Complex Poverty and Urban School Systems:

Critically Informed Perspectives on the Superintendency

by

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Abstract

Complex Indigenous and racialized poverty exists in Canada. Child poverty obviously has a negative impact on our youth who are served by school systems. As Silver (2014, 2016) and others have demonstrated, poverty can lead to poor educational outcomes. The purpose of this study was to examination the understandings and actions of four superintendents in Winnipeg, Manitoba related to complex Indigenous and racialized poverty.

The superintendency is incredibly complex and extremely political, and there cannot be a recipe book from which superintendents can help advance the cause of greater equity for all our students. That said, we can learn from the stories of those who have made a difference, no matter how small or contextualized. We can advance our knowledge to inform how superintendents can contribute to the creation of educational environments in which people challenge, develop, and, in the words of Foster (1986), "liberate human souls" (p. 18).

Using a qualitative approach informed by critical theory, this study explores how the superintendents understood issues related to complex, racialized poverty in particular; and how these understandings influenced their work in highly complex, political, and contextual work environments.

In this study, each of the superintendents participated in a series of individual interviews and a group dialogue.

The study attempts to ascertain (a) what the participants believed about complex poverty and how they have come to these understandings, (b) how they described the socio-political and organizational environments that informed and influenced their work as superintendents and; what they were able and unable do to mitigate the effects of poverty upon students and their communities, and (c) what actions have they undertaken to attempt to address issues of racialized

poverty and what else they think should be done in schools, in school systems, and in the greater communities.

Keywords: superintendent, critical theory, complex Indigenous and racialized poverty, reflective practice, social justice.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to my four research participants: Ron Weston, Pauline Clarke, Kelly Barkman, and Brian O'Leary. Superintendents lead very busy lives and the fact that each of you were so willing to "put it out there" publically is truly honorable. It was only by having these leaders share their time, their reflections, and their ideas with me that this study was possible. As an organization, The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) of which each of them is a member, has demonstrated strong advocacy for strong, ethical leadership and the participation in this study by the four exemplifies work in this direction.

I would like to thank two members of my advisory committee; Dr. Dawn Wallin and Dr. Jim Silver. Dawn, for a number of years you have been a fabulous teacher of mine and I admire your persistent push to ask deeper questions, to explore wider fields of critically informed perspectives, and your ability to do so in such a caring manner. Jim, with you on the committee my thinking about complex poverty shifted significantly. Through the last few years I have come to realize that one of the world's foremost thinkers in this area is not only in the City of Winnipeg, but was on my doctoral committee. I look forward to consulting with you into the future in this area. To both of you, thank you for caring so much that you never let me off the hook, you pushed me to think deeper, to be wiser, and to become more critical of my own thinking.

Dr. Jon Young. For three decades I have been reading your work on everything from multicultural education to governance. If it were not for you, I would not have started this program. If it were not for you, I would not have finished this program. You continue to model how to be a critically informed intellectual who is always about excellence and one who never stops asking questions and pushing me and others to do better. Doing well was not what you demanded of me,

you demanded the best that I had and you challenged me to think the same of myself. As well, throughout the process you demonstrated over and over again, with your attention to detail and your mindfulness, that you cared for me as a student and as a person.

Thank you.

Dedication

My story is influenced by 500 years of a colonialized and racist past that has long coattails. This dissertation is my small attempt to contribute to addressing and healing the torments of racialized peoples in North America, and thinking about how we might use the position of the superintendency to create greater equity and prosperity for all in our society.

The work of attaining a PhD is incredibly difficult not only to those pursuing the degree, but also for those whom we love. My dear sisters and your families, my incredible friends, you patiently understood why I could not go to the lake or on a trip during Spring Break. Thank you to the leaders and the boards of the Seven Oaks and Louis Riel School Divisions who have not only supported my studies, but have supported the thinking behind the dissertation. I also want to thank two of my best teachers, my daughter Keziah and son Josiah. The two of you experienced shortened weekends and holidays as I was studying but it is for you that I want a hand in making better schools. Thank you Lois, mother of my children, who knew of my deep longing to complete this work decades ago and helped me attain my previous degrees and helped in the thinking that eventually came into this current dissertation.

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Finally, I have written this dissertation for the struggles of the ancestors of my mother Hope Antoinette Brothers (nee Carrothers) and my father George Murray Brothers. On both side of our family, products of slavery, Jim Crow American racism, and subtler Canadian racism, both of you have provided me and my siblings, Tanya, Tamara, and Tara, with daily examples of struggle, perseverance, love, and most of all hope.   I love you all.

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PROLOGUE: MY POSITIONALITY

I have served as a district-level administrator for sixteen years, in the roles of assistant superintendent and superintendent in four school districts. In these roles, I have served communities of markedly different social economic status (SES). As a result of my involvements, I believe that I am reasonably well experienced with many of the social, economic, and political challenges of organizational leadership. As a person of colour with an experiential and scholarly interest in social exclusion, racism, and poverty, I have attempted to be grounded in notions of an action-orientated concern about inequality (West, 2001) while continuing in leadership roles in what I consider to be relatively conservative contexts. I believe in a praxis of educational administration that is grounded in critical social theory and aimed at social justice in the sense that hopeful yet critical perspectives, together with a dedication to political action, can be required of educational leaders (Bates, 1980, 2006; Foster, 2004; Lindle, 2004).

All social research is informed by specific concerns held by a researcher as the result of an implicit or explicit theoretical view (Carspecken & Apple, 1992). My research is concerned with putting a critical lens upon the work of school superintendents, and the "relationships between human activity, culture, and social and political structures" (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, p. 511) that contextualize their work. At the same time, I am determined to be open to new ideas, to make descriptive contributions, and to make contributions to "core social-theoretical concepts such as action, structure, culture, and power" (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, p. 512) related to the superintendency and my work as a superintendent.

Working within a conceptualization of educational administration that is grounded in critical social theory, aimed at social justice (Culbertson, 1988; Donmoyer, Imber, & Scheurich,

1995; English 1992, 1994; Lindle, 2004; Willower & Forsyth, 1999), and focused upon notions of human emancipation and liberation (Bates, 2006; Foster, 1986, 1989, 2004), I explored the role that a superintendent can play in bringing about greater social equity for those marginalized by racialized poverty and social exclusion.

I believe that many educational administrators in Manitoba and elsewhere, informed primarily, whether implicitly and explicitly, by administrative science theory, have restricted visions of the possibilities (and responsibilities) of our work in challenging inequity. It seems likely, therefore, that a critical social theory, focused on the fundamental question of the relationships that exist between structures of knowledge and structures of control, could provide the groundwork for insightful comprehensive analysis. Certain existing structures, given certain individuals, provide particular opportunities to exert influences within boundaries that are socially and politically constructed and often far from clearly demarcated. Specifically, located within larger geopolitical environments, superintendents have opportunities both to exert influence and to be influenced by school board trustees and administrators, teachers, and students. They do so, however, within locally contextualized boundaries, including political, economic, and cultural realities that create what can become quite unique environments. From a critical perspective, Foster (1989, 2004) argues that school systems leaders, such as divisional superintendents, must learn to think and act critically, tranformatively, educatively, and ethically to help create environments in which progressive action can occur. Ultimately, I have explored how several school district superintendents operate in ways that are seen as promoting equity in the socially and politically constructed contexts in which they find themselves, and I have critically documented their successes and challenges.

My Story: Influence and Criticality

As I think about how I have come to this place, completing a PhD while I have already experienced a career as a teacher and an educational administrator, I conclude that my attraction to issues of social justice and leadership germinated well before I was born. In the larger sense, my dissertation is born of the influences of 500 years of colonialism. Closer to this present moment, the influence of my parents, my experiences growing up in Canada, and my journey as an educator have led to my questions, my doubts, and my hopes for a better tomorrow. I firmly believe that this personal account is informed by providence—I am from whom I have come, as well as a myriad of deliberate choices and *random nows* that have influenced my thinking, my beliefs, my inclinations, my obsessions, and now my focus upon improving the superintendency. I have organized this autobiographical prologue into the following chronological phases, each of which emphasizes social justice, leadership development, and education: a personal legacy of being Black in North America, lessons of my parents, my early years, and my evolution as an influential.

A Personal Legacy: Black in Canada

With a North American familial lineage that dates back over three hundred years on both sides of my family, I can look back upon Indigenous, African, Irish, English, and Swedish ancestors, and yet I personally identify and am always identified by others as African-Canadian or *Black*. My father's side of the family includes former slaves who migrated to Nova Scotia after serving on the losing side of the American Revolution. The light brown skin and grey, green eyes in the pictures of great grandparents and relatives quietly speaks of the almost certain rape of my mothers and grandmothers by White masters and overseers. My grandfather, William,

who passed away in 1988, told me stories of how African loyalists received marginal land in

Nova Scotia and the quasi-apartheid reality that was Nova Scotia for many years. To this day, a

visit to the Brothers homestead in Cambridge Station visibly tells the story of a side community

of beige and brown people down the road from the White town of Kentville. I also remember

visiting my grandfather together with my dad when I was 22. I remember him training his

binoculars 500 meters to the house across the road to the house of his brother, Baden, and

hearing him curse him and his "pale skinned kids." My dad later told me of the old falling out

that my grandfather had with his brother. Baden had been seeing a White woman and when she

became pregnant, her family accused him of rape. Baden spent a few weeks in jail until she

finally admitted it was consensual and they eventually married. My grandfather, William, forever

despised Baden for marrying a White woman and despised the children, my distant cousins, who

could "pass" for White.

Together, Grandfather William and Grandma Christine had eight boys and four girls.

Among my aunts and uncles are successful dentists and business people. Common characteristics

include strong, forceful personalities bordering on stubborn arrogance, an incredibly strong work

ethic, a deep-seated wariness of White racism, especially the unstated type, and a pervasive sense

that "we have to be better to be equal." It is very interesting to me that of the 12, six married

White partners and another three married partners who, while they identified as Black, were

"High Yellow," that is to say, very light skinned to the extent that many would assume they were

Italian or Greek, rather than African-Canadian. With the exception of one, all of the brothers left

the Maritimes and settled across Canada and the United States. A healthy percentage of my

cousins have been university educated and have become middle to upper middle class citizens. It

is also fair to say that the family continues to get lighter through the generations as more and

more of us have children with White partners. As I think about my people, I see a tremendous

variety of looks, intellects, colours, dispositions, and ways of being—the same as most families.

However, I also can recognize several continuing commonalities: an effervescent sense of

hopefulness that seems to be rooted in a continued family story that we are underdogs, life will

be difficult, and yet we "can get over."

Many members of my mother's family were also slaves in the American south, leaving

Alabama for Oklahoma after the American Civil War. The Bowens and Carothers experienced

life in large Black communities that existed in that territory and subsequently in the state. In the

1880s, Jim Crow legislation swept through the American South and Southwest creating an

insidious form of apartheid, characterized by the growth of the Ku Klux Klan as a nationally

influential organization, a process as depicted in the acclaimed movie *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith

& Aitken, 1915). As many other Blacks would do during the first half of the twentieth century,

my people headed north for greater opportunities, but the cities of Chicago, New York, and

Detroit were not their destination. In 1903 a group of Black Oklahomans crossed the border into

Canada at Emerson, Manitoba, on their way to Amber Valley, Alberta where they established

one the most northern Black communities on the planet earth. In search of a free land, just as so

many White Mennonites, Ukrainians, Jews, English, and Scandinavians of the time, my mother's

people sought opportunity to recreate themselves in a nation that would hopefully be free of

tyranny. I believe that the stains of slavery, and the lies we tell ourselves about our lack of talent

and ability has long coattails that extend through multiple generations. This is a narrative that is

mirrored in the stories of Indigenous, colonialized, and racialized peoples around the world,

including in modern day Winnipeg. The resourceful people who crossed the Canadian border in

1903, the women with the family savings sown into the hems of their dresses, received marginal

land in the Athabasca region of Northern Alberta. The extended hand of welcome to experienced American farmers was withdrawn with the realization that these immigrants were of a darker hue. Within a generation, many of the men of Amber Valley moved to the larger cities of Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, and Winnipeg and took on the bow and nod work of porting on the national railways. Interestingly enough, my maternal great grandfather met his future wife while working the Canadian National Railway (CNR), a White Swedish immigrant named Gerda. Together they had six kids, the second, Thelma, being my grandmother. If there are some persistent patterns in my mother's family, they include a conflicted personal and familial identity. Thelma moved her five of what would eventually be eleven children to Fort William, Ontario, the end of a spur of the CNR, for one reason—to get my grandfather, Douglas, and the kids away from the often transitional, migrational lifestyles of African-Canadians connected to the railways. She did not want her family to be around African-Canadians, and she did not want Douglas to finish a shift, and not be with the family. In the family, there are lots of children born of parents who are barely adults, a tremendous sense of distance, and ignorance of people of African heritage. It was common to hear growing up, comments about "those Black people" stated by my relatives. In many ways, my people on my mother's side of the family are like a lost generation who share many characteristics of marginalized Indigenous people around the world. Of the 22 grandchildren of Douglas and Thelma, five have a university education and, of those, three are my sisters and I. That's said, in May 2016, three more great grandchildren became university graduates.

Lessons of My Parents

I have been reflecting much about my parents, Murray and Toni Brothers. During the past five years I have been thinking long and hard as my father has lost a relatively quick battle with

Alzheimer's disease and my mother struggles with the loss of her husband of 50 years. Of her siblings, my mother is the only one who has maintained a long-term marriage. Growing up, my parents and their children were often viewed as "uppity" by other members of my mother's extended family. My dad tells the story of his Uncle Bunny, a former CNR porter, visiting our middle-class home in North Vancouver and remarking to my dad, "Who are you trying to be, White?" From his family, my father gained the ability to work very hard, while retaining a very large chip on his shoulder when it came to interactions with White people. With a Grade 10 education, my father left Nova Scotia to join his older brother Bill's window and door business in Fort William where he met my mother. In 1965 they migrated to Winnipeg where we lived in a very small apartment at the corner of Magnus and Salter in the working-class North End. My dad worked as a custodian, construction worker, and a long haul truck driver. He told me the story of White unionists refusing to unload his cargo as a Black truck driver arriving in Chicago during the civil rights unrest of 1968. He somehow found a way to get enough for a down payment to buy a new bungalow in the suburbs of Winnipeg, away from the North End, away from People of Colour, and towards a dream of a middle-class existence for his wife and soon to be four children. For my dad, an economic and social turnaround came when he started selling cars at a car dealership. Soon, a family that was just scraping by became a household that took annual vacations, had nice clothes, and collected antique cars. My dad placed a huge emphasis on dressing nicely and not taking anything from White people. I remember a cold day in January in the produce section at the local IGA store. While my parents were getting vegetables, I decided to taste a few grapes. An older White man, the neighborhood barber, quietly slapped my hand and said "get those nigger hands off them grapes." To this day I can distinctly remember the face of a White IGA employee as he sheepishly watched my dad loudly berate Mr.

Topolinski for talking to me in such a manner. I also remember the dead silence in the car on the way home, my dad fuming, and my mother embarrassed. Upon getting home, my dad yelled at me and told me to never provoke such a reaction from a White man.

My parents had many White friends while I was growing up. Neighbors and people they worked with were terrific to them and to us kids. However, lessons from my father included "you have to be better to be equal," together with "never forget that behind some of those smiling faces, some of those folks will despise you." I also remember, while working as a car jockey at the car dealership, watching my dad's often angry rebuke if he sensed a potential customer pushed aside his assistance due to his colour. My mother maintained a hypervigilance to maintain appearances. While my White buddies were allowed to wear the scruffy jeans and plaid jackets of the 1970s teenaged life, my sisters and I were scrubbed daily and admonished to never ever let our guards down. My sisters and I grew up in a warm, caring household, where our parents worked hard, and yet we also had fun. That said, we grew up with a perpetual reality of high expectations, juxtaposed with recognition that the heights to which we could reach were unspokenly low.

My Early Years

As a 10-year-old, I received a weekly allowance of one dollar. Every Saturday I went to the local drugstore to buy a comic book, but not Batman or Superman. I was into the *Classics Illustrated* series. One particular copy I still remember and I still have. From reading *Negro Americans, the Early Years* (1969), I learned about Harriet Tubman, an ex-slave who returned to the American South to assist others to escape. I also learned that many famous cowboys of the American West were former slaves; and that Benjamin Banneker, a Black man, performed the first heart surgery. I also remember having lots of White friends, being completely accepted as a

member of the community, and yet quietly, always having a sense that we just weren't quite there. I remember scrubbing my face in the hope that I could wipe away the beige. Another powerful memory was of a classmate of Aboriginal background named Desi, absolutely devouring an ice cream being provided to him and all our classmates by our teacher. Whether I was correct or not, I quickly came to an assumption that his hunger was not a craving for ice cream but, rather, it was a demand for that which was not part of his weekly living. I remember a beautiful African-Canadian sister named Becky, coming to my school when I was in Grade 8. I remember all of my White friends asking "are you going to ask her out?" and the shame that I felt because, as a veil comes off, I was Black. When another Person of Colour was around, people seemed to be reminded that I was different. While I was a popular kid, I can still look at photos of my junior high graduation on a river cruise and remember I was pretty much the only one without a date. Years later, I had a tearful conversation at a school reunion, in which several of my good friends told me their parents loved me as a young man hanging around, but never enough to consider that I might date their daughters. I remember playing AA hockey and going to play in Mississauga, Ontario, for a tournament. I remember arriving at the hockey arena on Dixie Road where our billets picked us up. I remember waiting and waiting as parents were introduced to my teammates and off they went. I remember watching a heated conversation between my coach, the Mississauga coach, and a few other parents. I remember the arena clearing, my teammates going off with their billets and a concerned, animated conversation between the coaches and a number of Mississauga parents. With all of the other players gone, I remember a White couple coming and saying I would stay with them. As a twelve year old, I got it; my planned billets wanted nothing to do with me.

The next day, I torched that team with two goals.

I also remember the powerful images that messed with my sense of self as a teenager: Michael Jackson and his brothers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King. I remember being an early adolescent and hearing that "Black is Beautiful." It was and it continues to be an odd thing being Black in North America. Yes, I believed in the words of Langston Hughes' poem when he exclaimed, "I will sit at the table and they will see how beautiful I am . . . I too sing America" (Hughes, 2004); but by the same token I have at times experienced a deep loathing for people of African descent, like being two different people at the same time. In high school, I was conflicted. I saw myself as a new person, a man who was newly created, reborn if you will as a person growingly confident in my own skin. At the same time, I looked around and was keenly aware that members of my own family were the underclass that polite company called "poor people." I was hypersensitive to people on the street, those of colour, and those without resources.

I was fortunate to go to the University of Manitoba on a partial basketball scholarship. My first year was close to disastrous. My dad was ecstatic that I got to university; I do not think he contemplated that I would actually get an education and a degree. In my second year, things started to change. I took classes in history, sociology, and anthropology and was exposed to Marxist oriented professors who shook my world. I became deeply interested in the apartheid of South Africa, the history of North American slavery, and the reality of Aboriginal reserves in Canada. While I was a privileged citizen of the student body as a University of Manitoba Bison basketball player and doorman at the campus pub (it provided privileges!), I also wore a dark green khaki jacket with a "SWAPO Namibia" button on the lapel. Upon completion of my BA, I was headhunted by an insurance firm to work as a sales representative. After completing a series of interviews and a psychological assessment, the manager told me they really wanted to try me

out, in spite of the fact that my assessments indicated that I was not interested in a career focused

upon making money. In the words of the recruiter "you march to a different drummer, you care,

you care perhaps too much about others." I then completed the 2-year after-degree education

program in which I had a choice of student teaching at a high school in an affluent neighborhood,

or in a high school in an impoverished community. I chose the latter, and, upon completion of

my degree, I was fortunate to receive a number of offers, and yet once again I chose to work in

an inner city school. Why? I was a suburban kid raised amongst White middle-class families, and

yet I was absolutely drawn to the incredible diversity of my chosen school where I taught world

issues and coached a number of highly successful basketball teams that consisted of Filipinos,

West Indians, and a few White kids just to add some spice. After 6 years of teaching, I felt the

call to complete my master's degree at the University of British Columbia (UBC), so I could

work with race relations and Aboriginal studies professors including Kogila Adam Moodley and

Jean Barman. My questions led to me doing a critical analysis of the creation of a school-district

race-relations policy in British Columbia's lower mainland. This work I did deeply questioned

the validity and potential of the policy despite the good intentions of the authors. While in British

Columbia (BC), I taught grades 5 to 7 for 4 years. At the time, administrative leadership was

simply not in my mind, and, frankly, I thought it was the domain of those more gifted and

intelligent than I. In 1997, the principal at Ranch Park Elementary—Dave Smith—asked me to

quarterback a major internal review of all school operations as part of the BC accreditation

process. I was shocked to be asked. A year later, after the successful confirmation of the review,

I was again surprised to have Dave encourage me to apply to be a school administrator. I had

completed my master's degree, yet never for a moment did I see myself as an educational leader.

