for their involvement in the improvement initiatives was that they wanted to experience the opportunities these initiatives offered for developing their personal leadership capacities. This reason is also consistent with the cultural paradigm of justice. Further investigation into the reasons for teachers becoming involved in school improvement initiatives would be required in order to determine with more certainty the degree of influence of particular discourses of student achievement and dialogic democracies.

Another area deserving of further study concerns the influence of the teachers' conceptions of social justice in the actual improvement initiatives that were designed and implemented at the school. These initiatives were designed to address three school goals. The first goal focused on building a school community at Rothman that was interactive, responsive and accountable. The school improvement initiatives that were designed and implemented to address this goal included (a) physical improvements to the building such as painting and new signage in the halls, (b) expanded Student Council structures and functions, (c) enhanced Parent Council involvement, (d) the establishment and continued improvement of a teacher advisory system for all students, and (e) a restructuring of the Senior 1 orientation process.

The second goal was intended to improve the academic success of all students. The school improvement initiatives that were designed and implemented to enhance this goal included (a) restructuring the Senior 1 program, (b) development of common teacher strategies for dealing with student lates, absences and incomplete homework, (c) data collection and analysis regarding student attendance and failure rates, (d) developing a deeper understanding of aboriginal cultural differences, (e) developing an increased understanding of differentiated instructional strategies, (f) developing an increased understanding of evaluation and assessment methodologies, and (g) developing a literacy plan for the school.

The third goal included in Rothman High School's improvement plan was to prepare students for the school-to-work transition. The School-to-Work program was the major initiative that was designed and implemented to attain this goal. It contained components such as Employability Skills Portfolios, Job Shadowing, Career Cruising, and the Take our Kids to Work program.

Chapter 7 included an interpretation of how each of the initiatives that were planned to address the three goals of the school may have been influenced by the teachers' conceptions of social justice. The framework that was used to structure this interpretation utilized the four dialogic democracies developed by Gale and Densmore (2000), and also referred to three factors deemed relevant to the attainment of social justice by authors such as Brown (2004), Noddings (1986), Rusch (2005), and Shields (2004).

The analysis of the participants' comments related to their multicultural view of education that was attempted in this study indicated the presence of all four of the

dialogic democracies described by Gale and Densmore (2000). Gale and Densmore maintain that these dialogic democracies serve as indicators which can be used to assess the presence of social justice in schools. The comments of the participants seemed to suggest that the participants possessed some understanding of the importance of engaging in rational discourse, promoting transformative learning/leadership, and developing interpersonal relationships. This preliminary interpretation may contribute to a validation of the assertions of authors such as Brown (2004), Popkewitz (1999), Rusch (2005), Sirotnik and Kimball (1996), and Shields (2004) that the reformation of education policies and practices to increase equity and social justice is dependent upon the presence of actions such as these.

Descriptions offered by the participants of practices in which their actions appeared consistent with the *democracy of emotions* included (a) their continuing dialogue with students and parents; (b) their gathering of information about the students' academic and social skills and aptitudes, home situations, and future plans; and (c) their willingness to give of themselves; and (d) their efforts to increase the students' self-awareness. The teachers seemed to understand the importance of establishing personal relationships with each of the students, and they showed some evidence of involving the students in decisions regarding the curriculum to be learned.

Some of the school improvement initiatives at Rothman could be interpreted as facilitating the implementation of these actions. Teacher Advisor Groups were implemented to create better personal connections with students, and to facilitate ongoing dialogue between students and the staff members. The exit interviews conducted as part of the School-to-Work program prior to graduation with each Senior 4 student were

intended to provide opportunities for the students to showcase their high school accomplishments as presented in their portfolios, and thereby increase their own sense of self.

Although these examples are consistent with the democracy of emotions and suggest that the teachers were aware of the centrality of relationships in creating an effective learning environment, the influences of a monocultural view of education also seem evident. The teachers adhered closely to the curricula provided by Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, which is heavily reflective of mainstream societal values. The teachers' descriptions of students may have been coloured by the underlying discourses of deficit, disadvantage and Level 1 differences, which in turn would affect the students' views of themselves as social beings.

One of the strongest potential indicators of the presence of the *democracy of social space* at Rothman is contained in descriptions provided by the participants pertaining to the development of the practice of rational discourse. During the interviews with the teachers, a picture emerged of conversations that had occurred amongst staff members that contributed to deeper levels of understanding about student learning and assessment, the purposes of schooling, and student needs. An increase in the use of rational discourse at the school appeared to have coincided with the arrival of Joe Masterson as the new principal in 1996, and grew over the ensuing years as the staff became familiar with this type of dialogic process.

The internal committee structure established at the school under Joe's leadership may be interpreted as directly facilitating dialogic processes. The fact that the number of school committees changed over the years can be viewed as an indication of the

responsiveness of the school to the dialogue that was taking place. The data collection strategies used by the teachers at Rothman to gather information about staff, student and parental opinions is also indicative of rational discourse. The school improvement initiatives designed and implemented at Rothman emerged from conversations by staff members concerning student needs. The Teacher Advisor structure was described by the teachers as having been implemented to create a mechanism for engaging in dialogue with students, and to permit the expression of student opinions.

Although evidence emerged from the data regarding the existence of dialogic processes at Rothman, the dialogue that occurred did not probe issues of equity and social justice overtly or deeply. There appeared to have been very few discussions examining the marginalization or domination of minority groups. One of the criteria for the democracy of social space described by Gale and Densmore (2000) involves the inclusion of curricula dealing with people's struggles and achievements in order to develop an understanding of oppression. The teachers' comments provided little evidence of this occurring in the classrooms at Rothman. Discussions tended to take the form of historical accounts of groups that did not probe the origins of inequalities or injustices, or of actions designed to address them. As a result, students did not explore how power shaped consciousness and meaning in society.

The *democracy of systems and routines* described by Gale and Densmore (2000) centers on concepts such as devolved responsibility and social reflexivity which challenge bureaucratic administrative practices and excessive standardization procedures. The key to accomplishing these goals, according to Brown (2004) involves transformative learning and transformative leaders. As defined by Brown, transformative

learning is "... a process of critical self-reflection that can be stimulated by people, events, or changes in a context that challenges the learner's basic assumptions of the world" (p. 87). Transformative learning is enhanced by rational discourse and "...leads to some kind of action" (Brown, p. 97). It is this link between personal beliefs and public behaviours that characterizes transformative leadership. Transformative leaders will work to create school communities that attempt to change structures, practices and policies that perpetuate inequities.

The strongest indicator of the presence of the democracy of systems and routines at Rothman could be the entire school improvement process itself, if the initiatives which addressed the three goals of Rothman's improvement plan are viewed as having developed as a product of the transformative learning of the staff members. As the teachers developed understandings regarding the students and their needs, they may have been compelled to take action. These actions may have been shaped by practices involving rational discourse, self-reflection, and shared leadership.

Brown (2004) characterizes transformative learning as being driven by critical inquiry and self-reflection. She describes critical inquiry as involving "...the conscious consideration of the moral and ethical implications and consequences of schooling practices on students", and self-reflection as "...the dimension of deep examination of personal assumptions, values and beliefs" (p. 89). Although the participants in the study appeared to demonstrate some transformative learning regarding the students and their needs, this learning seems to have been restricted by the influence of the monocultural view of education.

The *democracy of scale* requires reliance on the three previous democracies in order to democratize community life through heterogeneous collectivity in common undertakings (Gale and Densmore, 2000). Such a process requires striking a tenuous balance between affirming individual and group differences and building solidarity.

At Rothman, the presence of democracy of scale was suggested by the efforts of staff members to create a school culture that was open, welcoming, safe, and accepting. The school tried to accommodate individual and group differences while still building a sense of community. The school implemented the TAG system to increase the connection felt by students to the larger school community. The 2004-2005 Rothman School Plan described the success of these initiatives at the school by referring to the results of data collected through surveys and focus groups conducted in the spring of 2003, October 2004, and April 2004 (see Appendices E, F, and G). The data revealed that 92 percent of the students felt safe at the school, which was an increase from 56 percent of the students who were surveyed in May 2002.

Community spirit was evident in the signs and posters mounted in the halls and classrooms, and various announcements and newsletters that promoted Rothman events. Comments contained in the interview data revealed a sense among teachers that Rothman provided a unique, challenging and rewarding place to work. The teachers expressed a strong sense of camaraderie.

A critical factor in the democratization of community life involves the sustainability of reforms. If efforts are made to reduce inequities and injustice, but the changes do not last, democracy of scale is not achieved. Datnow (2005) attributes the sustainability of change to a particular set of structural, procedural and cultural conditions

that must occur as part of a multilevel process. Rusch (2005) agrees, adding that the success of school change efforts may be attributed to learning that occurs within the organization. She maintains that organizational learning is supported by "...coherent infrastructures, increased interdependence among principals and teachers, and better communication networks between system level administrators and principals" as well as "...a historical culture of cooperation and trust between all levels of the system..." (p.86).

The principal and teachers at Rothman expressed the belief that the changes they had made at the school would be sustained because they were embedded in the programs and structure of the school. This perspective is consistent with Datnow's (2005) definition of sustainability, in which something becomes an established practice once it loses its status as a special project. During Joe's tenure as principal, some of the conditions required for organizational learning as described by Rusch (2005) appeared to have been nurtured. The school's committee structure provided a coherent infrastructure, interdependence between Joe and the teachers existed, and a culture of cooperation and trust developed within the school. As well, the environment within the school division as a whole was supportive of the types of changes that occurred at Rothman. Pierre Peloquin indicated that the changes planned at the school were harmonized with goals communicated by the school division and the province. Datnow points out the importance of this in light of research which found that schools were able to sustain reform when there was political support, an alignment of the reform design with external conditions, and stable leadership.