That began to change as I was asked by the representatives of the Ministry of Education to serve

on a number of External Accreditation Teams in which superintendents, teachers, and board members of other school systems converged for a week to audit the operations of other schools.

In hindsight, even as I was climbing, working hard, having successes, I lived in several worlds. My degrees, my contacts with successful families in Canada due to my degrees and basketball, as well as my work as a fashion model in Toronto, Vancouver, and Seattle all provided access to wealthy friends with prosperous lifestyles. Invariably, however, I eschewed all of this as I believed it to be superficial. From my current vantage point I cannot say I was correct; however, I thought a life of modeling clothes would be an absolute waste, while so many were not educated or had so little. I felt that if I had a life of prosperity (since I received numerous opportunities from the private business community through the years including the Investors Group, commercial real estate firms, and Cargill Grain), I would be selling out for personal gratification rather than a life of service. I realize how sanctimonious this must sound; however, that is who I was.

Goodness

Expressions of my beliefs manifested in my approaches to coaching basketball teams of predominantly brown kids who were characterized by incredibly aggressive play, manicured presentation, matching shoes, tear-away sweatpants, leather coats, and academic rigor. For all students who played on my teams, a form regarding attendance, attitude, and homework completion was completed by their teachers and in my hands weekly. I desperately wanted these brown kids to become grown people who would smash through their limited aspirations and live middle- and upper-middle-class lives in Canada. Expressions of my developing social democratic beliefs emerged powerfully during my 4th year of teaching. I came to realize that the controlling, highly orchestrated culture that I cultivated in the gym, in which an errant pass could

result in a well-aimed basketball whizzing by a player's head from my hand, contradicted the

egalitarian, critical-thinking, student-voice environments that I was attempting to cultivate in my

Grade 12 world issues classes. During the remaining 2 years at Daniel McIntyre Collegiate, I

changed my coaching style completely, with a desire to develop core fundamentals within which

players would have a high degree of flexibility and choices in their decision-making. My teams

continued to have just as much success, but arguably even more. After coaching the varsity boys

to back-to-back city championship teams, coordinating an organization plan that included the

junior varsity team and four feeder schools, I was able to arrange for a buddy to replace me at the

helm of the program who then went on to secure two more provincial championships, while I

went to BC. Why is this important? I think I was living out, expressing through my work, and

perhaps unfairly through my players, a story, an irrefutable message that we could not only

compete but that I/we could win.

Upon Being an Influential

I have been in official positions of influence with adult educators since 1996, when I

became a department head at Ranch Park Elementary in Vancouver. Since then I have been an

assistant principal of a middle year's school for 2 years, an early years principal for 3 years, a

district principal for 1 year, and then an assistant superintendent for 3 years, before becoming a

superintendent for 4 years. After that, I returned to an assistant superintendency in order to have

time to work on this doctoral program and now once again I am a superintendent. In all aspects

of my administrative career, I believe that I have, at least on the surface, attempted to

democratize human relations and system operations. At the elementary and middle schools I

served, I led the development of new mission statements and goal setting processes. When I got

involved in division-level leadership in Winnipeg, I coordinated the development of new

professional learning and collaboration processes for administrators including the *Sunrise Educational Leadership Team* (SELT) that met monthly. Members co-lead professional learning sessions, the *Sunrise Educational Dialogue Group* (SEDG), in which self-selected leaders participated monthly to further develop collaborative dialogue skills. It is from this initial group that new dialogue groups developed throughout the organization. Rather than a traditional clinical evaluative model, I developed the Educational Leadership Professional Growth Model in which all leaders conducted an annual self-evaluation against research-based criteria of educational and organizational leadership and met with colleagues monthly to support their growth. In such a model, professional growth was intertwined with accountability, for as Elmore (2010) wrote "internal accountability precedes external accountability" (p. 2). There are many more examples of my attempts to unleash the potential of my colleagues so that that new ways of teaching and learning might emerge. However, the reason I prefaced this section by saying "on the surface" regarding my efforts to democratize and flatten the organizations in which I worked is that, in reality, perhaps it was not true. For many years I saw my work to be solely focused upon that leadership team of principals and managers with whom I worked directly. Yes, I led the development of a division-wide "vision framework" in a district in which the vision statement was, "Nothing less than outstanding learning experiences, one student at a time." However, aside from a comprehensive surveying of staff, parents, and students that was completed in 2006, and a broad collection of division-wide data for the divisional annual report in 2007, my focus was never on what was happening with the most advantaged of our students, never mind the least advantaged. Perhaps this is because the managerial work was too demanding, or perhaps I was right in thinking that if we attended to the formal leaders, the important work of ensuring greater justice for all leaders and integrating the effects of poverty

would be accomplished by the folks on the front lines. I have since taken the time to explore

Foster's (1986, 2004) understanding of organizational leadership that is focused to social justice.

After evaluating some of my work against this model, I have found myself wanting.

Let's Take a Look

I have shared a little about myself, or at least how I make sense or interpret that history that

has informed who I am in my work as a superintendent. I think it is safe to say that all of us bring

our histories, and how those histories have been interpreted and internalized, into how we frame

our contemporary realities and our work. Bridging the personal and the public leads me to ask two

questions: How have people in one formal role of influence, that of the school division

superintendentcy, made sense of poverty, and how have they responded to the reality of poverty,

and how have they worked with those whom they influence to respond to the ramifications of

poverty? As well, how have they influenced progressive change from their positions as

administrative influentials of large, complex organizations.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Background of the Study

Reading the work of critical theorists Richard Bates (1980, 2006) and William Foster (1986, 2004), among others, I am reminded of the perhaps naïve, but hopeful, dreams of progressive change towards a more equitable school system and society that ignited my initial interest in being a high school history teacher in Winnipeg's West End over twenty years ago. During my past sixteen years of district-level leadership, I have been depressed by the pervasiveness of enduring social injustice and social inequality.

As Gaskell and Levin (2012) point out, high poverty levels in racialized communities are increasing in Winnipeg, as well as other Canadian urban centres. They found that children who live in poverty and do not share many of the dominant cultural attributes of the majority culture may attend school with less of the skills, behaviors, and understandings that teachers expect of them. In schools, youth living with poverty are more likely to have health problems, to be more transient, to experience violence, and to drop out of school. As they note, "socio-economic status (SES) is the single most powerful factor correlated with educational and other life outcomes, as has been found in virtually every study of these issues, over time, in every country where such studies have been conducted" (p. 12). Mayer (2002) writes that the children of wealthier parents are better behaved, happier, and better educated. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that children from poorer families are three and four times more likely to be in the lowest scoring group in mathematics at age 15 (OECD, 2008). The U.S. Department of Schools, Children, and Families reports that "deprivation can have a large and pervasive impact on educational attainment . . . on average, even those children from lower

socio-economic groups performing well initially (at 22 months) were overtaken by others by the time they started primary school" (Gaskell & Levin, 2012, p. 13). Silver (2014) reiterates the reality that poverty is substantially associated with poor educational outcomes: "The universal pattern is: the higher the level of poverty, the lower the level of educational attainment; low levels of educational attainment, in turn, increase the likelihood of poverty" (p. 2). These outcomes in turn increase the likelihood of incarceration. In parts of Winnipeg's North End, 20 percent of young people graduate high school on time, while more than 90 percent of young people in suburban Winnipeg graduate on time (Brownell et al., (2010). These statistics provide a stark challenge to educators whose vision is to see schools as sites of human liberation. Behind each of these statistics are people, individuals and members of communities, who should have full opportunities to develop their capabilities to fully contribute to the greater society. Instead, many are left behind and become invisible; and a growing number of these people are students in our schools. Silver depicts the vicious poverty cycle as shown in Figure 1.
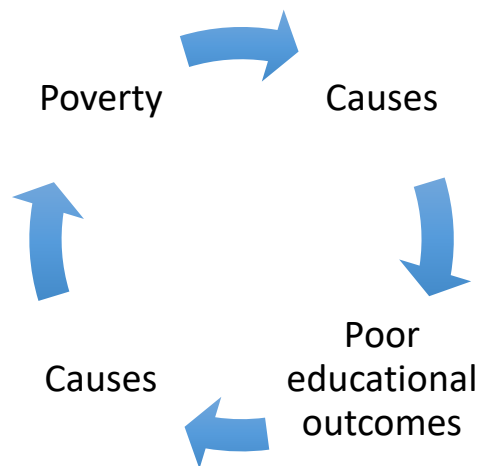
Figure 1. Cycle of poverty to poor educational outcomes and back to poverty. The diagram shows how living in poverty increases the chances that people will do poorly in education. Poor educational outcomes will increase the likelihood of continued poverty for individuals and their families. "Based on: Silver, J. (2014). *Poverty* (pp. XX-XX). Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood."

What Silver (2014) also says is in spite of the challenges, many individuals have been able to break out of the cycle, and we can be hopeful for the future. Recently, I have been rethinking the paradigms that have informed my work, my goals, and my overall effectiveness as an educational leader. As a framework of analysis, critical theory has been useful, as it challenges many of the foundational assumptions that bolster education systems in general, as well as the assumptions and paradigms of educational administrators, including myself, in particular. In contrast to positivist models of inquiry that traditionally have been utilized to make sense of education systems and the people who work within them, critical theory is concerned not only with critique but also with systems change, starting with a thorough analysis of particular social constructions at a given point in time (McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993). Critical theorists have suggested a need for educational leaders to link their exercise of power and influence with ongoing critical analysis, and to that end Bates (1980, 2006) advocates for a new model of educational administration based upon social justice while Foster (1986) suggests that hopeful, yet critical perspectives together with a dedication to political action are required of educational systems administrators. While critical theory offers a potentially powerful theory, it needs to be applied to a very real place and set of adverse circumstances (in this case, the reality of racialized, complex poverty in Winnipeg), and to the continuing ramifications of colonialism, racism, and neo-liberalism.

In a larger sense, even within an environment in which neo-liberalism exerts considerable influence upon educational philosophy, policy, and action globally, concerns for the real life issues of the larger society have emerged as major concerns for many educational administration scholars during the past 30 years. In the United States during the 1999 University Council of Educational Administrators (UCEA) conference, Catherine Marshall (2004) gathered a group of

scholars that became the group Leadership for Social Justice (LSJ). From an initial group of 140

researchers, the group maintains a focus on promoting "the research, practice, and policy foci

that build capacity for social justice" (p.9). Murphy (1999) identifies social justice as one of the

"powerful synthesizing paradigms embedded in the shifting landscape" (p. 54), and Furman

(2003) includes social justice within a general shift towards attention to moral purposes in the

leadership of schools. Most recently, the 2013 Annual General Conference of the American

Educational Research Association (AERA) was entitled "Education and Poverty: Theory,

Research, Policy and Praxis." Locally, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents

(MASS), Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA), and the Manitoba Teachers Society

(MTS) co-sponsored a major conference focused upon social justice in the fall of 2010, and the

spring and the fall 2015 *MASS Journal* was focused on equity. Paradoxically, all this has been

occurring during a tremendous societal shift towards neo-liberal social and economic policies

and orientations throughout western nation states during the past 40 years that is exacerbating the

gap between rich and poor. This irony is of great importance. From a critical stance we can

argue that despite the vast rhetoric suggesting schools are not working, schools are actually

working very well. They continue to be integral components of Western nations that are

extremely effective at serving the interests of powerful people, powerful families, and powerful

corporate interests while perpetuating the continued reproduction of a society characterized by

unequal social, economic, and political relations. During the past few decades, social justice has

emerged as a significant area of interest in educational research at the same time that neo-liberal

perspectives have been pervasive in all aspects of North American life, including schooling. It is

within this context of contradictions, that I am interested in the roles that superintendents can

play in school systems to address issues of complex poverty. I am interested in social justice, the emancipation or unleashing of the potential of all of our fellow citizens.

Strategies in Schools

Levin (2008) states that with all of the available research at hand, we can say we know what is to be done. Yet, while many excellent examples of educational success working with kids in poverty exist, conclusions to be drawn from a number of studies indicate that due to a lack of capacity or will, there exists "variable levels of commitment to and implementation of research based school improvement program strategies" (p. 403). Harris (1993) reports that improvements are rare in high poverty communities due to often limited resources, high staff and student turnover, and a historic lack of success, which results in an operational malaise. It is within this context that a number of theorists, including Levin (2008), Rothstein (2004), Noguera (2003), and Anyon (2005), provide compelling arguments for taking on the real battle that is out in the greater communities. However, they also believe that there is meaningful work to be done by educators in schools.

The intensification of neo-liberal approaches to everything in education, including the annual rituals of middle- and upper-middle class parents shopping for schools, the proliferation of iPads that are proposed to offer one stop shopping hardware, software, and pedagogical solutions in the name of 21st century learning, and the abject neglect of many low income neighborhood schools demonstrates the low expectations and resultant low resources and opportunities for kids in such communities. The growing presence of neo-liberalism in education is perhaps most obvious in the United States; however, each of the examples provided can be found in Manitoba. If the reality is that schools can serve only the interests of the privileged, then perhaps proclamations of critical work can only be that, proclamations, without the actions that

can effectively work to challenge the reproductive nature of most social institutions, including

schools. However, critical theoretical approaches are attractive to me because they can help us to

see schools and school systems as "sites of struggle" and can help us to recognize their roles in

maintaining and promoting the perpetuation of unjust societies. Critically theoretical work can

also assist us to see schools as institutions in which more equal relationships and, in fact, human

liberation can be considered and promoted.

While a dominant narrative (Postman, 1996) in North America is that leadership

continues to have much currency, the concept continues to be highly debated and contested by

critical theorists and others. On the surface, educational leadership is seen as influence exercised

formally and informally throughout districts at many levels, and the school system

superintendent is, at least figuratively, the primary organizational manager of a school district

(Manitoba Association of School Superintendents/Manitoba School Boards Association

[MASS/MSBA], 2009), engaging in work that is getting increasingly complex. Kowalski (2005)

and Farquhar, Leithwood, and Boich (1989) contend that the role of the superintendent has

evolved during the past 100 years to become increasingly demanding and yet always reflective of

social, political, and economic influences from the greater society. The modern day

superintendent, they suggest, operates in increasingly complicated and unpredictable

environments. In the American context, Grogan (2000) contends that superintendents need to

attend to a myriad of messages from a variety of publics that requires them to be both a

"politically astute entrepreneur and an expert educator" (p. 117). To further complicate the work,

very different perspectives and demands cry for very different solutions to educational problems

that are surfaced by various constituencies. Grogan suggests that what many have called a

postmodern era (Anderson, 1990; Cherryholmes, 1988; Hargreaves, 1994; Harvey, 1989;

Lyotard, 1979/1984; Nicholson, 1990), will continue to be characterized by a lack of coherence and direction that can only result in increasing pressure on school superintendents. Work within these increasingly complex and yet locally contextualized environments is indeed challenging, and it provides even more challenges for superintendents and others who attempt to address issues of racialized poverty and social exclusion.

Critical approaches surface a number of blind spots, problems, and paradoxes in the work of superintendents. Grogan (2000) suggests that a set of contradictory mindsets and practices that can facilitate this work includes comfort with contradiction, work through others, an appreciation of dissent, the development of a critical awareness of how children are being served, and the adoption of an ethic of care.

A personal question that I have is this: How can I play a part in advancing our knowledge and our individual and collective abilities to ensure that superintendents contribute to the creation of educational environments in which people challenge, develop, and, in the words of Foster (1986), "liberate human souls" (p. 18)? That is to say, specific to this study, how can the work of school superintendents become that of responding to complex, racialized poverty in ways that we have not necessarily or consistently done in the past? Currently, we live in prosperous times for many of our citizens. At the same time, significant fault lines are deepening between those who are fiscally solid and a growing number who are living in increasingly financial, economic, social, and psychological peril. More often than not, these fault lines parallel White/Brown-Black and colonialized/colonizer social demarcations within contemporary North American societies, and they speak to the realities of a poverty and social exclusion that is highly racialized.

It is within this context that school systems host the overwhelming majority of children aged 5 to 17, on average, some 195 days a year. It is within these experiences that much of what we do perpetuates the status quo. Many young people, often racialized, are turned away from any investment in contemporary life, while others are developing the interests and the abilities to launch significant challenges to the way things are. Every fall, 36 superintendents in Manitoba, like their counterparts throughout North America, welcome hundreds of principals who direct thousands of teachers who teach and, hopefully, nurture hundreds of thousands of students. If we are to truly expand democratic thinking, democratic sensibilities, and democratic action, then surely there is further work for all of us in education systems. Foster's (1986) interpretation of a professional ethic of educational leadership is that "each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of a human life; this is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas" (p. 33)

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Problem Statement

For Bates (2006), Foster (1986), Giroux (1983, 1988, 1997), Larson and Murtadha (2002), and other critical theorists who work in education and educational administration, the ability of individual actors to engage in public life through rational debate and a focus on human emancipation is paramount. As Cornel West (1993) so eloquently states, "leaders are to become organic cultural catalysts . . . a person, who can stay attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer, yet maintains a grounding in affirming and enabling subcultures of criticism" (p. 22). Sen (1999) asserts that public school systems have as their core function fostering the development of full citizens in environments in which all individuals have access to and are encouraged to gain powerful knowledge; the intellectual, social, and emotional assets; and the

personal and interpersonal capabilities that can provide access to the opportunities and freedoms

enjoyed by all others in society. This means more than seeing young people graduate and it

means more than good test scores. In fact, the mission statement of the provincial department

responsible for educating Manitoba's youth, Education and Advanced Learning, challenges us to

really consider and work to develop all of our children:

> . . . to ensure that all Manitoba's children and youth have access to an array of educational opportunities such that every learner experiences success through relevant, engaging, and high quality education that prepares them for lifelong learning and citizenship in a democratic, socially just, and sustainable society. (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2013, p. 1)

The definitions and the understandings of the phrase *social justice* are varied. Larson and

Murtadha (2002) propose that the work of social justice oriented leaders is to engage the

communities in which they have influence in ongoing, dialogical processes in which all

concerned gain insight into their local existing socio-economic and political realities, as well as

develop a growing capacity to act upon their new knowledge. Sen (1999) further challenges

those in positions of influence to consider "what we would do if we had the means to include all"

(p. 34), as doing so requires us to shed light upon the inequalities that are limiting the

opportunities and achievements of so many.

As is the case in most jurisdictions throughout North America, the organizational

management of school districts in Manitoba is often characterized by a broad distinction between

the policy-setting role of the school board and the administrative functions of the superintendent

and her/his professional staff: "A board governs primarily by defining policy and the

superintendent acts as the executive of the division by guiding all daily functions and activities"

(MASS/MSBA, 2009, p. 1). If organization charts are the measure, then the superintendent is

formally the most powerful and influential employee in most school districts.

It also means that superintendents must accept that change is necessary. It also means that they must accept that from a critical perspective, systemic change of this nature is often incremental by nature and that the challenges presented by poverty and social exclusion cannot be addressed simply through an annual strategic plan. If critically informed work is to be done, it will require a continuous ballet of balancing the interests of many, conceding some battles, at times agreeing to difficult compromises, while always keeping an eye upon a North Star (Fenstermacher, 2000). It means taking advantage of documents, policies, and practices that already exist. Regardless of the varied theoretical approaches to leadership, all superintendents need to attend to all of this work.

However, is the work that is done by most superintendents actually helping to maintain existing power relationships and inequities, whether knowingly, or unknowingly? While almost all school districts have utopian mission statements that speak of success for all learners, and the development of global citizens, I believe critical theoretical approaches can help superintendents see schools and school systems as sites of struggle. They and others must interrogate the protection and promotion of various interests that lie beneath all decisions: curricular, resource allocation, staffing, and pedagogy. Critical approaches can help us to see schools as institutions in which more equal relationships and, in fact, human liberation can be considered and promoted.