The continued existence of conditions supportive to organizational learning at Rothman appeared tenuous. The school's ability to sustain the changes resulting from the school improvement initiatives was highly dependent upon a number of factors outside the direct control of the teachers. Administrative changes, such as those set to occur at the start of the coming school year as the result of Joe's retirement offered the potential for dramatic shifts in the direction and culture of the school. Changes in priorities, values and procedures at the divisional or the provincial level could also affect the school, as would changes to the school's staff of teachers.

A critical aspect of developing democracy of scale involves working with individuals and groups outside the immediate physical and political surroundings of the school. Changes implemented at a school require support from external structures, organizations, individuals and groups (Rusch, 2005). Although initially the improvement initiatives which were underway were based within Rothman, and were not part of a divisional effort at school reform, in later years this changed. As the requirement for schools to develop school plans, which was mandated in the *New Directions* (1995a) document by the Manitoba government came into effect, the division began to adopt a broader approach to its own planning. This was observed in the divisional in-services provided regarding assessment and evaluation, which dovetailed with the initiative at Rothman. The teachers at the school also referred to the requirement placed upon them by the division that the goals of school's plan reflect the divisional goals, as well as those of the province. Although initially the school may have been an *island of improvement* (Hargreaves, Earl & Ryan, 1996) in the midst of its community, this changed over time. Thus the school was not as much at risk from potentially disruptive or constraining forces

that would affect its ability to enable teachers and students to work towards a broader embodiment of the principles of social justice.

Implications of the Study

The research described in this case study examined the conceptions of social justice held by the principal and teachers at one school, and the possible impact of these conceptions upon the design and implementation of the school's improvement initiatives. The conceptual model for this study (see Figures 4 and 5 in Chapter 3) suggested that teachers' conceptions of social justice may be influenced by factors such as particular paradigms of social justice, perspectives of education, and discourses of student achievement. Analysis of the data from this study provided some preliminary observations that indicate further research in this area may be warranted. The conceptions of social justice held by the teachers in this study appeared to be dominated by monocultural views of education that were heavily influenced by discourses of deficit and disadvantage, and seemed to contain elements congruent with both the distributive and the cultural paradigm of social justice.

The actions of the teachers described in this thesis allude to the influence of the teachers' monocultural conceptions of social justice. Although the staff members at Rothman had been involved in school improvement initiatives for several years, analysis of this case study suggests that limited change occurred. The majority of the participants' comments regarding social justice reflected an affirmative rather than transformative stance towards distributive and cultural justice, which may have contributed to the perpetuation of traditional policies and practices that support inequity. However, the

presence of actions leading to a more transformative understanding of social justice, particularly in the cultural paradigm, must also be considered. Evidence from the data indicating the presence of actions designed to increase opportunities for rational discourse among educational stakeholders, to give voice to previously disenfranchised groups and individuals, and to engage in more distributive leadership practices may suggest a positive shift towards more transformative actions.

The methodological presuppositions for this study were intended to be derived from a grounded theory approach to qualitative research. This permitted the personal opinions and perspectives of the participants to be used as foundational subjectivist data for developing an interpretive theory regarding the development and subsequent influence of conceptions of social justice. The major phenomena, concepts and properties of the theory suggest that teachers develop personal conceptions of social justice in response to factors such as their geographic origin, ethnic or religious background, race, gender, cultural and family influences, economic class, age, and experiences. These conceptions of social justice may include dimensions related to both the distributive and the cultural paradigms of social justice, and assumptions rooted in monocultural and multicultural views of education and discourses of student achievement. Further research using a similar grounded theory approach is suggested in order to gain a greater understanding of the impact of individuals' personal conceptions on their own actions and on the structure and functioning of various institutions within society.

Although the research conducted in this thesis was subject to limitations of sample size which place constraints on the certainty with which particular theoretical assertions may be made, some tentative observations can be offered. The assumptions

unique to particular views of education appear to contribute to the development of values that guide teachers' actions in their relations with students, parents and colleagues, and help to shape their teaching practices. These values also appear to determine the nature of the teachers' involvement in the design and implementation of various school improvement initiatives. Actions designed to enable teachers to become aware of the effects of discourses of deficit and disadvantage in their assessment of student achievement may lead to changes in their values.

The interpretation of data for this study suggests that perhaps the development of beliefs and actions consistent with dispositions of enlightenment and empowerment will change the status quo within education. This is another area deserving of further research because if these beliefs and actions lead to a more widespread understanding of how racism, sexism and class bias are economically, politically, educationally and institutionally produced, more educators and their students should be encouraged to become engaged in this type of critical analysis so that widespread school improvement will be sustainable.

Brown (2004) asserts that "Critical social theory calls educators to activism" (p. 86). This call for activism is echoed by Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (1999) who state:

> For entitled people (dominant group members), their role requires a moral choice to assume personal responsibility and to take personal initiative. For oppressed people (nondominant group members), their role is to recognize oppression and to commit themselves to self-determination. (p.96)

Teachers and administrators who strive to be educational activists must be willing to engage in critical and constructive inquiry that will validate the cultural, intellectual

and emotional identities of people from underrepresented groups (Brown, 2004; Sirotnik and Kimball, 1996). Brown describes the need for educational activists who are willing and able to organize constituents, articulate their concerns, and negotiate/advocate on their behalf with powerholders in order to develop a repertoire of action strategies aimed at the shifting of power (p.86).

The presuppositions for the content of this study were derived from the fields of educational administration, multicultural education and critical theory. An integral premise of the study was that approaches to school improvement that address issues of social justice and change will result in education reforms that are more equitable, viable and sustainable. This type of change requires "...real-life, context-specific, tactical, anti-racist work in our schools" (Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001, p. 239), by critical educators (Capper, 1998) working within a framework of distributive leadership and organizational learning (Rusch, 2005). Capper describes critical educators as individuals who are aware of injustice and oppression in society, and attempt to initiate social change by "...taking a critical view of education and focusing on power relationships through rational, intellectual dialogue about problems of practice" (p. 355). Actions designed to brew dissonance among educators regarding the injustice inherent in their monocultural perspectives of education would begin to address Capper's call for educators willing to engage in dialogue leading to social change.

The data from this study begin to define the significance of leadership in the planning and implementation of school improvement initiatives. School change at Rothman entered a new phase with the advent of changes in provincial policy regarding the preparation of school plans, and upon the arrival of Joe Masterson as principal in

1996. He offered a vision for Rothman to pursue. He instituted practices at the school that relied on rational discourse, collegial relationships, and distributed leadership amongst staff members. Empirical evidence from this study suggests the importance of critical dialogue to the deconstruction and reconstruction of teachers' understandings of their practices, and their subsequent effects on students.

One of the most noticeable organizational characteristics observed at Rothman was the degree of leadership demonstrated by staff members in the daily functioning of the school, and in the design and implementation of the improvement initiatives. Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2002) argue that sociocultural context is a constitutive element of leadership practice that fundamentally shapes its form. They believe that leadership practices which follow a distributive model are constituted in the interaction of leaders and their social and material situations. Joe Masterson appeared to foster a culture at the school which nurtured the type of sociocultural context required for distributive leadership. The vital role played by school level administrators such as Joe highlights the need for administrator training programs that emphasize a critical, historical and contextual understanding of social justice.

In 1994, the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) recognized the need for this type of training. It created a series of *Standards for School Leaders* that were designed to rebuild the foundations of school administration. These standards focus in part on student learning, high achievement for all students, and the training of school leaders who were willing and able to use political and legal levers to advance social justice (Murphy, 2005). A commitment to leadership "... predicated on the concepts of access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school

community" (Murphy, p. 167) is evident among the seven principles adopted by ISLLC as the basis for their standards. This commitment, and the ISLLC standard defining an educational leader as one who "...promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context" (p. 167) highlights of the importance of leadership for social justice in today's schools.

The organizational and social structure of schools today is not that different from what existed in schools a century ago (Levin and Riffel, 1997). Schools remain notoriously difficult to change (Wotherspoon, 1998), and those that do change frequently revert back to old patterns of operation once the pressures driving reform are removed (Hargreaves, 2006). The findings of this case study could be interpreted as a confirmation of the static nature of schools as institutions, and the role of teachers in the creation of this stasis. Analysis of the data collected for this study suggests some of the many ways in which the perceptions and actions of individuals shape the policies and structures of public institutions such as schools.

The conceptions of social justice held by the teachers in this study seemed to be dominated by monocultural views of education. Monocultural perspectives are considered to promote the maintenance of the status-quo. The school improvement initiatives at Rothman High School were interpreted as being affirmative rather than transformative in nature. This interpretation suggests that change in high schools may be dependent in part on shifting teachers' monocultural perspectives of education to views that are more multicultural. School improvement initiatives may require a transformative

component, so that the underlying generative framework within education is altered. This might lead to greater sustainability of change.

One-third of the teachers' comments regarding social justice in this study appeared reflect multicultural views of education. Factors such as the centrality of relationships, rational discourse and transformative learning and leadership seemed to support and nurture multicultural views of education. Individuals working in the field of educational leadership may need to consider the possible existence of connections between these factors and teachers' multicultural views of education, so that conditions encouraging and promoting the presence of these factors can be nurtured and cultivated.

Future research involving school change or issues related to equity and social justice could explore the connection between multicultural views of education and the presence of factors such as the centrality of relationships, rational discourse, and transformative learning and leadership. Future research also might seek to identify other factors or conditions that could reduce monocultural views of education, and increase multicultural views on the part of educators.