Noguera (2003) and Silver (2014) suggest that this is work that can be done from within systems. Foster (1986) made the distinction between two types of leadership. *Protest leadership* emerges from unhappiness and resentment, and it seeks to overthrow existing systems. Those who demonstrate *institution leadership* work within systems and attempt to influence others to commit to a shared vision, co-develop goals, and continually reform the existing culture.

Individuals must have the ability and willingness to impart their values to systems to do this work. This requires intellectual work and much more as it is intuitive, messy, and concerns tacitly held values and narratives.

It is important to surface the unique social, political, economic, and social contexts within which each superintendent finds himself or herself. For each superintendent, the context is in many ways unique, and so each, if inclined towards work that advances the cause of social justice and equity, has unique challenges and opportunities. Given the dispositions and skills of each superintendent, the context will provide (or not) unique opportunities to forward social justice and equity agendas. Given the critical nature of this project and a focus on district-level leadership, the critical methodological work of Robinson (1994) will be used to inform central questions of this project. Robinson (1994) argues that critical research must result in the identification of potential solutions to problematic conditions. Critical research must go beyond the identification of structural constraints and actually address the "individual or the collective action of agents which can drive the problem resolution process" (p.61). Robinson also states that the researcher must find ways to motivate the actors to actually do something about the identified problem, what Lather calls "catalytic validity" (cited in Robinson, p. 61).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the understandings and actions of four superintendents in Winnipeg, Manitoba related to complex Indigenous and racialized poverty. In the study, I address the following questions:

1. *How do the participating superintendents articulate their understanding of poverty and its impact on students' school experiences, and how have the following experiences informed these understandings: (a) early life experiences; (b) initial teaching experiences; and (c) academic background and professional learning.*

2. *How do these superintendents describe the socio-political and organizational environment that informs and influences their work as senior educational administrators?*

3. *How do these superintendents describe their roles as senior administrators within these environments in relation to being able to influence systems?*

4. *What actions have the participants undertaken to address issues of racialized poverty?*

Research Design

This is a qualitative study of how superintendents understand issues related to poverty in general and complex Indigenous and racialized poverty in particular; and of how these understandings have influenced their work in highly complex, political, and contextual work environments. Specifically, the methodology that I have used is qualitative inquiry, informed by critical theory. Defining research methodologies that are to be understood as critical depends upon how one defines the word. Robinson (1994) references the work of Fay (1987), when she argues that precise definitions are challenging because critical research and critical theory refer to methodology and to a loose collection of social theories. As indicated earlier, Lindle (2004) suggests Culbertson, Donmoyer, Imber and Scheurich, English, Greenfield, and Willower and Forsyth as influential researchers in educational administration who have been critical of the status quo. However, Carspecken and Apple (1992), Lather (1991), and Robinson (1994) argue that critical research is to be characterized by work that extends beyond the mere observation and critique of contemporary social phenomena.

As a methodology, Robinson (1994) suggests that critical research begins with the frustrations of a group of people, analysis of their social conditions, and the development of

individual understandings of those conditions. She argues that this is to be followed by coming to understand alternative frameworks that better serve their interests, and subsequently the development of a "program of social action" (p. 58) to transform the original situation. Carspecken and Apple (1992) describe the orientating theory of the critical researcher as "consisting of the concerns about inequality and the relationship of human activity, culture, and social and political structures" (p. 511).

As a social theory, Robinson (1994) distances *reflective* critical theories, which attempt to explain the origins of persistent oppression in contemporary society, from *action-oriented* interpretations, which require a commitment to making change or action. For the purposes of this dissertation, I recognize the participants are not particularly knowledgeable of critical theories, and thus the emphasis has been placed on reflective critical theories while exploring what action-oriented work might be done in the future resulting from the findings of this research.

Research Participants

The research [or the study] was conducted with four participants who, at the time, were working as superintendents in Winnipeg. Using a small number of participants allowed me to spend significant time gathering and reviewing data related to the particular demographic and organizational settings of each of the participants, and it provided me with the opportunity to spend meaningful time with each of them.

At the time that the study was conducted, Winnipeg was served by six public school divisions. I wanted to work with superintendents who had been in their positions for at least three years. That was the case in five of the divisions, including Louis Riel School Division where I serve as superintendent, thus I approached the other four who had been working superintendents in Winnipeg for at least three years, myself excluded. I approached each of the potential

participants via telephone and email, followed by a formal process of informed consent. The four superintendents agreed to participate in the study. They shared insights that shed light into how superintendents can influence the interplay between school systems and complex Indigenous and racialized poverty.

Data Collection

First, I gathered basic information on each of the divisions served by the participants. I was interested in the key documents that articulate the values and direction of each of the divisions: mission statements, strategic plans, annual reports, and policies that may be related to issues of poverty and diversity. Most school systems have vision or mission statements that espouse the key beliefs and values of the organization. Notions of democracy, agency, and equal opportunity more often than not characterize such statements. If these statements truly reflect what the leadership and membership of these organizations believe, then, surely, leadership of these organizations should be oriented towards the manifestation of these ideals or how these policy statements are understood and interpreted. Even if the purported ideals are not believed or acted upon by divisional leaders, this would continue to be an interesting notion to explore further. As a requirement of provincial authority in the province of this study, all school districts produce an annual report with the intention of sharing, with parents/guardians and other stakeholders, information on their priorities, initiatives, and progress. The review of this information provided some contextual insights into whether or not each organization had any language speaking to issues of complex Indigenous and racialized poverty.

Next, informed by the critical research methodological work of Carspecken and Apple (1992), Fay (1987), and Robinson (1994), I engaged the participants in a series of individual interviews and group dialogues. As I worked towards answering my research questions, the work

of Fay (1987), Carspecken and Apple (1992), and Robinson (1994) helped me be mindful of concepts such as the importance of continuous movement between the ideas of myself and those of the participants. A focus on reflexivity and openness to the co-creation of new mindsets through dialogical methods helped underpin the work. It was critical to acknowledge the importance of creatively generating a collective will to act and engender new ontological and epistemological ways of thinking.

In order to foster my own reflexivity, I maintained a reflective journal throughout the research. As the researcher, the potential existed for me to be in a position of power over the participants; however, each of the participants was working at the level of superintendent, and I was not in a supervisory role with any of them. My experiences and perspectives acquired as a district-level administrator, and as a Person of Colour influenced my interpretations. I have had experiential and scholarly interests in social exclusion, racism, and poverty, and I have attempted to be grounded in notions of criticality. I recognize that these experiences and orientations have doubtlessly influenced my participation in and interpretation of the research. Consistent with critical research methodologies (Griffiths, 1998), as a researcher, I needed to demonstrate an ongoing willingness to be highly reflexive.

I attempted to make the research meaningful to the participants and to myself, yet manageable for myself as researcher and the participants who maintain full-time responsibilities. I acknowledge the limitations of qualitative research and additional considerations related to my position as researcher. I believe the study will make a valuable contribution to the superintendency, to work that addresses equity and education, and to reformist work related to issues of poverty and human emancipation in general and racialized poverty and social exclusion in particular.

Limitations

The participants in this qualitative inquiry were four superintendents in the City of Winnipeg Manitoba, Canada. This study explores their thinking and actions related to complex Indigenous and racialized poverty based upon their unique life experiences, and their work as superintendents in Winnipeg. Their experiences and the contexts within which each of them work is individually unique from each other's experiences and work environments, from those of other urban settings, and certainly from those in rural settings. It is not intended that this study profiles or in any manner evaluates the individual participants in this study, nor does it provide the depth of information that would be needed for such an endeavor.

Operational Definitions

I acknowledge the reality and impact of poverty in North America in general, and in Winnipeg specifically. I have been interested in how racism and poverty have interacted over time to create racialized poverty and how, together with neo-liberalism, a deep and complex poverty has become a reality in Winnipeg. As stated earlier, I believe that the work of superintendents can and should be about enhancing the life opportunities of all students, and I support the focus on social justice that has emerged within education studies during the past few decades. To address issues of social justice and equity, my lens is informed by critical theoretical approaches to education. There are a number of terms I will use in this study that are open to interpretation. Thus, it is important that I clarify how I am using these terms.

Poverty

Poverty is often equated with the lack of food, clothing, and shelter and is generally associated with the developing world. Beyond this simplistic definition, Townsend (1993),

Raphael (2008), and Sen (1999) have advocated for an expanded perspective that includes lack of access to a quality of life enjoyed by the majority of a society and a lack of access to the assets and of opportunities to develop personal capabilities that allows people to access and use the freedoms that wealthy nations like Canada purport to provide. It is my perspective that poverty of this nature can impact people in all countries and all ethnic groups.

Racialized Poverty

Poverty impacts people of all ages and ethnic groups. In Winnipeg, there are people who are of White European descent who live in poverty. That said, Anyon (2005), Gaskell and Levin (2012), Apple (2003), and Omi and Winant (1993) have argued that poverty and exclusion in North America is largely racialized. In Canada, we have a colonial history and postcolonial reality in which the Indigenous people of Canada have been systemically victimized and marginalized; race has been an important social construct for hundreds of years; and recent immigration has been largely made up of visible minorities or *racialized* groups of people, often from countries also impacted by a colonial legacy. The racialized nature of contemporary Canadian poverty is made clear when we consider that while 17% of all Canadian youth live in poverty, the percentages expand to 27% of Métis, Inuit, non-status First Nations youth; 33% of immigrant/refugee youth; 22% of youth in racialized communities; and 50% of status First Nations youth (MacDonald & Wilson, 2013).

Complex Indigenous and Racialized Poverty

Silver (2014, 2016) states that beyond a lack of income, complex poverty is characterized by a host of additional challenges that trap individuals and communities in cycles of often multigenerational poverty. These additional challenges often include poor health, joblessness, lack of educational achievement, gang activity, and high incarceration rates. Complex poverty is

growing in many urban centers, is a product of neoliberalism, and is increasingly racialized. In this thesis, I use the terms related to poverty largely interchangeably, however the focus is the nature of / and the understandings of the participants of complex poverty in Winnipeg, which it is argued impact the Aboriginal and racialized communities in a significant manner.

Aboriginal/Indigenous

As with most things in language, names and references are determined by use and contexts are constantly shifting. Many common names applied to people in Canada who have been here prior to European colonization come from terms used by others to describe them; the term *Sioux*, commonly used to refer to the Dakota people, is thought to derive from a pejorative term used by Anishinaabe neighbors.

Terms used to refer in general to people who lived in what is now Canada prior to European colonialization have included *Indian*, or *Aboriginal*. These are terms that have been imposed upon people and communities. Increasingly, communities that have been in existence prior to colonial times are referring to themselves in words from their original languages including the *Musqueam* and Okanagan Nation in British Columbia, and the *Anishinaabe* in Manitoba. A popular term in Canada to refer to all people who have origins on the land prior to colonialization has been *Aboriginal*. The term that gained significant currency with its use in the repatriated Canadian Constitution of 1982. The term *First Nations* has also been popular, however, it has shifted towards an identification with specific legally recognized reserve communities and people who are recognized members of those specific communities and as such, excludes non-status Indians, Inuit, Métis, and those who have Aboriginal ancestry, but less clear identification with a particular community.

Recently, there has been a growing mobilization of peoples around the world who existed on the land prior to Western colonization. The term *Indigenous* has gained prominence as it identifies peoples in similar circumstances throughout the world. In this dissertation, the term Aboriginal will be used when people or documents are quoted who used the term. Otherwise the term Indigenous will be used.

Critical Theory and Educational Administration

As distinguished from positivist theories that are used to observe social interactions, analysis from a critical theoretical perspective must pursue human emancipation, "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer, 1982, p. 244).

With regards to educational administration and leadership, Lindle (2004) names a number of theorists who have questioned an increasingly conservative agenda in Western school systems. Park (1999) argues that Bates (1980, 2006) and Foster (1986, 2004) have proposed methodological approaches that seek to extend beyond simply creating greater understanding of contemporary social realities, but actually create changes.

Bates (1984) argues that the very characteristics of the education system that help to sustain the state are also contributing to an emerging crisis. The crisis is characterized by a failure to foster individual prosperity and societal harmony that ensures access to and the development of the substantial freedoms spoken of by the economist Amartya Sen (1999), including personal freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, and protective security. Contrary to the positivist mainstream constructions of educational administration that had been adhered to for years, Bates (1980, 2006) argues that the field of education requires an intense investigation from a sociological perspective, not just an epistemological one. We must recognize that knowledge is socially constructed, "not either divinely inspired, inherent in our

minds, or in a world external to us" (Young, 2008, p. 5)—important notions for educational

leaders to consider as they consider issues within their spheres of influence.

School Division/District

Throughout North America, most public schools fall under the jurisdiction of a school

district that is governed by an elected board of trustees and administered by a superintendent. In

the province of Manitoba, the term *division* is used instead of *district*. In this study, both terms

are used and are to be viewed as synonymous.

Influentials

A dominant narrative (Postman, 1996) in North America contends that the concept of

leadership continues to have much currency. Rottmann (2007) argues that leadership is in the

domain of individuals in positions of official power, and therefore, as the chief executive officer,

the primary organizational manager of a school district (MASS/MSBA, 2009), the school system

superintendent is the de facto leader who can make things happen. However, over the past few

decades, the concept of leadership has become highly debated and contested by critical theorists

and others. During the past 30 years, studies of district-level policies and strategies that have

attempted to link the work of district-level leaders to positive outcomes for students have largely

failed to shed light onto how the leadership characteristics and actions of individual actors in

district-level positions impact on student outcomes (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001; LaRoque &

Coleman, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Together with

positional, hierarchical power, individuals can exert influence upon others and systems. As a

result, in this study, rather than adhering to the traditional notions of leadership, I use the term

influentials, to speak to those, including superintendents, who can influence change.

Social Exclusion

The concept of social exclusion describes the structures and the dynamic processes of inequality among groups in society that result in unequal access to critical resources and social capital that is increasingly a reality for racialized groups in Canada (Galabuzi, 2006; Silver, 2016). Social exclusion is reinforced by institutional realities that provide advantages and benefits to some individuals and groups and disadvantages and burdens to others (Razack, 2002).

Superintendent

Throughout North America, most public schools fall under the jurisdiction of a school district that is governed by an elected board of trustees. The person who is the direct report of the board, the chief executive officer (CEO), is known as a *superintendent* in most public education systems. In this study, three of the CEOs were titled superintendent, in the fourth was titled chief superintendent.

Significance of the Study

I have worked as a district-level influential for sixteen years. From my own perspective the work is incredibly complex and extremely political, and there cannot be a recipe book from which to advance the cause of greater equity for all our students. That said, I believe we can learn from the stories of those who have made a difference, no matter how small or contextualized. As I move towards the end of my career, I am increasingly interested in how we can advance our knowledge and our individual and collective abilities to ensure that superintendents contribute to the creation of educational environments in which people challenge, develop, and, in the words of Foster (1986), "liberate human souls" (p. 18). How can the work of school superintendents become that of responding to complex Indigenous and

racialized poverty in ways that we have not necessarily or consistently adopted in the past? We live in prosperous times. Concurrently, significant fault lines are deepening between those who are fiscally solid and a growing number who are living in increasingly financial, economic, social, and psychological peril. More often than not, these fault lines parallel White/Brown-Black and colonialized/colonizer social demarcations within contemporary North American societies, and speak to the realities of a poverty and social exclusion that is highly racialized.

Complex Indigenous and racialized poverty exists in Canada in general and in the city of Winnipeg specifically. Child poverty obviously has a negative impact on our youth who are served by school systems. As Silver (2014) and others have demonstrated, poverty can lead to poor educational outcomes. Concern for matters of equity and social justice is growing in the dialogue of public education, and, while schools cannot eliminate poverty, there is much we can do in schools to address issues of poverty. Finally, superintendents, as de facto lead administrators, as influentials in school systems, can play a constructive role in creating conditions for greater equity in Canadian society and improved life opportunities of our children.

Silver and Toews (2009) have reported that government initiatives such as the Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP) and the Core Area Initiative (CAI) have been uneven in their attempts to mitigate poverty. Nevertheless, one of the positive by-products of these efforts has been the creation of innovative inner city CBO's (Community Based Organizations). Today, organizations such as the Spence Neighborhood Association, Rossbrook House, the North Point Douglas Women's Centre, and the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre represent grassroots individuals and groups who do play an important part in creating the means by which inner city poverty will be overcome (Silver & Toews, 2009).

When educators engage others in communities as equals and as change agents, many good things happen. To expand community development, Anyon (2005) provides a number of suggestions for educational leaders, including partnerships with local business and union groups to provide apprenticeship programs that can be expanded so that non-college bound students can enter the local labour force. When co-operation occurs, schools typically improve and student achievement rises for several reasons, including improved instructional pedagogy, accountability, and resources (Anyon, 2005; Gold, Simon, & Brown, 2002); decreasing student mobility (Whalen, 2002); and increased trust between the parties (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). From its inception in 2007 in Winnipeg, the *Wayfinders* Program continues to serve residents of the Elwick Manitoba Housing complex, and others in the community facing financial and socio-economic challenges. Rather than create an exclusionary alternative school, participants in *Wayfinders* continue to attend their community high school while also accessing tutoring in a neighbourhood storefront centre during the evenings and on the weekends. During the 2015-2016 school year there were approximately 250 students (grades 9 through 12) participating in the program, 20% of the local high school population.

Theoretical Frameworks

This next section provides a brief overview of the central concepts underpinning the study before each is taken up in much more depth in the rest of the review of literature.

Carr (2000) states that critical theory maintains an emancipatory interest that extends beyond understanding to contemplating necessary reform. This review will include an exploration of the particular perspectives that critical theory can provide upon contemporary social conditions, specifically public schooling and the agency of school system leadership. Marcuse (1991) and Adorno (1984) argue that what we often understand as facts or common

sense, are in fact social and culturally created, while Giroux (1983) has found that what we view as truth has reinforced dominant understandings of existing social order. Critical theory can be useful in probing superintendents' understandings of racialized poverty, and social exclusion in interesting ways. Freire (1985) and Giroux (1983, 1988) write that critical perspectives could be helpful in reimagining school systems as places in which a struggle for equity and social justice can occur, rather than being places that reproduce capitalist relations and dominant ideologies. These ideas are explored in Chapter Two.

Leadership

Educational leadership and the superintendency are explored in Chapter Three. I assume that improved life conditions for those living in poverty and social exclusion is required by human agents, including those in positions to influence change such as superintendents. In the literature, most assume that leadership resides solely in the domain of individual powerbrokers (Grogan, 2000; Leithwood, 2005; Rottmann, 2007), specifically within the powerful traditions of instructional leadership (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom 2004; Togneri & Anderson, 2003) and transformational leadership (Heck & Hallinger 1996; Leithwood, et al. 2004). However, Leithwood et al. (2004) also conclude that much of this research places too much importance upon individual leaders and little evidence is shown that links their work to improved capabilities for young people.

To further understand the limitations of individual leadership, Rottmann (2007) argues that the influence of rational technicism and neo-liberalism has resulted in many individuals in leadership positions supporting existing unequal social arrangements through an acceptance of broad narratives in which equal opportunities already exist in society, if only disadvantaged individuals in communities would simply grasp upon them. She further argues that for those

division-level leaders interested in addressing equity, the environments in which they work, influenced by rational technicism and neo-liberalism, are incredibly stifling and challenging.

In addition to rational technicism and neo-liberalism, Rottmann (2007) views critical orientations as a third leading idea influencing education. Bates (1980) argues for an intensive investigation of education from a sociological perspective beyond the positivist orientations that had become the norm. Within this field, Shields (2010) has advanced a transforming leadership, similar to notions advanced by Freire (1970, 1990) and Foster (1986), that is characterized by attention to the moral and ethical challenges that help to maintain inequity in society.

Foster (2004), Postman (1996), and Rottmann (2007) strongly suggest the need for new narratives to inform educational leadership. Such narratives could be informed by critical feminist (Grogan, 2000; Flax, 1990), postmodernist (Foucault, 1980; Grogan, 2000), critical race (Jackson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994), and post colonialist (Said, 1994; Hall, 2009) theories. Rottmann (2007), through her topology of educational leadership, suggests that a need for more critically informed work exists, while Grogan (2000) argues that through critically informed research, new progressive and critical perspectives of division level leaderships can emerge.

As I continued to formulate my thoughts on leadership and influence, (a) I believe in the importance of human agency; (b) I believe that superintendents can be influentials—powerful people; and (c) I am interested in the ways that superintendents as influentials can contribute to changes that support social justice through their efforts with others collectively in areas of influence.

The Superintendency

This project explored the work that is done in the superintendency. While the superintendency has not been particularly well researched, especially when compared to the school principalship, it has attracted some interest in the past 40 years (Grogan, 2000). Historical perspectives on the superintendency in Canada and the United States (Cuban, 1988; Boich, Farquhar & Leithwood, 1989) conclude that the position has evolved and in its contemporary manifestation calls for Superman/Superwoman-like attributes.

Grogan (2000) has identified a number of researchers who provide alternative and critical perspectives on the superintendency. Chase (1995) and Lindle (2004) are among others who have used gender studies to inform the superintendency. Cuban (1976), Hess (1999), and Tallerico (1994) have suggested that in America much district-level reform, informed by positivist rational technicism and neo-liberal ideals, has been ineffective at improving school outcomes for all students and particularly those traditionally less successful in school. Alternatively, Grogan (2000), Beck (1996), and Fenstermacher (1996) have advocated for a focus on ethics.

This research project focuses on the work of the superintendency in the localized context of Winnipeg Manitoba. The province of Manitoba is served by 36 school divisions serving a total of 172, 023 students in the public school board system (MECY, 2012). Ranging from systems of 713 students to 29, 848 students ((MECY, 2016), each of these school divisions has a superintendent serving as the de facto educational and administrative leader of the organization, while reporting to elected school boards typically consisting of nine trustees.

Given the moral dilemmas that surround educational leaders at this current moment, including the pervasiveness of complex, racialized poverty and inequality, if this research can

shine a light upon processes and practices that advance the cause of human emancipation from district-level positions, including the superintendency, then surely it will make a worthwhile contribution.

In the literature review that follows in Chapters Two and Three, an overview of the relevant literature on the rationale for this project, and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks through which to respond to the rationale will be provided. In Chapter Two, and in response to the first of the research questions in this study—*How do superintendents make sense of racialized socio-economic demarcations in society?* this review begins with an exploration of racialized poverty in contemporary society. The research questions listed at the beginning of this chapter are informed by the theoretical framework of critical theory. In the findings chapters—Chapters Five through seven—I explore how those engaged in educational leadership in general, and district superintendents in particular, have made sense of racialized and socio-economic differences, made sense of what they are and are not able to do in their positions as superintendents in light of racialized poverty and social exclusion, and also shed light upon promising practices in schools and systems.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW:

POVERTY, RACIALIZED POVERTY, AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Defining poverty is tricky. Two particular schools of thought pertaining to poverty include, (a) poverty is caused by moral, social, and economic failures at the individual or local community level, and (b) larger structural dynamics including governmental policy and imperatives of the global market economy, that are well out of the control of individual actors are the causes of poverty. For educational leaders, these diverse starting points have led to dramatically different work: do we help individual students fit into the existing systems, or do we also have a further responsibility of tackling structural impediments that may exist in our school systems and beyond?

Poverty is often equated with the lack of basic necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter—by individuals or a community (Poverty, 1995). Generally associated with the developing world, poverty is often understood as "when an individual or community is lacking the basic necessities of life" (Raphael, 2011, p. 12). Williamson and Reutter (1999) suggest that by this definition, very little poverty exists in Canada. However, DeGroot-Maggetti (2002) argues that our choice of definitions and measures reflects our values. If we believe that people need to be able to participate fully in the life of their communities, the measures will accordingly be much broader than those identified above. Townsend (1993) advocates for an expanded perspective that includes lack of access to a quality of life enjoyed by the majority of a society. As Raphael (2008) states, "poverty is the inability to take advantage of all of the opportunities provided by living in a wealthy industrialized nation such as Canada" (p. 13). From Raphael's perspective, being impoverished has been characterized by being ill-nourished, having the absence of good health, experiencing premature mortality, and also lacking the ability to participate in the life and

happiness of the greater community. Expanding what can be understood as poverty even further, Sen (1999) argues that poverty is present when citizens do not have, nor do they have access to, the assets and personal capabilities that allows them to access and use the freedoms that wealthy nations like Canada purport to provide. A variety of theorists argue that any definition of poverty must take into account the economic, psychological, social as well as physical well-being of individuals, their families and their communities (Carter & Polevychok, 2009; DeGroot-Maggetti, 2002; Galabuzi, 2001; Kozol, 1992; Mitchell & Shillington, 2002; Sen, 1992; Silver, 2006; Silver, 2016; Vaught, 2011).

Sen (1992) argues that poverty is more than a lack of income. He states that the "relative deprivation in terms of income: e.g., the inability to buy certain commodities can become absolute deprivation in terms of capabilities. A dominant view is that people without capabilities have brought their conditions upon themselves.

> A political economy and colonialism lens is an antidote to the dominant way of understanding poverty. Poverty is typically blamed on those who are poor. The view is that they are the authors of their own misfortune – they are lazy, or drink too much or have too many kids. Hence, there is little public support for investing in anti-poverty initiatives. So an important part of solving poverty and all its related problems has to do with how we come to understand the causes of poverty. (Silver, 2016, p. 13)

It can lead to the impossibility of certain social functions, for example, appearing in public without shame" (p. 115). Using Sen's criteria, Canada and the United States seem to have a high degree of poverty indeed (Olive, 2007). Silver (2016) provides a "political economy and colonialism lens" (p. 13) to make sense of poverty in modern Canada.

Child Poverty

Many of these people living in poverty are children. *Child poverty* as a term can be misleading, for, as Silver (2014) states, "children are poor because their families are poor, and in

that sense child poverty is actually family poverty." However, given that school systems work with children and educators like to believe we can positively influence the life trajectories of students, insights into child poverty are important indeed. Given the adverse effects of complex poverty and Silver's (2014) or Sen's (1992) sense that poverty results in a deprivation of capabilities, impoverished children are often damaged and disadvantaged children in a wide variety of ways. They are more likely to experience poor health, less likely to succeed in school, more likely to be apprehended by child welfare authorities, more likely to be in trouble with the law, and less likely to secure good jobs when they reach a working age, all of which can refuel the multi-generational cycle of poverty of which too many of our youth are at risk.

Again, the reason this is so important in the context of this study is that, as Gaskell and Levin (2012) and Silver (2014) have made clear, poverty often leads to poor educational outcomes and poor educational outcomes clearly can result in poverty. Thus my interest in what in fact can be done to mitigate this vicious cycle.

The Canadian Context: Determining Levels of Poverty Using Economic Measures

In Canada, an official poverty line does not exist and "the varying measures of poverty are essentially political concepts" (MacDonald & Wilson, 2013, p. 37). In Canada historically, poverty has been measured through a variety of no less than five economic metrics (*Social Transfers*, 2000). The Market Basket Measure (MBM) determines the cost of a specific basket of goods and services for a family of four as identified in a particular community. A family is considered low-income if they have a post-tax income level lower than the cost of the basket. Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs (or LICOs) and low-income measure (LIMs) are used to identify goods and services considered basic necessities, and calculations are conducted to determine what it would cost a person to attain all of them. Through LICO, poverty is defined as

those Canadians who spend 20% more of their gross income on food, shelter, and clothing than the average Canadian. The LIM is equal to half of the median income in a Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), adjusted for family size. In 2007, the pre-tax LIM for a single person was $18,178 and $36,456 for a family of four with two adults and two children (Eckerle Curwood, 2009). A significant problem with the LICO is that it was last updated in 1992, although, "in the past, rebasing was done every five years, thereby keeping pace with the average family" (MacDonald & Wilson, 2013, p. 37). If previous rebasing provides any insights, the current LICO is about 20% below what it should be, making it an out-dated measure of low-income. In many of its reports, the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) uses the after-tax low income measure (AT-LIM) given a simpler structure and international comparability. The AT-LIM is based upon the Canadian Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) that is conducted yearly on income and other variables. Two limitations of the AT-LIM are that it does not include Aboriginal reserves, making it a poor measure of Indigenous poverty; and the sample size is small when compared to that gained through long-form census (Eckerle Curwood, 2009). A more comprehensive picture of low income can be gained by comparing data from all three of these measures. In 2006, the percentage of Canadians with incomes under the LICO was 10.5%; under the MBM, 11.9% (Eckerle Curwood, 2009); while the AT-LIM child poverty rate in 2008 was 14.5% (excluding those on reserves). Regardless of the measures, poverty is a problem in Canada. While the Canadian economy has doubled between 1981 and 2010 in inflation-adjusted terms, poverty for working adults and seniors, and for children, is higher than in 1989 when the Canadian parliament voted to eliminate poverty by the year 2000 (Yalnizyan, 2013). Figure 2, below, shows the percentage of Canadians living below the AT-LIM by age.
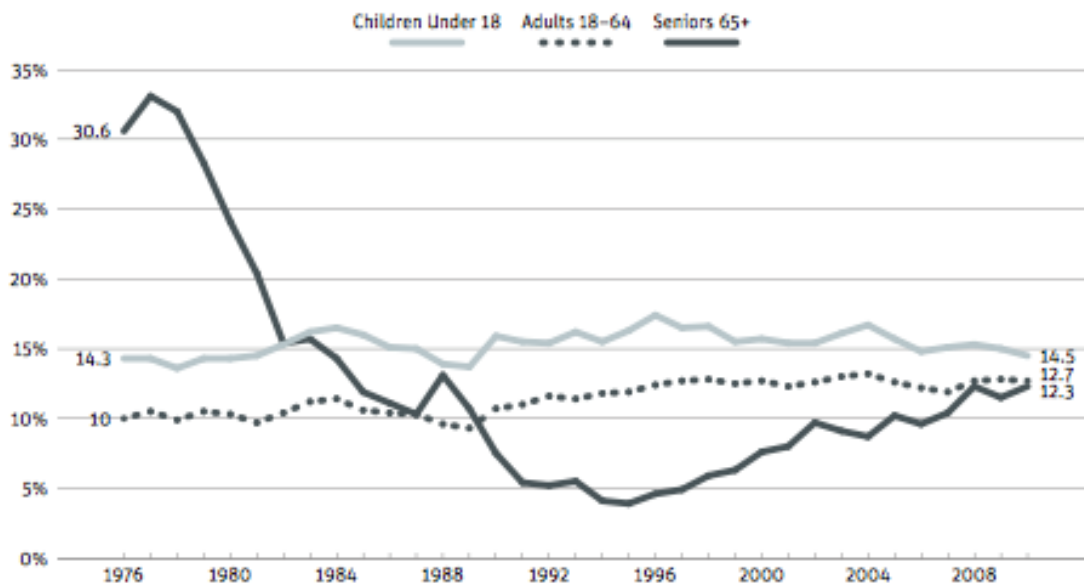
Figure 2. Percent of Canadians with incomes below the AT-LIM by age, Canada, 1976-2008. Graph indicates the percentage of seniors (dark line), adults between 18 and 64 (dotted line), and children under 18 (light line) with incomes below the AT-LIM. In 2008, 14.5% of children were living under the line. Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 202 - 0802

During the month of March 2015, Canadian food banks helped 852,137 separate

individuals, an increase of 26%, compared to March 2008. During 2015, over 1.7 million

Canadians accessed a food bank. Of those who accessed the food banks, 33% were children and

youth under 18 years old. Half of the families assisted live with children, a level 28% higher than

in 2008 (Hunger Count 2015, 2016). In Canada, one in eight children live in households

experiencing life under the low-income cut-off after social transfers (Campaign 2000, 2009);

these people have "inadequate income, no wealth, and very little social and cultural capital"

(Gaskell & Levin, 2012, p.14). Conditions are not improving either; 15.1 per cent of Canadian

children lived in poverty in 1989 and this expanded to 17.7 by 2004. Between 2002 and 2007,

28.7% of Canadian children lived in low-income circumstances for at least one year, and 11% of

all children in Canada lived in poverty for 4-6 years (*Income Trends*, 2009). Of 30 member

nations of the Organization of Economically Developed Nations (OECD), Canada ranks 25th

with regards to our ability to lower the prevalence of poverty (Yalnizyan, 2013).

Income Inequality

Income inequality is the growing differential between individuals who have and those

who do not. In Canada, income inequality has increased more rapidly than in any other OECD

nation during a period from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. Canada dropped in rank from 14th

to 22nd while 15 of 34 other nations are reducing income inequality (MacDonald & Wilson,

2013). In an OECD (2008) report, Canada ranked less unequal than the United Kingdom and the

United States, but more than Australia, South Korea, and the Western European countries. In

spite of economies thriving through neo-liberal economic strategies, high-income families have

had almost all income gains in Canada. Prior to 1980, rising real incomes was a prevalent pattern

for most Canadians. Using the GINI Coefficient as a measure of income inequality, in which a

measure of zero means relative income equality throughout a society and one is complete

inequality, inequality has increased in Canada from .38 in 1980 to .42 in 2005 (Eckerle

Curwood, 2009). Wealth (accumulated assets) distribution is even more unequal than income

distribution in Canada. Seventy percent of all assets were owned by 20% of Canadians in 1984

while the bottom 60% owned 6% of assets. A further indication is the evolution of the tax rates

for high-income earners. A tax rate of 80% in 1948 is now 43% in 2009 (Silver, 2014) while the

combined provincial and federal corporate tax rates are down from 50% in the 1980s to 29.5% in

2010. Finally, the top 1% of income earners accounted for 32% of income growth between 1997

and 2007 (see Figure 3), four times the gains made during the 1960s (Yalnizyan, 2013).
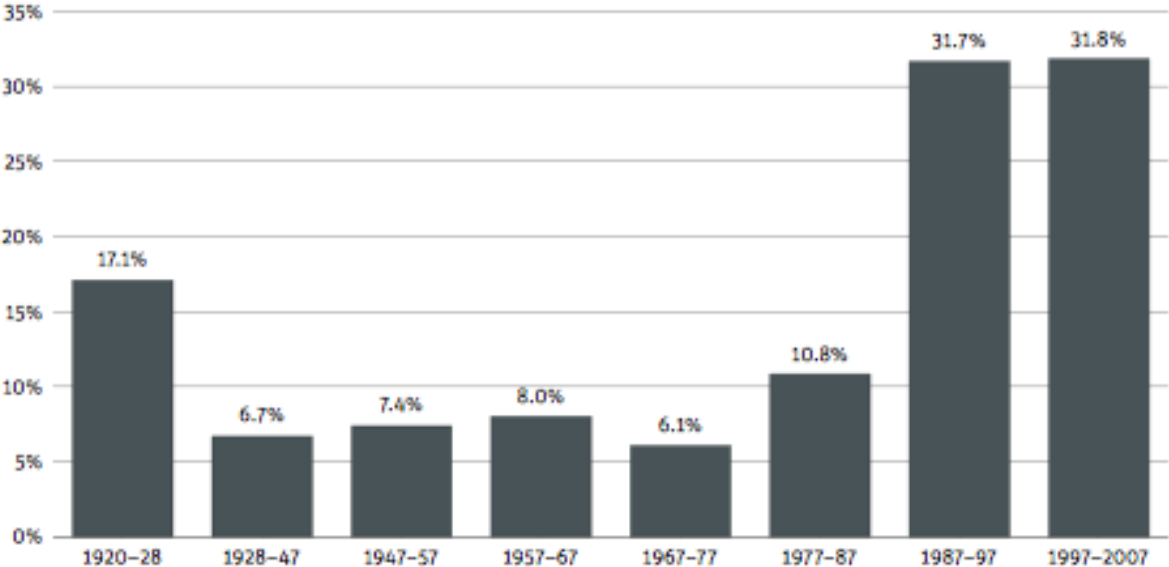
Figure 3. Share of income gains by top 1% income earners in Canada, 1920-2007. Graph indicates growth of the share of income gains by the top 1% of income earners from 1920 through 2007. The growth of the share of income gains by the top 1% grew tremendously since 1987 as shown in the two bars on the right. Cited by Yalnizyan, 2013, p. 3.

Given their positions of apparent influence within school systems that serve the young

people of Manitoba and their families, how superintendents make sense of the growing

pervasiveness of poverty, as well as the growth of income inequality, is pivotal to a subsequent

investigation of where they believe responsibilities lie and what they see as their further work to

ameliorate the impact of poverty and social exclusion, if that is in fact what they believe to be a

key component of their work.

The Impact of Poverty and Social Exclusion

Adam Smith stated that "it is important to be able to present oneself credibly in society

without the shame and stigma of apparent poverty" (cited in Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, p. 25).

Silver (2014) identifies two broad categories of poverty. The first is characterized by a shortage

of income that may be temporary, while a second form, what he refers to as *complex poverty*, is

often long-term, inter-generational, and damaging to aspects of life well beyond a shortage of income.

Recognition is growing in Canada and beyond, that what Silver (2014) calls complex poverty is a health issue, and its existence "erodes the social fabric of communities" (*Statement of the Winnipeg Roundtable*, 2010, p. 2). A widening scale of material differences between people has resulted in higher levels of mental and physical illness (Wilkinson, 2005; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). In countries in which there is less of an income gap, such as Sweden, stronger social relations and less violence are indications of greater social cohesion than in Canada. Wilkinson (2005) concludes that "there can be no doubt of the direction of causality, namely, that as economic disruption and dislocation widens, income differences lead to the deterioration of the social fabric and the rise of violence" (cited in Fullan, 2006, p. 4). Again, Silver succinctly articulates the realities of complex poverty in Winnipeg's inner city:

> A political economy approach argues that the spatial concentration of complex racialized poverty is not "natural," and is not caused by the personal failings of the poor. Rather, broader socio-economic forces operating beyond the confines of cities and preceding the events of today have played a major role in shaping these conditions … the form of poverty that exists … is a socially created phenomenon. It is the product of four broad socio-economic forces: suburbanization, de-industrialization, in-migration, and colonialization. (2016, p. 206)

Fullan (2006) argues that if we continue to pursue self-interested economic development, we are creating higher levels of economic and political stress upon our society. This should be a concern for all because inequality impacts everyone in the society. Ensuring a high quality of living for all will benefit the middle class and the affluent, not just those on the margins of our society for several reasons. First, some will be motivated by a desire for social justice and simply want to see everyone have a quality life. Second, others can see that growing social tensions will eventually challenge the very notion of a stable, democratic society. Finally, an economic

argument can also be made in the sense that a healthier economy depends upon the labour

productivity of all citizens, and "there is no question that the social consequences embedded in

Wilkinson's analysis will have a growing adverse effect on the economy" (Fullan, 2006, p. 7).

To underline the linkage between poor health and social exclusion, Wilkinson and Pickett (2010)

remind us that there are individual people and families behind the statistics on complex poverty

and inequality. All people have common characteristics and needs that make us seemingly

sensitive to inequality. Twenge (2000, 2006) looked at 269 studies between 1952 and 1993 and

reports a 40-year rise in the level of anxiety in North Americans, while self-esteem, what

individuals think of themselves, has also risen during the same time frame. Investigating stress

and levels of cortisol in the brain, Dickerson and Kemeny, (2004) have found that tasks that

threaten one's self-esteem, such as social situations in which one could be judged negatively,

provoked large increases in cortisol levels. They also have found that personal well-being is

partly informed by a defense of our personal self-image or "social self" (p. 357), which depends

in turn upon the healthiness of a personal self-esteem and on social status, and is "largely based

on others' perception of one's worth" (p. 357). A harmful side effect of poverty and social

exclusion is shame (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Scheff (1988) calls shame the range of

emotions concerning feelings of foolishness and stupidity, and are rooted in how we imagine

others see us. Further, Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) have found that health research shows that

low social status and lack of friends are important markers of psychosocial strain in modern

societies. Twenge (2006) speculates that the rise of social anxiety has paralleled growing

urbanization. As we are interacting with many more people we do not know, we have become

very concerned with how we appear, how we impress, and concerned that others will think well

of us. Bringing these factors to contemporary society, inequality increases anxiety over being

evaluated or judged by others. Our status affects not only our sense of self, but also how others, including our friends and families view us. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) go on to argue that greater inequality increases social evaluation anxieties, as we no longer know each other and "we come to see social position as a more important feature of a person's identity" (p. 43). They also point to psychological experiments that conclude that we make judgments of one's social status within seconds of meeting another. Wilkinson (2005) provides a detailed analysis of the costs of these challenges that extend well beyond economics, into each and every aspect of our personal and community living. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) have shown that in societies with a high degree of inequality such as Portugal, people trust each other less and have higher levels of anxiety; more incidences of mental illnesses occur; and the use of illegal drugs is demonstrably higher than in more equal countries. At all levels of western consumer societies, a premium on money and possessions arguably places us at greater risk of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). In communities with high divorce rates, low levels of trust, and low social cohesion, teenage birth rates are higher, a reality that is often a fast track for the further exclusion of women from mainstream society and one of the ways in which generations get trapped into inequality (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Levels of obesity tend to be lower in countries where income differences are smaller. Citing the *British Medical Journal*, Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) conclude, "what matters in determining mortality and health in a society is less the overall wealth of that society and more how evenly wealth is distributed. The more equally wealth is distributed the better the health of that society" (p. 81).