Murphy (2003) suggests that educational administrators need to consider the paradigms of school improvement, democratic community, and social justice as they restructure their practices to meet the challenges facing schools today and in the future. Starratt (2003) embraces the three paradigms described by Murphy, but argues that they need to be taken to a deeper level. By applying the agricultural metaphor of cultivation to Murphy's paradigms, Starratt situates actions contributing to the cultivation of meaning, community and responsibility at the center of educational administration. The

case study described in this research attempted to provide a glimpse of how one school tried to accomplish this.

Starratt (2003) emphasizes the strong connection that must exist between effective, dynamic educational leadership and an understanding of the complexities of school improvement issues. He states:

> To exercise leadership in this climate of change requires deep convictions, strong commitments, and clear ideas about directions for change in the form and content of schooling. There should be no illusions about this. The people leading the way in school transformation must have thought and read their way through complex issues at stake in school reform. They must be people who see a clear connection between the public program of schooling and the kind of society that will carry the human adventure into the future; that is, they will understand the human and technical challenges that the community faces and will bring the understanding of these challenges to bear on the design of the form and content of the schools they are redesigning. (p. 23)

Our understanding of the human challenges facing schools and communities may be enhanced through knowledge of how the beliefs and assumptions by which people make sense of their lives influence their actions. By exploring the conceptions of social justice of teachers involved in the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives at one school, additional knowledge and insights may be obtained that can contribute to the development of this type of understanding.

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Appendix A-1

Focus Group Interview Guide

Before beginning the interview, I will read the following passage to the participants:

Thank-you for agreeing to participate in this study of social justice and school improvement. I am interested in learning more about how your school implemented school improvement programs aimed at helping students in at-risk situations improve their learning and fulfill their educational potential. The questions I will ask you during this and subsequent interviews have been designed with that in mind. I would like to remind you that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time and that you are not obligated to answer any of the questions. When I write the final case report, I will use pseudonyms and I will not use any quotations which might identify you. I promise that everything you say will be held in confidence. I will be audio-tape recording this group interview so that I will have an accurate record of your comments, and I may also take notes during our conversation. These tapes and notes will be kept in a locked and secure cabinet in my home, and will be destroyed upon completion of my dissertation (August 2005). Transcripts of our conversations will be prepared by me, and returned to you for your review and approval before I analyze them as data. Do you have any questions before we begin?

The interview will be guided by the following questions and probes:

1. I would like to know more about your school. What can you tell me about it?

   What are the goals of this school? Does it have a mission statement?

   What are the strengths of this school?

   What areas still require attention in the school?

2. I would like to know about the students who attend this school. How would you describe them?

   What are some of the issues surrounding student learning at this school?

   How have these issues been addressed?

   Are there students at this school that you would consider to be at-risk?

   Please tell me about them.

3. I am interested in knowing more about the school improvement project that this school implemented. Can you tell me about it?

   What is the nature of this improvement project?

   How did it get started?

   Who was involved in its development and implementation?

   Why was this program started?

   What is the current status of the program?

   How would you rate the success of the program?

Thank-you for participating and for your time.

Appendix A-2

First Individual Interview Guide

Before beginning each interview, I will read the following passage aloud to the participants:

Thank-you for agreeing to participate in this study of social justice and school improvement. The questions I will ask you during this interview have been designed to explore this area. I would like to remind you that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time and that you are not obligated to answer any of the questions. When I am writing the results of these interviews, I will use pseudonyms and will not use any quotations or descriptions which might identify you. I promise that everything you say will be held in confidence. I will be audio-tape recording this interview so that I will have an accurate record of your comments, and I may take notes during our conversation. These tapes and notes will be kept in a locked and secure cabinet in my home, and will be destroyed upon completion of my dissertation, hopefully in August 2005. I will transcribe the tapes of our conversation, and return a copy to you for your review and approval before I analyze them as data. Do you have any questions before we begin?

The interview will be guided by the following interview questions and probes:

1. Tell me about your education career.

   How long have you been a teacher?

   Why did you decide to become a teacher?

   What brought you to this particular school? How long have you been here?

   What do you see as the strengths of this school?

   What are the issues at this school? Do you perceive some of the students as marginalized?

   Is student learning affected by these issues? How?

   Are the parents and community at large involved with this school? How?

2. Why did you become involved in this school's improvement initiatives?

   What did you see as the rationale behind the school improvement initiative?

   What did you hope the improvement initiative would accomplish?

   Please describe the nature of your involvement with the initiative.

3. Has your involvement with this school improvement initiative affected your teaching practice? If so, please describe how.

4. This study is about school improvement and social justice. What does 'social justice' mean to you?

Thank-you for participating and for your time.