Complex poverty and social exclusion create dire conditions for many of the children and families that we serve. It is not only the lack of resources, but the lack of any reasonable hope to attain the attributes and capabilities to get the resources that make poverty and social exclusion

especially pernicious (DeGroot-Maggetti, 2002; Laidlaw Foundation website, 2002; Levitas, 2003; Mitchell & Shillington, 2002; Sen, 1992). The consequences of poverty are reflected in the inability of individuals to fully participate, not only in the larger economy but in all social and political aspects of a democratic society. They are reflected by children in our schools who do not participate in sports programs due to embarrassment about the clothes they wear. They are reflected in the inability of parents living in poverty to effectively advocate for their children, *or even feel they can come to the school*. They are reflected by Indigenous and racialized youth who disproportionately are in foster care, suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, and are in our youth centres and prisons. They are reflected in a belief that *closing the gap*, and getting more students to graduate, *on its own*, will remedy poverty.

Yalnizyan (2013) reports that the University of Toronto's Centre for Urban and Community Studies found that increased income polarization is resulting in a significant spatial polarization of communities along income lines. In Manitoba, Smith et al. (2013) have found that 31,000 people lived in subsidized social housing in 2009. By linking the housing data with the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCPH) health data repository, they also have found that those living in social housing live shorter lives, are more likely to have schizophrenia, are more likely to commit suicide, and are more likely to drop out of school. They also have found that after analysis of data collected through the Early Development Instrument (EDI), 44.6% of preschoolers are not ready for school compared to 26.4% of their peers who do not live in social housing. Silver (2014) cites studies by Lemstra et al. (2009) and Brownell et al. (2010) in observing that in Saskatoon's West End and Winnipeg's North End, both characterized by complex poverty and social exclusion, "the incidence of every conceivable health problem with heart and circulatory diseases, all forms of cancer, liver and kidney diseases, stress related health

problems, infant mortality, incidents of hospitalization, accidents—is higher than in the rest of these cities. As yet another indicator of the increasingly deep divide between those who have, and those who live in complex poverty, is the ready identification of those in poverty as "other" (Silver, 2014, p. 64). Those mired in complex poverty are situated as outliers in a world in which a white middle-class existence is the norm and the realities of their day to day lives are falsely attributed to "individual or ethno-racial deficiencies . . . a tangled web of pathology" (Silver, 2014, p. 64). The words of two people living lives of complex poverty in Winnipeg's North End reinforce these conclusions. A forty-seven-year-old woman said:

> When you feel disempowered, you don't feel you're worth anything and you don't feel you are making a contribution to society so you don't participate. Your basic life function is to survive. … a lot of issues that they're facing on a day to day basis such as poverty, suicide, unemployment, addiction, which prevents them from moving on … the gap widens and as a result of that I believe the community looks at the system as a very hostile system in which to live. (cited in Silver, 2006, p. 121)

More recently, a forty-six-year-old grandmother, attending an adult literacy program in Lord Selkirk Park, a public housing project in Winnipeg, described being excited about a class trip to the library, "I even got a library card which I have never had before" (Silver, 2014, p. 138).

As a member of the middle-class, living in south central Winnipeg, I have experienced this experiential divide during 4 years recently, when my daily drive to work has taken me through the most poverty stricken areas of Winnipeg. Daily I would see men and women with weathered faces, many in wheelchairs and with missing limbs. Whether first thing in the morning or at the day's end, people I have seen on the streets were clearly intoxicated. It is also amazing, and yet shameful, that on many of these days, these people became invisible to me. There are many like me, Winnipeggers living middle- to upper-middle-class lives who have little to no physical contact with those living in complex poverty, except for driving by them in our cars,

which does not count. They become *other,* outliers in a world that is by and large an excellent place to live . . . for some.

From this perspective, success would be a significant improvement in the relative living standards of those who are currently poor, as well as an assurance that people have the *capabilities* (Freire, 1970; 1993; Sen, 1992) to think, consider, advocate, and act (Mitchell & Shillington, 2002). Stated over 100 years ago, the words of Frederick Douglas still ring true: "Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails and where one class is made to feel that society is in an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons or property will be safe" (Douglas, 1886, p.52). It is no accident that given the high poverty rates in Indigenous communities that Winnipeg has become one of the most violent cities in Canada (*Crime Statistics,* 2009). Gilligan (1996) has found that he has "yet to see a serious act of violence that was not provoked by the experience of feeling shame and humiliation" (p. 110). Prison data show that more unequal societies are more punitive (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), and it can be argued that imprisonment rates are determined by the prevailing focus on punishment as opposed to reform. Where social differences are great, trust is low, and decision makers are more inclined to lock up offenders. It also seems that countries that imprison more spend less on schools, recreation, and other forms of social welfare (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

Racialized Poverty

Many people living in poverty are working, are increasingly living in large metropolitan areas (Anyon, 2005), and are more often than not single parents, young people, and without a high school education (Brownell et al. 2012; Carey, 2004; DeGroot-Maggetti, 2002; Income Trends, 2009; Lister, 2004; Levin & Riffel, 2000; Mitchell & Shillington, 2002; Scott, 2005).

While being Indigenous or a member of a racialized ethnic group are not causes of poverty, there can be no question that there is a higher incidence of poverty among these groups (Silver, 2014).

Gaskell and Levin (2012) write that while the intricacies and complexities of making sense of racialized compartmentalizations of people are dizzying, there are clear linkages between immigrant and Indigenous status and poverty, with 40 per cent of Indigenous and nearly half of the children of recent immigrants in the low-income category. Ornstein (2006) also found a high correlation between living a disadvantaged life and being of colour, reporting that the 20 poorest ethno-racial groups in Canada are non-European. Two groups that suffer from poverty and social exclusion in inordinate numbers are people identified as African-Americans and Indigenous people in the United States and Canada respectively (*A Statistical Profile*, 2009; *Aboriginal Offenders*, 2001; Barlow, 2010; Galabuzi, 2001; *Income Trends*, 2009; Lu et al., 2003; Townsend, 1993).

Even when there are not differences in the educational levels of immigrant parents or the length of time they have been in Canada, groups that can be identified by their so-called race often experience more challenging circumstances. Poorer outcomes in education and in labour markets persist for Black and Indigenous youth even when studies control for prior achievement and other factors, a fact that supports why the Supreme Court of Canada stated in 2005 that "racial prejudice against visible minorities is . . . notorious and indisputable. . . . [It is] a social fact not capable of reasonable dispute" (*R. v. Spence*, 2005).

The racialized nature of poverty in Canada is glaring. MacDonald and Wilson (2013) suggest that there are three tiers of child poverty in Canada (Figure 4). The first tier excludes immigrant, racialized, and Indigenous children and includes 12% of the remaining population. The second tier includes racialized children (22%), first generation immigrant children (33%),

and Métis, Inuit, and non-status First Nations (MInsI) children (27%). The third tier is made up

of status First Nations children who live below the poverty line. Fifty percent live under the

poverty line.
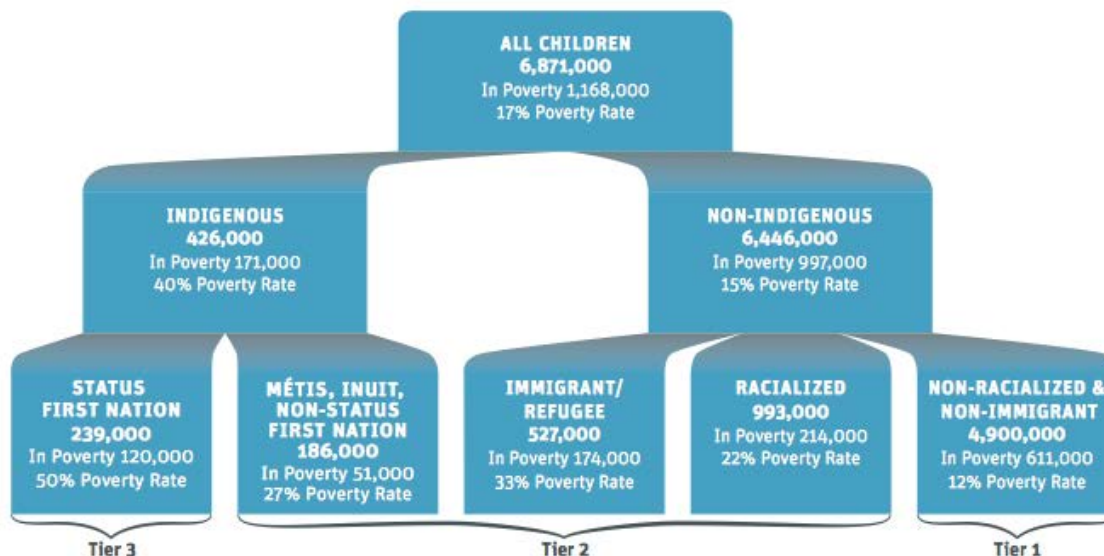
Figure 4. Three tiers of child poverty in Canada. The chart shows the total number of children living in poverty (top tier), the number and percentages for Indigenous compared to non-Indigenous people (middle tier), and then a breakdown of the number and percentages for different categories of Indigenous and racialized children. cited in MacDonald & Wilson, 2013, p. 13.

If Indigenous and racialized children were excluded, Canada's rate of child poverty, at

12%, would still be three to four times higher than Nordic countries (MacDonald & Wilson,

2013). The average child poverty rate for Indigenous Canadians however, is 40% compared to a

rate of 15% for other Canadian children. In others words, they are two and a half times more

likely to live in poverty. This rate for Indigenous children climbs to 66% in the prairie provinces

of Manitoba and Saskatchewan (MacDonald & Wilson, 2013). Again, these rates of poverty

come with significant ramifications. Silver (2014) found that higher rates of poverty for

Indigenous peoples are highly correlated with poorer health outcomes.

District-level influentials such as school superintendents are working with communities characterized by increasing complex racialized poverty and social exclusion. These realities can lead to significant negative ramifications, not only upon those in disadvantaged circumstances but also upon the economic and socio-cultural fabric and cohesiveness of the greater society. Again, how district-level influentials such as superintendents, make sense of these realities, and the work that they may do—together with others—to reproduce these realities or mitigate them can shed some light upon how we address these concerns in the future.

Causes of Poverty

In this section, research is shared that informs us that what we can view as contemporary complex Aboriginal and racialized poverty and social exclusion is deeply rooted in our colonial past that in many ways has normalized racialized narratives of the individualized and collective lives of our fellow citizens and of the interactions we have between ourselves and other members of our society. These socially created narratives have been further exacerbated by the encroachment of neo-liberalism which has, in many ways, normalized the economic, social, and cultural stratifications of our world. How superintendents make sense of these stratifications and what they believe to be the impact and causes of these stratifications will inform their work for the maintenance, or perhaps for the reduction, of the causes and impact of racialized poverty and social exclusion. Within and beyond education systems, influentials such as superintendents can help with the reinforcement of repressive norms, or they can also become agents for progressive change.

West (1993) argues that, to gain a better sense of the "cultural politics of difference" (p. 11), the criticality of the Frankfurt School, French/Italian Marxists, and poststructuralists help us rethink what seems to be natural and normal at any particular time, and to find that upon

reflection it is anything but. The dominance of capitalist economic systems, which are often viewed as synonymous with democracy, and the legacy of Western imperialism are undergoing a period of reinvestigation and deconstruction through a range of critical and post-colonial perspectives. Through these perspectives, two of the many varied factors that are acknowledged to create conditions for poverty are neo-liberalism and a legacy of racism, borne of our colonial past. Both of these factors shed light upon why so many of the poor are in the lyrics of the African-American artist Curtis Mayfield (1970), "people who are darker than blue."

Race and racism. Du Bois (1903) wrote that "the problem for the 20th century is that of the colour line" (p. 1), and, over a hundred years later, Ralston Saul (2008) has stated "Canada is in trouble because it is untethered from its Aboriginal moorings" (p. 67). Deeply ingrained in the social, political, and psychological fabric of North America are notions of the *other*. In the United States, this notion of other has largely been filled by African-Americans and, in Canada, by Aboriginal people and racialized immigrant groups. This is not to say that other identified racial and ethnic groups are not in similar circumstances or have not spent some time in the past as *other*, for they have. Large percentages of these two groups of people, however, do live in poverty. Some would argue that these two peoples (recognizing that within these identified groups, endless diversity exists) are simply two more ethnic groups who have to blend into the mainstream North American societies.

Race is a dated biological construct (Apple, 1993, 2003; Omi & Winant, 1993; Roman, 1993; Sleeter, 1993; West, 1993). Some contend that high levels of poverty are the result of existing biological, cultural, and familial differences between racial groups (Jensen, 1969; Noguera, 2003). Hernstein and Murray (1995) suggest that differences in IQ are largely genetic and environmental; it was argued that African-Americans have on average lower scores on

intelligence tests because they are genetically predisposed to be of lower intelligence; multiple

generations of dysfunctional communities have only exacerbated the situation.

Despite attempts to extinguish its potency during the American civil rights movement,

through official multiculturalism in Canada, and perhaps reaching its apogee in the election of

Barack Obama to the U.S. presidency in 2008, innate differences in genetic and cultural

endowments "continue to be reintroduced into the discourse" (Noguera, 2003, p. 42). Ogbu

(1987) writes that African-Americans are still perceived as being held back by the characteristics

of their culture, including a poor work ethic and oppositional attitudes. McWhorter (2000)

suggested that African-Americans constitute an underclass because of a generational victim

mentality that "condones weakness and failure" (McWhorter, 2000, p. 28). Such approaches

align well with conservative-behaviorist paradigms that locate the problem of poverty within the

racialized communities and individuals, and thus absolve other North Americans of any current

or historic responsibility. Omi and Winant (1994) argue that, to the contrary, race is constitutive

to the daily experiences in both countries:

> Race is present in every institution, every relationship, and every individual. This is the case not only for the way that society is organized—spatially, culturally, in terms of stratification etc.—but also for our perceptions and understandings of personal experience . . . as we size up a potential client, neighbor, or teacher. . . . We are compelled to think racially, to use racial categories and meanings systems in which we have been socialized. (p. 158)

Apple (2003) argues that the analysis of racial dynamics needs to be extended to other

countries, including Canada; without doing so, it is impossible to understand contemporary

societies and the glaring reality that, in seemingly wealthy nations, many of the descendants of

colonized peoples still struggle for—or have given up hope for—success, validation, and

recognition.

Another perspective is that race is a social construct that developed over time as a "fundamental principle of social organization and identity formation" (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 5), despite a widely held belief that it is not an objective biological fact (Apple, 2003; Hatcher & Troyna, 1993; Noguera, 2003; Omi & Winant, 1993, 1994; Sleeter, 1993). What race is not is simply an objective category; one cannot say, for example, "one is one's race" (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 6), because this ignores the incredible diversity within, the relational character of racial meanings, the comprehensiveness of the race concept, and cannot "account for the ways actors . . . have to manage . . . racial meanings and identities on a daily basis" (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 6). For example, the American term "urban" is often code for "African-American," just as "the problems of the inner city" is code for "the Aboriginal problem" in many Western Canadian cities. Race also has an increasingly global context; clear linkages can be made, for example, with the realities of impoverished lives in the brown ghettos of Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, all of which betray their historic, colonialist roots. In short, "just as the noise of the big bang still resonates in the universe, so the over determined construction of world civilization as a product of the rise of Europe and the subjection of the rest of us still defines the race concept" (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 9). The contextual racial reasoning in Canada and the United States is a significant factor in the over representation of People of Colour in the impoverished neighborhoods of each of these countries.

The power of racial reasoning and its impact on contemporary culture is further revealed upon analysis of school achievement levels of middle-class African-American youth and immigrant students. Several studies show that immigrant students of colour often do very well in school (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ogbu, 1987; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). At the same time, middle-class African-Americans tend to underperform (Ferguson, 1984; Jencks & Phillips,

1998). Noguera (2003) suggests several reasons that can be rather informative with regards to the persistence of racism and how it may impact people living in poverty. Based upon Omi and Winant's (1986) conclusion that race is also an ideological construct in which members "take on the history, stigma, and stereotypes associated with that group" (Noguera, 2003, p.51), it is understandable that minority youth are more likely to take on the styles and behaviors of lower-class members of their racial/ethnic group (Ogbu, 1987; Steele, 1997). These insights lend further support for demands that schools and school systems be viewed for what they are: locations in which established power relations, including colonizer/colonized, non-racialized/racialized, are potent if often subtle; potential sites in which anti-racist education/de-colonizing ways can be brought to flower. In other words, school systems are sites of struggle: implicated in the reproduction of racialized poverty; and (for critical pedagogues) possible sites of resistance and liberation.

Canadian history is replete with tensions related to property and the subsequent lack of equity for Indigenous peoples. During colonization, relations between Indigenous people and Europeans varied from war allies and trade partners to a growing attitude on the part of settlers that Indigenous people were to be brought into the wage economy, "albeit at the level of the lowest paid laborer" (Helin, 2006, p. 91). In the Indian Act of 1876, reserves were contemplated as rural Indigenous communities outside of the mainstream; traditional governance structures would be replaced, and control of land and resources would be complete. The Act prohibited Indigenous men from acquiring land and further amendments prohibited Indigenous people from retaining legal counsel to advance claims upon the land. Some of the modern foundations of the Canadian economy are built upon Prime Minister MacDonald's National Policy of 1879, which established tariffs to protect burgeoning businesses, strung rail lines across the continent, and

filled the prairies with European immigrants, who would then provide markets for Eastern

businesses while providing grains to be shipped through the Great Lakes. All of this was

predicated on the removal of Indigenous peoples from the land. The reserve system facilitated

the "nearly absolute geographical separation of the colonizer and the colonized" (Razack, 2002,

p. 129), a separation that exists physically and psychologically to this day. Up until 1952 the

Elections Act prohibited Indigenous people from voting unless they revoked their status as

Indigenous people. An intense effort to assimilate Indigenous youth was accelerated in 1840

when the first residential school was established, and many more remained open across the land

until 1996. In essence, "Indian Nations were denied the right and the means to function with any

degree of independence and self-reliance, and at the same time, prohibited from functioning in

the larger society with rights enjoyed by non-Indians" (Helin, 2006, p. 46). Schissel and

Wotherspoon (2003) have referred to the treatment of Aboriginal people in Canada during the

past two hundred years as nothing less than cultural genocide in which the "destruction of culture

and enslavement or protracted physical destruction of a people are a planned state project" (p.

36). Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill (1986) have argued that the assimilationist intent of

residential schools was not intended to bring Indigenous people into all aspects of mainstream

life; rather, the education they received was oriented to domestic work with little prospect for

anything else. The well-documented effects of residential schools (Barman et al., 1986; Battiste,

2000; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003) created generations of

traumatized people, many of whom became adults unable to build meaningful familial relations,

lacking any sense of personal efficacy, and unable to exist in traditional Aboriginal communities

or in contemporary Canadian society. Physical genocide is the mass killing of the members of a

targeted group, and biological genocide is the destruction of the group's reproductive capacity.

Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things.

In 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada started a national conversation, to listen to residential school survivors, and the family and communities that were also impacted. Many of the stories and lessons of this history are available to all Canadians at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, located at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg and a significant collection of resources on the available on the Centre's website. The final report of the commission was published in 2015 and a summary of the final report titled *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 2015) is also available on the site. The findings of the commission reinforced and confirmed the findings of Barman et.al., 1986) and other researchers referred to earlier.

> The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as "cultural genocide." Physical genocide is the mass killing of the members of a targeted group, and biological genocide is the destruction of the group's reproductive capacity. Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p.1)

A powerful component of the commission were the many poignant stories told by survivors across the country. After sharing his story of being abused, survivor Wilfred Whitehawk stated that he had not regrets about disclosing his story.

> I don't regret it because it taught me something. It taught me to talk about truth, about me, to be honest about who I am.... I am very proud of who I am today. It took me a long time, but I'm there. And what I have, my values and belief systems are mine and no one is going to impose theirs on me. And no one today is going to take advantage of me, man or woman, the government or the RCMP, because I have a voice today. I can speak for me and no one can take that away. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p.13)

The key word in the title, *reconciliation* signals that while the commissioners wanted to shed light upon the atrocities of the residential school experience, they also believed that for all Canadians to move beyond the experience and break the cycle of complex Indigenous poverty, forgiveness, acceptance, and increased knowledge must become a central component of Canadian society,

> The Commission defines reconciliation as an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. A critical part of this process involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations, and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p.16)

The placement of Indigenous people into residential schools were acts of racism. Even though it took place existed decades ago, the impact of residential schools continues to have a negative impact not only on many of the living survivors, but also upon their children and grandchildren. In order to understand why many Indigenous communities are experiencing complex poverty requires the acknowledgement that structural racism has, and continues to exist in Canada.

Neo-liberalism. O'Connor (2001) argues that while the term *poverty* has often been used in government pronouncements, the only factors that have been often cited as causes of poverty and social exclusion have been behaviorist in nature, and speak to the deficiency of those who are impoverished. Other evolving narratives have contributed to current socio-political narratives about poverty. One of these is the economic philosophy that largely informs contemporary Canadian life.

From the 1950s through the 1970s, Keynesian economic philosophy in Canada resulted in universal flat rate benefits financed by general revenues and supplemented by social insurance (Myles, 1998). What Mahon (2008) calls the "golden age of social liberalism" (p. 348) resulted in a Canadian welfare system that closely resembled that of Sweden. Barlow (2010), Gaskell and Levin (2012), and Silver (2014) contend that the post-war Keynesian economics of liberalism in Canada resulted in Medicare, the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Assistance Plan, and other strategies to limit poverty. During the emergence of neo-liberalism in the 1970s, however, public spending, as well as taxation, was cut; many of the anti-poverty efforts of the 1960s and 1970s were taken apart; and equity concerns "disappeared from state policy agendas in many countries" (Gaskell & Levin, 2012, p.22). Silver (2014) points out that while spending on federal social programs was 20% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1975, it shrunk to 14% by 2011.

In response to growing rates of poverty, market-oriented policies have resulted in incentives based upon a belief that poverty is a result of poor choices made by individuals. Less centered on social justice, concerns about growing social inequality and poverty have increasingly been based upon growing fears that we will be less competitive in the globalized economy (Green, Preston, & Janmaat, 2006; Lloyd-Ellis, 2003; Mahon, 2008; Osberg, 1995).

During the 1980s to the present in the United States and Canada, from both Republican and Democratic, and Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties respectively, neo-liberal practices have strongly influenced the social, economic, and political terrain. Silver (2014) has shown how globalization has been accelerated by the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), through which the ability of elected officials to limit transnational corporations (TNCs) has been curtailed significantly. Vosko (2000) indicates that many high skilled, and high paying manufacturing jobs have been shifted to lower cost countries only to be replaced with part-time, low waged, non-union jobs, "without benefits or security—precarious labour" (cited in Silver, 2014). Silver (2014) also argues that Canada has been promoting the use of temporary foreign workers, often racialized, which has resulted in depressed wage growth to such an extent that a former chief economist at the Toronto-Dominion Bank said in an interview, "for sure it's depressed wage growth—with over 300,000 [foreign temporary] workers, I would use the word significantly" (cited in Silver, 2014, p. 45). Practices have included decreased governmental regulation of the marketplace, decreased taxes, and reduced redistributive social programming (Barlow, 2010). Theorists including Herrnstein and Murray (1995) and Loury (1995) have argued that the Keynesian economic philosophies of the past actually helped to create a culture of dependency among the poor.

Neo-liberalism and poverty. Silver (2000, 2014) identified a number of neo-liberal policy changes that have arguably increased the amount of poverty in Canada and are directly linked to massive job losses and downward pressure on wage levels, especially for relatively unskilled labor. Progressive supports for the poor—including housing, training, transportation, and child care—have been replaced by a conservative-behaviorist focus on eliminating welfare

dependency by pushing welfare recipients into low paying or subsidized employment and training programs (Graefe, 2006; Silver, 2014). Federal contributions to provincial social spending decreased by $150 billion (Silver, 1992) as the result of the creation of the Canadian Health and Social Transfer (CHST); provinces received $7 billion less during the time period of 1996-1998 than they would have received through former plans; and, since 1995, Manitoba and other provinces have reduced their benefit rates, shelter allowances, and raised eligibility requirements for assistance programs (Silver, 2000). In 1996, as a result of Bill C-12, Unemployment Insurance (UI) was dismantled and replaced with a privatized Employment Insurance (EI), resulting in eligibility for support being reduced from 74% in 1990 to 39% in 2001 (Mahon, 2008; Silver 2014). To again reinforce the importance of "work," in 1996 the Manitoba Social Allowances Act was changed to the Employment and Income Assistance Act (MacKinnon, 2000). MacKinnon reports that many provinces introduced workfare programs in which people must prove work or training requirements. A long list of further clawbacks have resulted in programs that push social assistance recipients into low paying jobs and universally reduce social supports to poor people and their children. As many middle-income manufacturing jobs, often unionized, have gone international, post-industrial job growth has been concentrated in personal and business services, and "virtually all of the recent employment growth has involved either highly skilled, well compensated and secure jobs or unstable and relatively poor jobs" (Esping-Anderson, 1999, p. 10). Many of these poorly paid, insecure jobs are in the fields of retail, accommodations, and foods sections of the economy and are held disproportionately by women, young people, recent immigrants, and visible minorities. Scott (2005) suggests that this has occurred while the Canadian social net has become increasingly porous: only 13% of low wage earners have access to non-wage benefits, compared to 51% for those making $10 to $19

an hour and 77% of those making more. Anyon (2005) argues that, clearly, neo-liberal attempts

to address high levels of poverty by job training have not worked. Conversely, Osberg (1995)

found that in a report on Human Rights in Canada, the United Nations Commission on

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights "notes with concern . . . that social assistance benefits are

lower than a decade ago and they do not provide adequate income to meet basic needs" (p. 55).

Apple (2004) suggests that while North American economies have expanded greatly, it

was easy to believe the "dramatic expansion of that eloquent fiction, the free market" (p. 15)

would inexorably create jobs, education, and a well-functioning social reality for those who

make good choices as individual actors living on an equal playing field. Silver (2014) identifies

the work of Mitchell and Shillington (2008) as those who have concluded that African-

Americans, Canadian People of Colour, and Indigenous peoples in particular have been hurt by a

neo-liberal shift. Wilson (1987) argues that, during the 1970s and 1980s, preferential housing

policies, resistance to integration by whites resulted in "white flight" to newly burgeoning

suburbs or, in the words of funk artist George Clinton, in "chocolate cities and vanilla suburbs"

(Parliament, 1975). This trend contributed to the development of racially segregated areas of

concentrated poverty suffering from structural isolation from social resources—jobs, quality

schools, decent housing, health care, and social services.

Complex, Racialized Poverty: From the Global to the Local

Davis (2006) has found that a globalized pattern of neo-liberalism and globalization has

resulted in an "urbanization that is radically decoupled from industrialization—vast numbers of

people are leaving the land and relocating in cities where there are no jobs for them—resulting in

the mass production of slums" (p. 19). Unlike the inner city mills of Victorian England, today's

urban concentrations of complex poverty are characterized by low paying, part-time labour or no

jobs at all. Common to many of these urban environments around the world is the growing

correlation between Indigenousness, racialized identity and complex poverty, and what Tatum

calls an "internalized oppression" (cited in Silver, 2014, p. 89), as people come to believe that

their conditions are of their own making (Wacquant, 2008; Watt, 2008). Comack, Deane,

Morrisette, and Silver (2014) report that these conditions are to be found locally in Winnipeg.

Behaviour and cultural adaptations include the rise of street gangs, with young men struggling to

find a way to make a living in an increasingly jobless world "saturated with globalized

invitations to enjoy the benefits of the consumer lifestyle" (cited by Silver, 2014, p. 69),

adaptations that can be found globally. In the Canadian context, Adams (1999) has said that,

"once Aboriginal persons internalize the colonization process, we feel confused and powerless . .

. we may implode with overwhelming feelings of sadness and explode with feelings of anger.

Some try to escape this state through alcohol, drugs, and/or other forms of self-abuse" (cited in

Silver, 2014, p. 89).

While reports on poverty by the Economic Council of Canada in 1968 and the Canadian

Senate in 1971 called high levels of poverty "a disgrace" and our "national shame" respectively

Silver (2014, p. 71), has found that little mention was made at the time of linkages to Indigenous

or racialized communities. Silver (2014) claims that this began to change in the 1980s and 1990s

as patterns of spatially concentrated and racialized poverty began to emerge. In Winnipeg for

over a hundred years, eastern European immigrants in the North End certainly faced significant

discrimination and socio-economic exclusion (Mochoruk & Kardash, 2000; Silver, 2016. A

number of researchers (Balakrishnan, Maxim, & Rozze, 2005; Fong & Shibuya, 2000; Galabuzi,

2001; Kazemipur & Holli; 2000) have found that in Canadian urban centers, the spatial

concentration of poverty is intensifying along racialized lines.

The degree of child poverty in Winnipeg can also be highlighted in four ways: Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WHRA) data can be used to show how poverty is concentrated in specific neighbourhoods in Winnipeg; the City of Winnipeg provides profiles of all neighbourhoods in the city including demographics for Aboriginal and visible minorities; the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP) report *How are Manitoba's Children Doing?* (Brownell et al., 2012) provides evidence of a high correlation between low socio-economic status and poor educational and health outcomes; and there are stories from a variety of individuals who are living lives in complex, racialized poverty.

The Spatial Location of Poverty in Winnipeg

Recently, MacKinnon (2009) and Silver (2014) have found that poverty in Winnipeg is high, racialized, and disproportionately concentrated in the inner city. However, analysis of Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) data shows that spatialized areas of complex poverty are located throughout Winnipeg and situated within each of seven school divisions that serve the city. The WRHA produces a number of studies that give detailed information on geographical boundaries, such as Regional Health Authorities (RHAs). Their *Health Inequities in Manitoba* (2010) report focuses on neighborhood income groupings derived from census data. These neighborhood income groupings can provide a distinct glimpse into the geographically and economically disparate neighborhoods of Winnipeg. Martens et al. (2010) explain the use of these economic gradients as follows:

> The basic concept of socioeconomic gradients used by the WHRA is to use five groupings of neighborhood income (from lowest to highest) in Winnipeg. Neighborhood income quintiles represent approximately 20% of the population in the relevant grouping (rural, or urban), ranked by the average household income. R1 (rural) and U1 (urban) are the lowest neighborhood income groups; R5 (rural) and U5 (urban) are the highest neighborhood income groups. (Martens et al., p. xviii)

The purpose of the *Health Inequities in Manitoba Report* (2010) is to document health inequities across socio-economic groups in Manitoba and to determine if the gap is widening or narrowing over time. Figure 5, below, is a map that identifies the income quintiles for the entire city of Winnipeg and the following maps show the income quintiles that correspond with each of the school divisions that serve metro Winnipeg (see Appendix A). These maps show that areas of poverty are located throughout the city of Winnipeg, and in every one of the seven school divisions serving the city, thus, poverty should be a significant concern of all superintendents in the city.
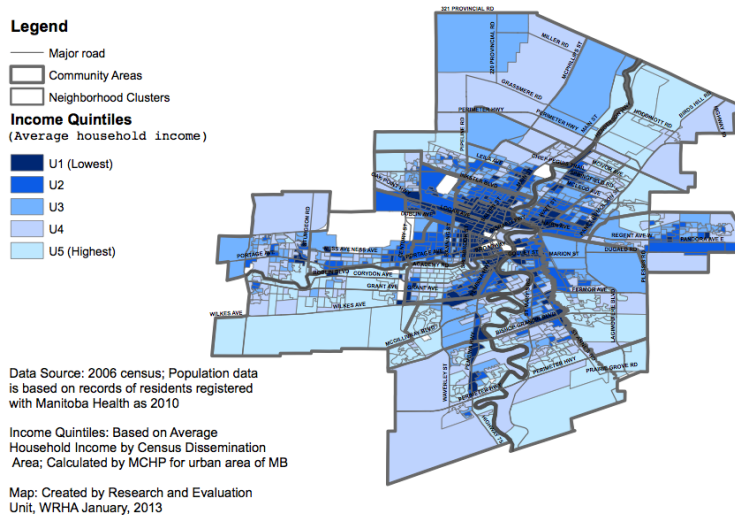
Figure 5. Distribution of income quintiles for metropolitan Winnipeg (includes all of the metro school divisions). The map represents the city of Winnipeg. The colours represent the income quintiles throughout the city with the dark blue representing the areas with the highest percentage of families in the lowest income quintile. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (2013). http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html

This map indicates a heavy concentration of poverty in the inner city, located predominantly north-northwest of the intersection of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. It also indicates significant pockets of poverty located throughout the city of Winnipeg.

Locating Aboriginal and Racialized Citizens in Winnipeg

The City of Winnipeg (2013) creates detailed profiles of each of its neighborhoods including demographic breakdowns of languages spoken, percentages of people who self-identify as Aboriginal, and visible minorities. Unfortunately, these data are based on Canada census data from 2006 and do not reflect how the racialized nature of many Winnipeg neighborhoods has increased dramatically since then. It is of interest, however, to identify neighborhoods that share geography with areas identified as the lowest economic quintiles (UI) in the previous section. By various Winnipeg neighborhoods characterized by low SES, Table 1 identifies the percentages of residents who are of Aboriginal status or visible minorities as identified in the 2006 census.

Table 1

Alignment of the Racialized Nature of Winnipeg Neighborhoods (City of Winnipeg) With Lowest Economic Quintile (WRHA)

Neighbourhood	% Aboriginal	% Visible Minority	School Division	School	% Aboriginal	% Visibly Minority
Daniel MacIntyre	17.2	47.5	Winnipeg	DMCI	20	70
Lord Selkirk Park	66.7	1.1	Winnipeg	David Livingston	70	15
Brooklands	14.1	14.5	St. James	Brooklands	70	20
Jefferson	13	9	Seven Oaks	Elwick	65	30
Elmwood	9.9	5.7	River East	Donwood	60	15

Note. The table also identifies schools located in each of these neighborhoods and the percentages of people identifying as Aboriginal and students who can be identified as members of a racialized group (school division data collected in 2014). Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (2013). Each of the neighborhoods listed in Table 1 have become increasingly racialized in the past decade.

The Impact of Living in Winnipeg's Lowest Socio-Economic Quintile

Conducted by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP) on behalf of the government of Manitoba, the report *How Are Manitoba's Children Doing?* (Brownell et al., 2012) was developed to provide a description of how Manitoba children are doing in the areas of physical health and emotional health; safety and security; successful learning; and social engagement. (Brownell et al., 2012, p.1) The report uses information from the Population Health Research Data Repository, a comprehensive population-based data collection developed and maintained by the MCHP.

For the purposes of the report, "children" where defined as those 0 to 19 years of age, and the selected indicators of physical health and emotional health, safety and security, successful learning, and social engagement are presented over a 10-year period, from 2000/2001 through 2009/2010. In order to highlight the association between socio-economic status (SES) and the selected indicators, information was correlated with area-level income quintiles; the population of all the children of Winnipeg is broken down into five equal sized cohorts. In the year 2000, 33,398 of Winnipeg's children (24%) were in the lowest income group and in 2009, 35,151 (23.98%). In essence, the study can provide information on how Winnipeg's poorest children, 24% of the total, are doing compared to the rest.

The report identifies significant differences correlated to the socio-economic status of Winnipeg's children. For the majority of the indicators examined in this report, children from

lower income areas have poorer outcomes than children from higher income areas. Children in

the lowest socio-economic quintile were more likely to have sexually transmitted diseases, to

have had injury hospitalizations, to be in foster care, to be in families receiving services from the

government agency Child and Family Services (CFS), to require grade repetition, to be pregnant,

and to require income assistance.

Low Degree of Inequality Gini Coefficient < 0.060	Medium Degree of Inequality Gini Coefficient 0.060-0.200	High Degree of Inequality Gini Coefficient > 0.200
Universal programs are needed for all indicators to ensure increasing health and well-being of the entire child population		
Universal programs and policies	Universal and targeted programs and policies	Highly targeted programs and policies to supplement universal approaches
Physician Visits (Rural)*	Hospital Utilization (Urban)	Child Mortality
Physician Visits (Urban)†	Asthma (Rural)†	Hospital Utilization (Rural)*
Asthma (Urban)	Diabetes (Rural)	Chlamydia
Children with a Mother with Mood and Anxiety Disorders (Rural)	Children with a Mother with Mood and Anxiety Disorders (Urban)*	Gonorrhea
Diabetes (Urban)	ADHD (Rural)	Suicide
Child Mood and Anxiety Disorders (Rural)	Unintentional Injury (Urban)	Injury Hospitalizations (Rural)*
Child Mood and Anxiety Disorders (Urban)*	Special Education Funding	Injury Hospitalizations (Urban)
ADHD (Urban)	Grade 3 Numeracy (Cohort Approach)	Intentional Injury Hospitalizations
Grade 3 Reading	Grade 7 Mathematics (Urban)	Unintentional Injury Hospitalizations (Rural)*
Grade 3 Reading (Cohort Approach)	Grade 7 Mathematics (Cohort Approach)	Children in Care (Rural)*
Grade 3 Numeracy	Grade 8 Reading and Writing (Cohort Approach)	Children in Care (Urban)
Grade 7 Mathematics (Rural)	Grade 12 LA Standards Test (Rural)*	Children in Families Receiving Services from CFS*
Grade 8 Reading and Writing	Grade 12 LA Standards Test (Urban)	Grade Repetition (Rural)
High School Completion (Rural)	Grade 12 Math Standards Test (Rural)*	Grade Repetition (Urban)*
Grade 7 Engagement (Rural)	Grade 12 Math Standards Test (Urban)	Teen pregnancy (Rural)
Youth on Income Assistance (Rural)†	High School Completion (Urban)	Teen pregnancy (Urban)*
	Grade 7 Engagement (Urban)†	Teen birth
	Grade 7 Engagement (Cohort Approach)	Youth on Income Assistance (Urban)

* Indicates a statistically significant increase in inequality over time in these indicators
† Indicates a statistically significant decrease in inequality over time in these indicators

Figure 6. Degree of socio-economic inequality as measured by GINI coefficients. The chart
indicates that the higher the degree of inequality as measured by the GINI coefficient, the greater
need for highly targeted programs to meet the needs of endangered children. (Brownell et al., 2012,
p. xxviii.)

The report also identifies the percentage of negative outcomes that occur with children in

the lowest income quintile compared to the exact percentage of the population in the lowest income

quintile for that indicator (see Figure 7). For example, there were more child deaths in the lowest

income areas than expected given the percent of the population in these areas. This is clearly an indicator of a high degree of socio-economic inequity. Children in the lowest socio-economic quintile account for46.6% of all child mortality, 48% of all incidents of Chlamydia, 63% of all suicides, and 48% of all grade retention (Brownell et al. 2012, p. xix).