Appendix A-3

Second Individual Interview Guide

I will read this paragraph before beginning the second individual interview:

Thank-you once again for agreeing to participate in this study of school improvement and social justice. I have learned about school improvement and social justice from our previous conversations, and I would now like to know what I have missed. I would like to remind you that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time and that you are not obligated to answer any of the questions. When I write the final case study report, I will use pseudonyms and will not use any quotations that might identify you. I promise that everything you say will be held in confidence. I will be audio-tape recording our conversation today, and may take notes during our talk. I will transcribe the tapes, and return the typewritten pages to you for review and approval before I use them as data. Once again, I remind you that all tapes and notes will be maintained in a secure and locked cabinet in my home, and will be destroyed upon the completion of my dissertation (August 2005). Do you have any questions before we begin?

The second interview will follow the format of an informal conversation (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003), but probes based on the participant's responses to the first individual interview may be used in the event that the conversation needs some structure. These probes are:

1. I am going to read to you what I learned from you during our first interview regarding the strengths and issues in the school. What have I missed? Do you have anything to add?

2. I am going to read to you what I learned from you during the first interview about your school's improvement initiatives. What have I missed? Do you have anything to add?

3. I am going to read to you what I learned from you during the first interview regarding changes in your teaching practices which you attribute to your involvement with the school improvement initiative. What have I missed? Do you have anything to add?

4. I am going to read to you what I learned from you during the first interview regarding what social justice means to you. What have I missed? Do you have anything to add?

Thank-you for participating and for your time.

Appendix B-1

Letter of Request to Divisional Superintendent

Date

Dear [School division administrator authorized to provide written consent]

I am currently enrolled as a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, completing the requirements for my dissertation research. As part of this research, I will be conducting a small case study. The intent of this letter is to request permission to interview five of your school division's staff members as participants in the study.

The purpose of the study is to investigate social justice within the context of school improvement initiatives in a secondary school which has been supported by the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP). Specifically, I am interested in the conceptions of the principal and four of the teachers regarding social justice, and the impact of their conceptions upon the design and implementation of school improvement initiatives aimed at helping students at risk of not fulfilling their educational potential.

I am aware that _____ School has been involved with MSIP, and I would like permission to carry out the study at that school. If you agree to my request, I will contact the principal of the school and invite him/her to become involved.

The time involved with each of the participants is minimal. I will ask each individual to participate in two focus group interviews, each lasting approximately 45 minutes, and two individual interviews of approximately 30-45 minutes. I would like to interview five staff members (the principal, and four randomly selected teachers). I will conduct these interviews at times convenient to the participants, but outside of classroom responsibilities. I will ask the participants for permission to tape-record the interviews, and I will take notes during the interviews. I do not anticipate any risk to the participants, but each individual will be informed of the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I will be using pseudonyms during the analysis of the data, and in the final report of the study. I will not be using any descriptions or quotations which might identify the individuals. At the conclusion of my dissertation work in August 2005, the interview tapes will be destroyed.

Included with this letter is a consent form. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

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Appendix B-2

Letter of Request to the Principal of the School

Date

Dear [Principal giving written consent for permission to involve the school]

I am currently enrolled as a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, completing the requirements for my dissertation research. As part of this research, I will be conducting a small case study. Your school division has given written permission for me to invite you and your school to participate in this study. The intent of this letter is to request permission to interview yourself and four teachers on your staff. I am aware that your school has been involved in school improvement projects such as those sponsored by the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP). I am interested in the conceptions you and the teachers have of how school improvement initiatives can assist students in at-risk situations fulfill their educational potential.

The time involved with you and the teacher participants in the study is minimal. I will ask each individual to participate in two focus group interviews, each lasting approximately 45 minutes, and two individual interviews of approximately 30-45 minutes. The teachers will be randomly selected from a list of staff which you identify as having had involvement in the school improvement projects your school has been engaged in during the last few years. The interviews will be conducted at times

convenient to the participants, but outside of classroom responsibilities. I will ask permission to tape-record the interviews, and to take notes during the interviews. I do not anticipate any risk to you or any of the participants, but each of you will be informed of your right to withdraw from the study at any time. I will also be using pseudonyms during the analysis of the data, and in the final report of the study. I will not be using descriptions or quotations which might identify individuals. At the conclusion of my dissertation work, all interview tapes will be destroyed (August 2005).

Included in this letter is a consent form. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

If you are willing to accept this invitation and participate in the study, I would ask that you read and sign the enclosed Consent Form and return it to me in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope.

If you have further questions or require further information, please contact me at:

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Appendix B-3

Letter of Request to the Teacher Participant

Date

Dear [teacher participant]

I am currently enrolled as a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, completing the requirements for my dissertation research. As part of this research, I will be conducting a small case study on the subject of how school improvement initiatives, such as those supported by the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP) can assist students in at-risk situations to fulfill their educational potential. Your school division and principal have given me written permission to invite you to participate in this study. The intent of this letter is to request permission to interview you to ascertain your perceptions on this topic. Your name was randomly selected from an alphabetized list of staff members who participated in your school's improvement projects.

The time required from you to participate in the study is not excessive. I will ask that you participate in two focus group interviews with the principal of your school and three other teachers, and that you grant me two personal interviews. Each of these interviews should take approximately 30-45 minutes, and they will be conducted a a time convenient for you, but outside of classroom responsibilities. I will ask your permission to audio-tape the interview, and I may take notes during our conversations. I do not anticipate any risk to you, and you will be informed of your right to withdraw from the

study at any time. I will also be using pseudonyms during the analysis of the data, and in the final report of the study. I will not be using descriptions or quotations which might identify individuals. At the conclusion of my dissertation work (August 2005), all interview tapes will be destroyed.

Included with this letter is a consent form. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

If you are willing to accept this invitation and participate in the study, I would ask that you read and sign the enclosed Consent Form and return it to me in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope.

If you have further questions or require further information, please contact me at: Brenda St. Hilaire or the chair of my Doctoral Studies Committee, Dr. John Stapleton (474-8581 or _____

Thank-you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Brenda St. Hilaire

Appendix C-1

Written Consent Form – School Division

Your signature of this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation of your school division in the research and agree to permit me to conduct this research. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Principal Researcher: Brenda St. Hilaire

Doctoral Studies Supervisor: Dr. John Stapleton

(204) 474-8581, e-mail: _____

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing REB. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122, or e-mail

. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

School Division Name: _____

School Name: _____

Name and Position of School Division administrator giving written consent:

_____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Appendix C-2

Written Consent Form – School Principal

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation of your school in the research and agree to participate in the study. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice of consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Principal Researcher: Brenda St. Hilaire

Doctoral Studies Supervisor: Dr. John Stapleton

(204) 474-8581, e-mail:

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing REB. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122, or e-mail

. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

School Name: _____

Principal's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C-3

Written Consent Form – Teacher Participant

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Principal Researcher: Brenda St. Hilaire

Doctoral Studies Supervisor: Dr. John Stapleton

(204)474-8581, e-mail:

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing REB. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122, or e-mail

_____ . A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D

Participant Letter Regarding Member Check

Date:

Dear _____:

Attached please find a copy of the transcript of our last interview. Please review it, and make any changes or comments you wish with regard to its contents, accuracy and clarity. Once you are satisfied that the transcript is an accurate reflection of your interview, please contact me by e-mail or telephone.

Thank-you once again for your time, effort, and cooperation. It is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Brenda St. Hilaire

Appendix E

Parent Focus Group Discussion

Parent Focus Group Summary
April 2003

1. ***As a parent of a child or children that attend what would you say are the strengths of the school?***

- different programs they offer – a variety
- teachers – good role models – past. Still getting to know the new teachers
- strong guidance department – trustworthy
- strong life skills program
- strong music program (but with the change in teachers it has been a little unsettled)
- with staff changes the programs have adjusted

2. ***If you were asked to describe the atmosphere at what would you say?***
   is it safe?
   is it welcoming?
   is it respectful?
   is it caring?

- welcoming
- parents feel safe in the building
- some issues of safety for students
- issues of bullying – safety questionable
- are groups of students that are threatened

3. ***How do you perceive the relationship between the teachers and students at ?***
   is it respectful?
   is it caring?
   is your child comfortable approaching a teacher for help?

- teachers need to give respect to get respect back
- 95% of the teachers are respectful and caring
- in general, students feel comfortable asking for help from teachers. Have been circumstances where students do not feel comfortable

4. ***How would you describe the relationship between administration and parents?***
   is it respectful?
   is it open?
   are you able to talk to administration about ideas and concerns?

- feel they are listened to but not always heard
- sometimes feeling like it's pass the buck
- happy with managing of the overall school but some concerns about how individual students are dealt with
- a feeling that admin know best
- principal comes through. Always at parent meetings
- if you ask to speak to the principal you get to speak to the principal. The calls are not screened. You are passed on to someone else if they have the information you need. Principal will get back to you if he says he will, i.e. with information.
- administration is accessible
- open communication is there

5. ***How would you describe the relationship between teachers and parents?***
   is it respectful?
   is it open?
   are you able to talk with your child's teachers about your child's progress?

- depends on how you approach it
- example of a discussion with a teacher, respectful, setting expectations
- no dealings – nothing negative to say
- Parent/Teachers – teacher good at listening
- Good to send out info ahead of Parent/Teacher
- Good that you can have more time if needed at Parent/Teacher

6. ***has implemented a TAG system to bring students and teachers together in an activity-based program and to track students' employability skills portfolios. From what you know about the program, what feedback can you give to staff regarding the impact of this initiative?***

- TAG – great idea. How good it is for students depends on the teacher your child has
- my child doesn't go
- students need to know what to expect in a job interview, questions they are asked. Perhaps do this earlier in school. Do mock interviews for S2's.
- don't agree with keeping students in same TAG for all 4 years. Not good if you don't have a good teacher for 4 years
- teachers make or break it for students
- students saying it is beneficial depending on the teacher
- maybe just have teachers that want to do it, do TAG

7. ***How would you describe the programming at ?***
   what are the strengths?
   what do the students need that the school is not providing?