Indicator	Percent of outcomes that occur in the lowest income quintile (bracketed number shows the exact percent of the population in the lowest income quintile for that indicator)**	
	Rural	Urban
Physical Health		
Child Mortality	42.1% (23.7%)	46.6% (19.6%)
Hospital Utilization (Hospital Episodes)	40.0% (23.9%)	31.9% (20.2%)
Physician Visits	21.5% (23.9%)	20.8% (20.2%)
Asthma	19.5% (22.9%)	19.3% (18.5%)
Diabetes	29.3% (22.9%)	17.7% (18.5%)
Chlamydia	52.1% (22.3%)	48.0% (17.4%)
Gonorrhea	61.6% (22.3%)	59.1% (17.4%)
Emotional Health		
Attention–Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	18.9% (22.9%)	20.5% (18.6%)
Children with a Mother with Mood and Anxiety Disorders	23.1% (23.5%)	24.9% (19.8%)
Child Mood and Anxiety Disorders	24.8% (22.3%)	20.9% (17.4%)
Suicide	67.4% (22.4%)	63.0% (17.3%)
Safety and Security		
Injury Hospitalizations	43.6% (23.9%)	35.8% (19.9%)
Intentional Injury Hospitalizations	58.5% (23.9%)	49.9% (19.9%)
Unintentional Injury Hospitalizations	42.0% (23.9%)	33.0% (19.9%)
Children in Care	55.8% (24.2%)	66.7% (20.2%)
Children in Families Receiving Services from CFS	43.8% (24.2%)	56.2% (20.2%)
Successful Learning		
Special Education Funding	19.5% (15.4%)	28.1% (18.4%)
Grade Repetition	30.6% (17.1%)	48.7% (20.2%)
Grade 3 Reading	14.1% (15.7%)	16.3% (19.2%)
Grade 3 Reading (Cohort Approach)†	13.5% (17.4%)	14.8% (18.1%)
Grade 3 Numeracy	13.8% (15.7%)	16.0% (19.2%)
Grade 3 Numeracy (Cohort Approach)†	13.1% (17.4%)	14.0% (18.1%)
Grade 7 Mathematics	12.7% (14.5%)	13.8% (17.6%)
Grade 7 Mathematics (Cohort Approach)†	12.2% (17.0%)	11.5% (16.1%)
Grade 8 Reading and Writing	12.2% (14.9%)	13.7% (17.0%)
Grade 8 Reading and Writing (Cohort Approach)†	12.0% (17.6%)	11.3% (15.6%)
High School Completion	11.5% (13.8%)	10.2% (15.3%)
Grade 12 Language Arts Standards Test	10.3% (21.9%)	6.8% (15.1%)
Grade 12 Mathematics Standards Test	9.2% (21.9%)	6.6% (15.1%)
Social Engagement and Responsibility		
Grade 7 Engagement	12.6% (14.5%)	13.5% (17.6%)
Grade 7 Engagement (Cohort Approach)†	12.2% (17.0%)	10.9% (16.1%)
Teen Pregnancy	45.0% (22.5%)	43.9% (17.5%)
Teen Birth	48.7% (22.5%)	51.5% (17.5%)
Youth On Income Assistance	23.4% (22.3%)	53.6% (18.1%)

* Values are adjusted for age and/or sex where applicable

** If outcomes are distributed equally amongst the five income quintiles in rural and urban Manitoba, then the percent of outcomes should equal the percent of population in income groups, i.e., around 20% of outcomes in 20% of the population

† Includes all children from a birth cohort who should have been assessed if they had progressed through the school system as expected (e.i., for grade 3 assessments, all children born in 2001; for grade 7 assessments, all children born in 1997; for grade 8 assessment, all children born in 1996)

Figure 7. Percentage of Outcomes in the Lowest Income Quintile. Chart indicates the physical, emotional, and educational challenges faced by children who live in the lowest income quintile in

Winnipeg. Brownell et al., 2012, p. xxviii.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW: POVERTY, SCHOOLS, AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Conceptual Frameworks

In spite of the continued impact of colonialism and neo-liberal influences, Bates (1992), Levin (2010), and Rothstein (2004) have argued that school systems can play a role in closing the income and social differentials that are growing in Western societies; maybe not as central a role as perhaps is played by labor market, housing, and taxation strategies, but a role nonetheless. A number of writers (Cunha & Heckman, 2008; Levin, 2010; Sen, 1992) provided compelling evidence that a failure to provide high quality education to disadvantaged children hinders economic prosperity, social cohesion, and justice. In Manitoba, the Manitoba School Board Association (MSBA), Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), and the Manitoba Teachers Society (MTS) have articulated progressive statements supporting democracy and equality. These proud aspirations align with the thinking of a number of educational theorists who have emphasized a focus on democratic development, equity, and community building through public education (Fullan 1996; Goodlad, 1995; Levin, 1995, 2008; Sergiovanni, 1994; Starratt, 2001; Strike, 1999). From critical perspectives (Apple, 1993; Bates, 1980, 2006; Freire, 1970; Foster, 1986; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), it is necessary to critically analyze the philosophical and structural underpinnings of the education system itself, with an intention to promote participatory citizenship, equity, and social justice for all. Regardless of the perspective, there is a sense that positive outcomes from schools can assist in the alleviation of some societal problems.

Critical theoretical perspectives suggest a need to question the very determinants of inequalities that exist in the larger society that are in turn reflected in schools. In the literature, (*1st Nations* Health, 2009; Brownell et al., 2004; DeGroot-Maggetti, 2002; Galabuzi, 2001; Lu et al., 2003; Silver, 2006) much has been said about what poverty is; the effects of poverty upon individuals and communities in general, and educational outcomes in particular; and the strategies that can be used in school systems to mitigate the harmful effects of poverty. Unfortunately, my previous work with school district leaders (Brothers, 2010) has led me to a similar conclusion to that made by Levin (1995), who states "despite our knowledge of poverty's important influence on education, responses to poverty have tended to play a marginal role in educational policy and practice" (p. 215).

The conceptual framework of critical theory can be used to contextualize the second, third, and fourth research questions: (a) *how do these superintendents describe the socio-political and organizational environment that informs and influences their work as senior educational administrators, (b) how do these superintendents describe their roles as senior administrators within these environments in relation to being able to influence system, (c) what actions have the participants undertaken to address issues of racialized poverty?*

Critical theoretical perspectives as well as critically informed understandings of social justice can assist superintendents to reflectively consider the experiences, observations, and choices that they have made in their positions of influence. Incorporating Lukács' notion of reification, Carr (2000) argued that theory has often been seen as absolute, as if grounded in an essentialist nature of knowledge or "justified in some other historical way" (p. 210). As such, traditional theories separated thought into action while critical theories would be used to provide "insights into praxis and emancipation" (p. 210).

Critical Theory

Critical theory provides a vivid contrast to positivist models of inquiry that have traditionally been used to understand and explain social phenomena. Critical theory is oriented toward critiquing and changing society, as opposed to theory that merely attempts to explain human events.

Guess (1981) and Giroux (1983) suggest that critical theory is a "school of thought," as well as a self-conscious critique aimed at change and emancipation that does not dogmatically hold to its own doctrinal assumptions. Carr (2000) states that critical theory aims to produce a particular form of knowledge that seeks an emancipatory interest, specifically through a critique of consciousness and ideology owing much of its orientation to Kant, Hegel, and Marx.

Carr (2000) and Guess (1981) summarize that the central concepts of critical theory include a holistic focus upon all aspects of society at a particular moment of time and an openness to insights from all the major social sciences, including anthropology, economics, history, sociology, political science, and psychology to inform not only understanding but reform. Horkheimer (1976) argues that positivist sciences created generalizations about different aspects of the world that should not be applied to the social sciences. Generalizations made concerning social experiences invariably fail to take into account how the background of the researcher informs his/her understanding of any social phenomena, and, as a result, much of what is called social theory conforms to the mind of the researcher rather than the experience itself. He also believes that traditional theories, whether deductive, inductive, or phenomenological, focused on generalizing aspects of the world (Carr, 2000). In contrast, he

believes that generalizations in the social sciences were extremely challenging, because they

would be "conforming to the ideas in the researcher rather than the experience itself" (Carr,

2000, p. 210). In Horkeimer's (1976) words,

> the facts which our senses present to us are socially performed in two ways: through the
> historical character of the object perceived and through the historical character of the
> perceiving organ. Both are not simply natural; they are shaped by human activity, and yet
> the individual perceives himself as receptive and passive in the act of perception. (p. 21)

Kant (2002) questions the legitimacy of hegemonic philosophic, political, and social

discourse, believing that a dependency on reason masked socially created paradigms in the name

of truth. While early critical theory was founded upon Marxist structuralist explanations of

inequality and oppression, Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) witnessed new forms of social

domination in the 1930s—Stalinism, Nazism, state capitalism, and mass culture—that were not

contemplated by Marxist theory, and, as a result, they argue for the existence of other forms of

oppression, forms that could exist in our current context.

Critical theorists emphasize understanding cultural phenomena as mediated through a

social totality beyond the strictly materialist understandings of Marx or the idealist notion of an

essential absolute truth. Rather, truth is mediated through a historical period; it also emerges

from created ideologies as well as from the material reality of needs, wants, and desires informed

by history. As Giroux (1983) summarizes, "history is to be found as second nature in those

concepts and views of the world that make the most dominating aspects of the social order

appear to be immune from historical socio-political development" (p. 32).

While using critical theory, one needs to always be continuously reflective. Critical

theory is used to "explain what is wrong with the current social reality, identify actors to change

it, and provide clear norms for criticism and practical goals for the future" (Bohman, 1996,

p.190) or, as Horkheimer wrote earlier, "the emancipation of human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (1976, p. 219).

Habermas (1979) argues that the advanced capitalism characteristic of 20th-century Western economies had developed specific negative tendencies, including a failure to provide sufficient goods for society, a growing imbalance between the interests of capital and the larger society, a withdrawal of assent due to a failure to provide social programs, and a motivational crisis when shared values and traditions are not maintained (Bates, 1985). If Habermas (1979) is correct, critical perspectives can help us interrogate the narratives that are held to be true, including the realities of racialized poverty, social exclusion, and our responses to these phenomena, causes, and effects. Rethinking Hegelian notions of dialectical reasoning, Stepelevich (1990) argues that rather than a linear cause and effect understanding of social conditions, attention can be called to ongoing reciprocal effects of our social world, including social, economic, and political relations. With this line of thinking, one can surmise that a variety of influences can act upon school superintendents and superintendents upon others.

Critical Theory and Educational Leadership

Freire (1970, 1973, 1985) contends that critical perspectives are concerned with pushing beyond demonstrably false beliefs and enabling conditions within which adults and students can recognize their individual, gendered, classed, and racialized group placement within unjust systems. Further, he argues for what he calls *conscienticizao*, or a "critical consciousness" (1973), in which people would come to recognize that their plight is determined largely through man-made power dynamics rather than fatalistically accepting the world as divinely determined. Giroux develops this idea in his distinction between a "language of critique" and a "language of possibility" (1983, 1988, 1997). He contends that any theoretical perspective that simply views

schools and school systems as mere instruments for the reproduction of capitalist relations and dominant ideologies could not contemplate the opportunity for, and in fact the reality of, any "counterhegemonic" practices in schools (Giroux, 1988, p. 111). The work of critical educators in general and critical educational leadership in particular should be "to raise ambitions, desires, and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issue of educational struggle and social justice" (Giroux, 1988, p. 177).

Critical pedagogy. Burbules and Berk (1999) make a distinction between a critical thinking tradition in the literature and a tradition of critical pedagogy. In the former, members of a society do not question the assumptions and guidelines that inform daily living. Critical pedagogy on the other hand, goes beyond a cool examination of the truthfulness of a given proposition by locating the proposition as an element of larger systems of belief and action in a particular society with an implicit intent to address inequitable, undemocratic, or oppressive institutions and bring about expansive social justice (Burbules & Berk, 1999). To clarify the differences between critical thinking and critical pedagogy, they state that,

> . . . it is one thing to question the evidentiary base (or logic, or clarity, or coherence) of a particular claim, and to find it wanting. . . . It is something else, something separate, to question the motivation behind those who propound certain views, their group interests, the effects of their claims on society, and so forth. (p. 1)

Advocates of critical pedagogy contend that at the core of all social arrangements, power is used through economics, politics, and culture, to support and maintain inequities to the benefit of some but not all. It is one thing to question whether poverty is due to cultural and psychological deficits of those affected by poverty, or if poverty is due to historic and structural factors. As it relates to this study, it is important to better understand why these beliefs are held, were do they come from, and who do they advantage/disadvantage. Complex poverty exists and persists in

Canadian society. Any attempt to address complex poverty and its impact upon individuals and communities requires an interrogation of the socio-political and economic conditions that help to maintain its existence. To address complex poverty requires more than academic analysis, it requires an intention to improve conditions for those who are disadvantaged.

Leadership: District-Level Influentials

In contemplating improved life chances for those who are impacted by complex, racialized poverty and social exclusion, I make two basic assumptions: improved life chances require changes to the status quo; and the work needs to be done through human agents, including those in positions to influence people and systems. For over a century, a wide variety of efforts made to improve North American schools have focused on conceptualizations of leadership, organizational change, and influential individuals who have been informed by their life experiences within highly conceptualized environments (Rottmann 2007). That said, conceptions of change and leadership mean very different things to different people, which generates a wide variety of practices, some of which can actually work explicitly or implicitly as barriers to increased equity and social inclusion. By way of a workable definition, Rottmann (2007) referred to leadership as "a relational form of influence that may exist at the individual, organizational, or discursive level" (p. 2). A dominant narrative (Postman, 1996) in North American cultures holds that leadership is synonymous with powerful individuals. Regarding the field of educational administration and leadership, researchers such as Siskin (1994), Grogan (2000), and Leithwood (2005) have studied teachers, department heads, superintendents, and most comprehensively, principals, and have largely attributed influence, change, and leadership to an individual agent. Leithwood (2010) observes that during the past twenty years, many researchers have explored the roles played by school districts and systems leaders in school

reform (Cawelti, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al. 2003; Florian, 2000; Maguire, 2003; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). While Florian (2000) reports that effective district-level leadership has had a pronounced impact on systems supporting disadvantaged youth, after reviewing over 30 studies, Leithwood (2010) concludes that "reducing disparities or gaps in the achievement of students from different social, cultural, and economic backgrounds has proven to be largely elusive" (p. 246).

Heck and Hallinger (1999) identify positivist, interpretive, and critical-contextual approaches to educational leadership. Rottman (2007) organizes conceptualizations of educational leadership into three areas: individual leadership (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Fullan, 2001; Leithwood, 2005), group leadership (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995), and leadership as the property of discourse (Foster, 1986; Starratt, 2001). I believe Rottmann's (2007) individual and group conceptualizations align with Heck and Hallinger's (1999) positivist and interpretive frameworks, as they largely focus upon the perceived and largely hierarchical and managerial skills of individuals in official positions of influence. Conversely, I comprehend Heck and Hallinger's (1999) understandings of critical conceptualizations as highly related to Rottmann's framing of leadership as located within a context of critical discourse. Rottmann (2007) argues that leadership can be beyond the purview of individuals if we consider *organizational leadership* and *leadership as discourse*. Bacharach and Mundell (1993), Ogawa and Bossert (1995), Rottmann (2007), and others have challenged the very notion that leadership can, or should, be owned at an individual level. Foster (1989) and Starratt (2001) are two of a number of researchers who have challenged others in the field to view leadership as a philosophical idea. Within the interpretive and critical approaches to leadership identified by Heck and Hallinger (1999), some interpretations of transformational and

distributed leadership would suggest that leadership resides in group and structural dynamics as well. Rottmann (2007) makes a compelling case for suggesting organizations and ideas have the ability to actually possess leadership qualities. That said, for the purposes of my research, I am still interested in how critically minded individuals in the role of superintendent, working within highly contextualized and politicized spaces, make sense of and work within their environments to influence critically informed change.

A review of this literature can inform an understanding of why superintendents describe the social and political terrain in which they work in the ways that they do, and why they place responsibility for inequities where they do. The critically informed research can provide further insights into potential orientations and practices of district-level influentials that might address issues of inequality and social exclusion and, in so doing, inform existing theory and praxis.

Individual Influentials: Perspectives From Positivist Research

Heck and Hallinger (1999), Leithwood (2010), Marzano (2006), and Rottmann (2007) have attempted to review the literature on district-level leadership. Blount (1999), Boris-Schacter (1998), and Heck and Hallinger (1999) have found that much of the work reflects structural functional orientations that largely view schools as closed systems in which, while improvement goals are identified, the status quo is largely maintained and social hierarchies are conserved. Rottmann (2007) contends that much of this work asserts that leadership is in the sole domain of individuals in positions of official power. During the past 30 years, a number of studies of district-level policies and strategies have attempted to link the work of district-level leaders to positive outcomes for students (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001; LaRoque & Coleman, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). While the results of these studies have identified what seem to be characteristics of effective school districts, they largely have not shed

light on how the leadership characteristics and actions of individual actors in district-level positions, which I refer to as *influentials*, interact with and have impact on what takes place in schools and with students.

Instructional Leadership

Fullan (2001) found that research during the 1980s focused upon how influentials supported the implementation of specific programs to comply with accountability schemes, usually through strategies to encourage the implementation of new instructional practices. The effective schools movement followed, in which "researchers and policy makers idealized the school as the unit of change" (Leithwood et al. 2004, p. 36), with a focus on the instructional leadership of school principals and other site-based influentials. While the role of the district and by default district-level influentials, including superintendents, was largely dismissed, several researchers (Cuban, 1984; Purkey & Smith, 1985) did investigate how these reforms could be brought to scale district wide. Murphy and Hallinger (1986) and LaRocque and Coleman (1990), associated effective instructional practice with instructionally focused leadership from the superintendent and district-level leaders while Floden et al. (1988) observed that strong district-level leadership for instructional practice was not common. During the past two decades, standards based reforms and accountability systems in the USA (*No Child Left Behind*) and in some Canadian provinces (Alberta and Ontario for example) have led to renewed interest into district-level instructional leadership. Fuhrman and Elmore (1990), Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, and Easton (1998), and Elmore and Burney (1997) have proffered evidence that district-level influentials can "exert a powerful influence on the kinds of instructional practices favored and supported across a district" (Leithwood et al. 2004, p. 39).

Cawelti and Protheroe (2001), and Togneri and Anderson (2003) have completed multi-site qualitative studies of high performing school districts in low socio-economic and diverse communities, and have attempted to identify key district-level factors in the apparent success of these districts. They found a common theme of unsatisfactory academic achievement in communities characterized by racialized poverty and social exclusion. Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a meta-analysis that examined findings from 27 studies involving 2,817 United States school districts and 3.4 million students in what they believe is the largest quantitative study of research on superintendents. The study found that district-level leadership has a positive correlation to student achievement, and effective superintendents create goal-oriented organizations. However, Waters and Marzano (2006) also found that a significant limitation of the analysis is the chosen measure by which to determine the effectiveness of a school system, in this case student achievement measured by standardized testing. Leithwood et al. (2004) argue that, while the evolving literature on instructional leadership at the district-level and their influentials is interesting, empirical links between the works of these leaders, teachers' activities in the classroom, and student learning are not strong.

Transformational Leadership

Hallinger and Heck (1996) found that the effectiveness of leadership is more than the mechanistic implementation of initiatives and programs; rather, it concerns engagement in the larger social and organizational contexts in which district-level influentials work. Regardless of the localized context within which these influentials find themselves, a number of researchers including Conger and Kanungo (1998), Hallinger and Heck (1999), and Leithwood (1996) have concluded that several broad sets of practices are universal. Leithwood (2013) identifies "setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization" as key categories (cited in

Leithwood et al. 2004), within which a number of specific practices can be articulated. Transformational leaders may or may not have strong knowledge of teaching and learning, but their primary work has been to ensure organizational environments exist within which people can develop the capacity—the intrinsic desire and ability—to improve their abilities and practices. Effective transformational superintendents were also engaged in redesigning their organizations to strengthen collaborative cultures. In spite of the results of this research, which indicates the value of superintendents exercising these basic transformational leadership capacities, there still remains little research that indicates what exactly effective superintendents do (Hart & Ogawa, 1987; Leithwood et al. 2004). As indicated earlier by Leithwood et al. (2004), the research related to transformational leadership may place too much importance upon individual leaders, has difficulty in articulating between management and leadership functions, and, thus far, provides little connection to results for students, never mind improved socio-economic equity.

As Leithwood (2005) concludes as well, Ogawa and Bossert (1995) argue for a form of organizational leadership in which a critical mass of individuals would influence directions, policies, and practices within an organization. Rottmann (2007) contends however, that while many have viewed transformational and organizational leadership as shared, horizontal exercises, in large part the research has been used to "legitimize the notion of individual leadership in formal settings" (p. 2). For all the promotion of transformational and organizational leadership, much of what has resulted has continued to concern the abilities, orientations, and actions of individual leaders.

Socially Just Work: Challenges and Opportunities

Within Contemporary Environments

Rottmann (2007, p. 8) identifies the presence of two significant "leading ideas"—rational

technicism and neo-liberalism—that present significant challenges to socially just influentials.

Theories, policies, discourses, and what Rottmann (2007) calls "leading ideas" (p. 3) can

influence possibilities for individual and organizational action. Foucault (1980) uses the word

discourse to refer to leading ideas that can permeate all social spaces through language and

communication between individuals and groups, and subtly influence meanings and shared

understandings.