- Life skills is a strong program
- what does WPC need – dedicated teachers, teachers that are there for the students. There are teachers like that here, but would like all teachers to be this way
- resource program/learning center needs to be reviewed
- Natural Helper program – brings students together that would not normally be together – a real positive

8. ***Is what is happening in the classroom at enabling your child to learn and succeed at school?***
   if not, what needs to happen to assist your child in his/her learning?

- back to the teachers – dedication

9. ***staff has identified literacy skills, i.e. reading and writing and reading comprehension, as a focus for working with our students to help improve their academic success. How important would you see this initiative in helping your child improve his/her academic skills?***

- extremely important – everyone agreed

10. How well do you feel the school is doing in preparing your child for life after high school?
what are the strengths that the school should continue to do?
what is missing that you feel could be done at the school?

- strengths – portfolio
  doing something at every level

- weakness – preparing them for interviews
- sometimes feel too much pressure put on students on what they want to do. Some students feel they have to know and they don't.
- use to have work experience – was good for students who really don't know what they are interested in or what they want to do. Maybe bring it back.

11. had implemented employability skills portfolios as a means of helping students link what they do in school with future career possibilities. From what you know about this program, what feedback can you give staff regarding the impact of this initiative?

felt this had already been answered

12. Are there any burning issues that you feel need to be addressed at ?

- more participation at Parent Council meetings
- special needs programming, effected by amalgamation. Presently working on it.
- that amalgamation doesn't mean losing programs
- in general, quite pleased with the school
- marquee needs to be changed more often

- this information will be combined with focus groups held in May

Appendix F

Student Focus Group Discussions

MAY 16, 2003

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – Students

Celebration

1. As a student at what would you say are the strengths of the school?
   - Happy, enjoyable atmosphere

To build a school community that is interactive responsive and accountable.

2. If you were asked to describe the atmosphere at what would you say?
   is it safe? is it welcoming? is it respectful? is it caring?
   - I feel safe.
   - I feel welcome.
   - I feel at home.
   - The teachers are respectful to students.
   - Students respect students.
   - For the most part students respect teachers.
   - We feel that has a caring atmosphere.

3. How would you describe the relationships between the students and teachers and students and the principal and vice principal at ?
   is it respectful?
   is it caring?
   are you comfortable approaching a teacher for help?
   - The administration are always in the hall to welcome students, making it enjoyable to come to school.
   - It is generally a positive relationship between the teachers and students.

4. has implemented a TAG system to bring students and teachers together in an activity-based program and to track students' employability skills portfolios. What difference has TAG made to students at ?
   what makes TAG a good thing?
   what could be done to make TAG better?
   how could the ESP's be better?
   - Increased student voice
   - Increased interaction between students who would not usually interact
   - A break from regular classes

To improve the academic success of all students

5. How would you describe the programming at ?
   what are the strengths?
   what do the students need that the school is not providing?
   - Offer more courses than a lot of schools
   - Wide selection and opening up new courses
   - More business courses
   - Make credit for extra curricular activity

6. Is what is happening in the classroom at enabling you to learn and succeed at school? If not, what needs to happen to assist you in your learning?
   - Teachers ability to teach
   - Small classes
   - "Hands on" activities
   - Assignments on the internet

7. staff has identified literacy skills, i.e. reading and writing and reading comprehension, as a focus for working with our students to help improve their academic success. What could be done in classes and in the school to assist you in further developing your skills in reading and writing?
   -

To prepare students for the school to work transition

8. How well do you feel the school is doing in preparing you for life after high school?
   what are the strengths that the school should continue to do?
   what is missing that you feel could be done at the school?
   - There to support you in your goals
   - Need to expose students to career options and at an early age

Burning Issues

9. Are there any burning issues that you feel need to be addressed at ?
   -

Appendix G

Bullying Survey

SURVEY Total Overview

This is a survey designed to determine students' attitudes on the topic of bullying.

1. Do you feel that bullying occurs at our school?
   14% often
   70% occasionally
   6% never

2. Do you feel that someone you know other than yourself is bullied at school?
   9% often
   67% occasionally
   2% never

3. Do you feel that you personally are bullied at school?
   6% often
   34% occasionally
   62% never

4. How often do you feel that you bully others?
   5% often
   43% occasionally
   52% never

5. How large of an issue would you say this issue is at ?
   1% out of control
   14% serious
   75% mild
   9% not at all

6. How safe from bullying do you feel you are at our school?
   91% very safe
   8% not very safe