Rational Technicism

Rottmann (2007) suggests that this leading idea has wielded a particularly powerful

influence in education for over a hundred years. Drawing upon assumptions of logical positivism

including the notion that reality exists independent of the observer, it is possible to understand

the world through "logical analysis of sense data gathered by a neutral observer" (p. 8). She

contends that, through rational technicism, scientific management processes have been adopted

by school systems and, as a result, conformity and technical efficiency have been championed. If

they have tacitly or explicitly bought into this leading idea, influentials are likely to be

"managers" (Rottmann p. 5) whose role is to maintain harmony, efficiency, and the

organizational and cultural status quo. Such managers believe they can observe their

environments and the people whom they manage with neutrality, as they take steps to rationally

administer these people and bureaucracies. Rottmann concludes that for influentials who believe

that the status quo is good, growing ethnic and class diversity are problems to be addressed

through bureaucratic solutions with little appetite for any consideration of local context or the

perspectives of those on the fringes. For influentials predisposed to addressing equity, the influence of rational technicism upon and throughout an organization creates a stifling environment in which to operate. Rottmann (2007) points to the researchers Ferguson (1984), Larson and Ovando (2001), and Ball, Bowe, and Gewitz (1996), who have concluded that hierarchical bureaucracies can become impermeable to progressive change related to sexism, racism, and classism respectively. This is accomplished through the evolution of norms, regulations, and authority structures that normalize a devaluation of emotion, diversity, and individualized voice while valuing conformity, rationality, neutrality, and uniformity. Influentials attempting to work for progressive change and equity can make a difference through individual and collective acts. However, Rottmann (2007) concludes that hierarchical bureaucracies are more likely to work against socially just initiatives than support them.

Neo-Liberalism

A second leading idea that Rottmann (2007) posits as a significant challenge to individuals working towards equity is the merger of liberal rhetoric and free market capitalism, neo-liberalism. Emerging in Western democracies in the past 50 years, neo-liberalism has been used to link notions of equality, equity, and democracy to the marketplace. In the field of education, neo-liberalism has resulted in a plethora of large-scale, business-oriented reform strategies, including open boundaries in which schools compete for students, and comparisons of school districts based upon graduation rates. Rottmann argues that neo-liberal discourse has resulted in choice being privileged over the equitable distribution of resources and the creation of a social ethic in which many believe equal opportunities already exist for all, and success being achievable for all who will simply avail themselves of those opportunities.

Influentials who tacitly, or explicitly believe in the tenets of neo-liberalism, will largely view their work as progressive as they uncritically ensure the adoption and implementation of neo-liberal reform directives that come from school boards and departments of education, or are marketed through the powerful education and professional development industries. Either way, Rottmann (2007) contends that the work of these "problem solvers" (p. 5) is to "facilitate the implementation of standardized policy mandates in their localized contexts" (p. 5). She argues that, while these individuals are often viewed as change agents and the work is challenging, they are simply adopting initiatives that have been strongly influenced by capitalist economic interests and practices that place a higher premium upon market driven choices than the equitable sharing of resources. For those who are truly critically minded, working within a neo-liberal environment, such as contemporary Canada, can be very challenging, as the tenets of the discourse are widely viewed as common sense and progressive, even though the voices, perspectives, and systemic needs of those on the margins are largely ignored.

Neo-Liberalism and Schooling

Closely aligned with conservative-behaviorist narratives, neo-liberal philosophy has spilled into other sectors of society including education (Apple, 1993; Graefe, 2006; Mahon, 2008). For all of the efforts resulting from a conservative-behaviorist discourse to get kids out of poverty through education and hard work, several other statistics are illuminating: federal funds to cover college education expenses cover 42%, compared to 84% twenty years previous (Carey, 2004); while 48% of low income students who are high school graduates go on to college, only 7% of all lower income kids get a degree by age 26 compared to 60% of upper income students. Brownell (et al, 2012) reports that in some parts of Winnipeg's North End, only 20% of young people graduate from high school, compared to 90% in more affluent parts of Winnipeg. Further,

education systems cannot take the blame for these statistics in spite of claims to the contrary. As Anyon (2005) writes, if school quality had declined, we could expect to see a large income gap between older (better trained) workers compared to recent (allegedly poorly educated); however, evidence for this does not exist, and, actually, average SAT scores for all American students rose during the 1980s and 1990s. Noguera (2003) and Anyon (2005) have both concluded that the cause of declining wages is not poor schooling. In Anyon's words, it is "macroeconomic policy and the resulting employer practice" (p. 38). Anyon argues that these policies have also led to the increased use of prison systems to manage unemployment. The U.S. maintains the world's largest penal system, one million inmates of whom are African-American. This reality is mirrored with where Aboriginal people make up three percent of the adult population while consisting of 27 percent and 20 percent of the prison federal and provincial prison populations respectively (Statscan, 2013).

Critically Informed Discourse

Rottmann (2007) identifies critical theory as a third leading idea exerting influence in the current educational context. Foster (1986) argues that educational administrators, immersed within administrative science theory and the classic bureaucratic paradigm of administering rather than leading, are oblivious to the reformative possibilities of the work. Of interest to me is whether a critical social theory, focused on the fundamental question of the relationships that exist between structures of knowledge and structures of control, provides the groundwork for insightful comprehensive analysis that can inform educational administration in general and the work of superintendents specifically.

Bates (1983) has extended Habermas's (1972, 1976, 1979) critical analysis of advanced capitalism to education by arguing that school systems help to sustain state legitimacy and

control. Educational decision makers accomplish these tasks by training future workers, providing rational control by adjusting spending, and updating training programs to meet new economic needs. They also serve as conduits of socialization to the values of the state and help to ensure the "motivation and commitment of the young" (Park, 1999, p. 370). Extending Habermas's ideas further, Bates (1980) argues that the very characteristics of the education system that help to sustain the state are also contributing to an emerging crisis, the failure to foster the individual prosperity and societal harmony that ensures access to and the development of the kind of substantial freedoms spoken of by Sen (1992), including personal freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, and protective security. Influenced by the new sociology of education that emerged in England during the 1970s, Bates (1980) argues that contrary to positivist mainstream constructions of educational administration that had been adhered to for years, the field of education required an intense investigation from a sociological perspective, not just an epistemological one and a recognition that knowledge is socially constructed, "not either divinely inspired, inherent in our minds, or in a world external to us" (Young, 2008, p. 5). These are important notions for influentials as they reflect upon how they make sense of contemporary class and racialized divisions in the greater society, how they describe the socio-political environments in which they reside, and how they determine what is to be their work.

Transforming Leadership

Similar to other critical approaches, Shields (2010) argues for a transforming theory of leadership. Emerging from the same roots as transformational leadership, she suggests that, while Burns (1978) is mostly associated with transformational leadership, he was advocating for the need for much more significant change than is usually associated with that form of

leadership. He stated that truly transformative leadership is "a transformation in the attitudes, norms, institutions, and behaviors that structure our daily lives" (p.414). Shields (2010) states that neither transactional nor transformational leadership truly meet hers or Burns' understanding of a leadership that is truly transforming, leadership that "attends to the moral and ethical issues that often perpetuate inequity and inequality in organizations" (p. 565). Further, Shields identifies a number of others who make similar arguments (Anderson, 2004; Astin & Astin, 2000; Brown, 2004; Dantley, 2003; Duncan, Alperstein, Myers, Olckers, & Gibbs, 2006; Evans, Harlan, & Prilleltensky, 2007; King & Biro, 2000; Tillman, 2005) and who have identified common elements of transforming leadership, which include "the need for social betterment, for enhancing equity, and for the thorough reshaping of knowledge and belief structures—elements that reappear as central tenets in the concept of transformative (although not necessarily transformational) leadership" (p. 566).

Shields identifies Freire (1970, 1998) and Foster (1986) as theorists whose work are exemplars of how transformative leadership could be understood in the lived realities of people's existence. Foster (1986) had stated "leadership must be critically educative; it cannot only look at the conditions in which we live, but it must also decide how to change them" (p. 185). In essence, whereas transformational leadership "focuses on what happens within an organization, transformative leadership starts with a recognition of some material realities of the broader social and political sphere, recognizing that the inequities and struggles experienced in the wider society affect one's ability both to perform and to succeed within an organizational context" (Shields, 2010, p. 568). As opposed to Leithwood's (2010) focus upon directions, developing people, redesigning, and managing instruction; Shields's notions of truly transforming leadership are grounded in the "twin concepts of critique and possibility" (2010, p. 569). In other words,

tinkering with existing systems is not enough; what is required is recognition that schools often reproduce and perpetuate inequalities and, as a result, must become places based upon "democratic authority" (p. 569) in which leaders "diminish undemocratic power relationships" (p.102).

Towards New Narratives

Postman (1996) argues that schools need to have a "transcendent and honorable purpose to become the central institution through which students may find reasons to continue to educate themselves" (as cited in Hoffman & Burrello, 2004, p. 269). Foster (2004) asks us to question many of the actions of leaders influenced by dominant neo-liberal narratives. He proceeds to say that more stories are needed to help us establish new narratives that can, "give us, as a profession, the confidence we need to raise questions of a critical nature that, despite their risks, may ultimately lead to the formation of a more proper educational organization" (p. 195). Similar to Rottman's (2007) identification of the neo-liberal discourse, Foster (2004) has identified an *economic narrative* that tells us that our "sense of worth is to be found in our capacity to secure material benefits" (as cited in Hoffman & Burrello, 2004, p. 270). This "common sense" narrative informs us that the production of skilled workers, blue collar and white, who can compete in the global economy is the goal of contemporary western education systems. Postman (1996) offers a range of alternative narratives for schools including an emphasis on global citizenship, intellectual skepticism, respect for democratic institutions, and appreciation for diversity.

Foucault (1972), identifies several *technologies of thought*, each of which represents "the application of a systemic procedure towards a particular end" (Foster, 2004, p. 177), and which exert powerful influences over our collective thinking and actions and are fostered through

leadership that supports existing narratives. Two technologies of thought that Foster (2004)

thinks particularly influential upon educational leaders are the control of numeracy and language.

Through the control of numeracy, collections of numbers and statistics are used to influence

policy development. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), conducted on

behalf of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has provided

results that have been used in the United States to show the dominance of Asian students over

North American students and to support an economic narrative that demands more rigor and

accountability through a greater focus on math and science in schools, to the detriment of the arts

in many American (and Canadian) jurisdictions. Foster argues that these have not been neutral

exercises; rather, these are programs to support existing narratives, in this example, an economic,

neo-liberal narrative or discourse. With regards to the technology of language, to Foster (2004),

"leadership is language and language is how leadership is exerted" (p. 178). As we might

observe in many organizations and micro cultures, particular languages exist, certain words are

used, and those with proficiency with these particular aptitudes have increased ability to

influence decision-making. At the same time, language excludes others in subtle but powerful

ways. Foster (1986, 2004) has identified several challenges to the potentialities of leadership. He

infers that leaders often explicitly or implicitly believe in the tenets of the dominant narratives.

Whether they believe in the narrative or not, systemic influences upon them make it difficult to

act in any manner that deviates from the narrative. This inhibits the ability of superintendents,

even those so inclined, to address complex Aboriginal and racialized poverty.

Foster (1986, 2004) laments the "incrementalism and determinism that dominated the

majority of modernist narratives in theories of administrative science" (cited in Lindle, 2004, p.

169). As opposed to a "sanitized and supposedly depoliticized approach to governing schools"

(Lindle, 2004, p. 169), he advocates for an assertive activism in which the work is to "develop, challenge, and liberate human souls" (Foster, 1986, p. 18). His interpretation of a professional ethic of educational leadership is clearly stated when he says, "each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of a human life; this is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas" (p. 33).

Foster (1986) argues that critical leaders need to identify the narrative to which they ascribe, whether it is dominant or an alternative. Leaders need to consider how they can respond to the imposing narrative in their local context, as well as how their actions can challenge the dominating narrative. This requires a high degree of meta-cognition and reflection or as Fay (1987) argues, coming to see the false consciousness from which they view the world, which is a reflection of Foster's (1986) notion of institution leadership. Influential individuals and collectives who impart their values upon systems are those who can do this work.

Capper (1998) writes that critical theoretical perspectives make allusions to social class, gender, race, and other conditions, as they are used to address issues of social justice. However, a number of other critically oriented perspectives make specific marginalized groups the central focus of their work in ways that are similar to and at times different from critical theory, including a variety of feminist, postmodern, critical race, and postcolonial theoretical perspectives. Is this doable work? Yes it is, but very challenging.

Critical Feminist, Postmodern, Critical Race, and Postcolonial Perspectives

Grogan (2000) provides a useful alternative perspective on the work of superintendents informed by critical feminist and postmodern literature. By feminist literature, she refers to work that explores the significance of gender upon education (Card, 1991, 1995; Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1993; Harding, 1991; Kenway & Modra, 1992; Noddings, 1992; Scott, 1986). Grogan

(2000) argues that while the understandings of these writers differ from each other, they all attend to what have been described as "the distinctively feminist issues [which are] the situation of women and the analysis of male domination" (Flax, 1990, p. 40). Concerning postmodern literature, she points to the work of Foucault (1980), Lyotard (1979/1984), and others (Anderson, 1990; Capper, 1993; Cherryholmes, 1988; Giroux, 1983; Lather, 1991, 1992) who have used postmodernism to provide insights into their particular academic disciplines.

Feminist perspectives. Flax (1990) argues that feminist theory aims "to analyze gender relations: how gender relations are constituted and experienced and how we think or, equally important, do not think about them" (p. 40). Grogan (2000) contends that looking through a feminist lens upon the superintendency acknowledges the often tacit reality that not only have the majority of researchers been men but most superintendents have also been men. Wallin (2010, 2013) and others (Kachur-Reico & Wallin, 2012; Wallin & Crippen, 2007, 2008) have made the same argument in the Canadian context, while Biklin and Shakeshaft (1985) argue that if gender is a useful analytical perspective, then drawing upon the experiences of women in the position will assist our understanding of leadership and schools, "since an inadequate conception of the female experience distorts our perspectives on the human experience as a whole" (p. 47). Finally, Grogan (2000) contends that perhaps the most significant contribution comes when we adopt a feminist paradigm of social criticism, as "feminist scholarship advocates action that results in a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for those who have been marginalized" (p. 126). When looking at the superintendency through this lens, we may ask whether superintendents concern themselves with such issues or whether a focus on equity and care would lead to different approaches to the superintendency.

Postmodern perspectives. Postmodernism provides further insights that enable us to understand the superintendency in terms different from those that have been used in the past. Grogan (2000) suggests that the concepts *discourse*, *subjectivity*, *knowledge* and *power*, and *resistance* are of particular usefulness.

Foucault (1980) uses the term discourse to understand how we are positioned as subjects in different relationships with others. How one acts as a teacher is often quite different than when one becomes a superintendent, because in each role "there are rules within a discourse concerning who can make statements and in what context, and these rules exclude some and include others" (Craib, 1992, p. 186). In the discourse of educational administration, traditionally a superintendent has been expected to promote organizational effectiveness, and the position often comes, whether deserved or not, with clearly understood positional power. Superintendents may experience tremendous tension and stress as they reconcile work that has been largely informed by the discourses of rational technicism and neo-liberalism which are at odds with personal views that are more critical in nature. Grogan (2000) argues that a person who becomes superintendent is shaped by the discourse of the superintendency. In her words, "we are molded by or subjectified by a discourse in the sense that we learn to make meaning of our experiences according to the dominant values and beliefs expressed within the discourse" (p. 127).

The concept of subjectivity "refers to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32) that are largely informed by the discourse within which we reside. Using an example within an educational setting, Grogan (2000) states that, whereas teaching encourages relationship building, a common understanding of the work of an administrator is to maintain a distance, as Rottmann (2007) also suggests when she highlights the importance of a

rational and neutral positionality as a formal leader in an environment informed by rational technicism.

The third useful concept, knowledge and power, is informed by Foucault's (1980) insights into the interdependence of knowledge and power, in the sense that what counts as knowledge is always contestable and is dependent upon who has the relative power to claim it (Grogan, 2000). From this perspective, any review of the work of superintendents needs to critically analyze the power relations that informs what the work is, who does it, and who benefits. Such a way of thinking can also help one to reject any understandings of social reality "within theories that purport to explain all of human history" (Grogan, 2000, p. 128). Any study of the superintendency and, in fact, the work being done by superintendents needs to always ask who is being best served by the policies and practices that are in place, or, as Hargreaves (1994) writes, if superintendents "give voice to other versions (of reality) which are normally neglected or suppressed" (p. 39) their decisions will be better informed.

Regarding the concept of resistance, Grogan (2000) argues that, if the definition of knowledge is expanded to include others' voices, any challenge to formerly accepted knowledge claims will in all likelihood be resisted. The concept of resistance applied to the study of the superintendency would result in inquiries and questions that would produce what Grogan calls "a productive lack of certainty" (p. 129), growing appreciation that there are always multiple perspectives, and a continued reflection of the relations between knowledge and power at the local level. Once these ideas have been grasped, a more comprehensive understanding of the local context is made possible.

Critical race theory (CRT). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) base their discussion of social inequality in American society upon three propositions: race is a significant factor in

determining inequality; society is founded upon property rights; and "the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and consequently, school) inequity" (p. 48). Race continues to be used as a lens through which many of us make sense of our social world in North America; "race has become metaphorical—a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological *race* ever was" (Morrison, 1992, p. 63). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue that, while feminist and class-based theories have been important, CRT has made unique contributions. As Roediger (1999) suggests, the "main body of writing by White Marxists in the United States has both 'naturalized' whiteness and oversimplified race" (p. 6). Omi and Winant (1994) argue that the conceptualization of race has contributed to the evolution of hegemony in Western, colonial cultures in that many of these societies continue to be organized and ruled in ways that cannot be folded into notions of ethnicity and class. Explorations of the correlation of ethnicity, class, and gender, for example, failed to account for the extraordinarily high rates of impoverished conditions lived by African North Americans and Aboriginal Canadians. While capitalism is often viewed as a necessary correlate of democracy, critical legal scholars have argued that a belief in the inherent sanctity of democracy ignores the structural inequalities that have been historically characteristic of modern Western capitalist democracies. King (2012) writes that a pervasive narrative in North America has been that Native people and cultures have been "unable to move forward along the linear continuum of civilization" (p. 79) and. as a result.

> . . . democracy becomes not simply a form of representative government, but an organizing principle that bundles individual freedoms, Christianity, and capitalism into a marketable product carrying with it the unexamined promise of wealth and prosperity. It suggests that anything else is, by default, bankrupt. (p. 79)

Omi and Winant (1994) also argue that, rather than civil rights, the early years of the American republic were founded upon property rights in the sense that only landowners had the franchise. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) state that during the American civil rights movement, progressive leaders built their plans for social justice on an appeal to human and civil rights, ignoring the fact that society was based upon property rights. The intersection of race and property has resulted in the objectification of African North American peoples as property that followed the seizure of Aboriginal lands, which was justified by European legal tradition:

> When the pilgrims came . . . John Winthrop created an excuse to take Indian land by declaring the area legally a vacuum." The Indians had not subdued the land and therefore had only natural right to it, but not a civil right. A natural right did not have legal standing. (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 53)

King (2012) has shared that from a White perspective, the nation states of Canada and the United Sates emerged after the American Revolution and the War of 1812 from what was essentially a wilderness, regardless of the fact that there were over 600 and 550 recognized First Nations in Canada and the United States respectively. The U.S. Articles of Confederation gave the government "the exclusive right to regulate the trade and managing all affairs with the Indians" (King, 2012, p. 81); while, in Canada, the Royal Proclamation of 1763, acknowledged the rights of indigenous peoples to the land, but the British North America Act of 1867 and Indian Act of 1876 ensured federal control over almost all aspects of Indian life. A final, and what Ladson-Billings and Tate have called "more pernicious and long lasting result" (1995, p. 57), was the "construction of whiteness as the ultimate property" (p. 57), in the sense that the basis for rights in property, possession, has historically included only the cultural practices of White people (Harris, 1993). Today, there are several key principles of CRT. First, there is a belief that racism is woven into the fabric of the legal, cultural, and psychological lives of North Americans. Second, equal rights legislation is often undermined before it can fulfill its promise.

Third, neutrality, objectivity, colour blindness, and meritocracy do not exist. Fourth, there is a need to reflect on the perspectives of those who experience racism and use first person accounts. And, finally, democracy must be disentangled from capitalism; the two are not synonymous (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Superintendents, and other influentials, are working with increasingly diverse populations and the continuing reality of the construct of race simply cannot be ignored.

Postcolonial theory. Said (1994) has indicated that post-colonialism concerns itself with the continued impact of old colonial practices that still live with us today. Hall states that post-colonialism is not an acknowledgment that colonialism has ended; it is an awareness that what we have come to view as normal, as the facts, are not necessarily the way things truly are. So, post colonialism is not the end of colonialism:

> . . . it is after a certain kind of colonialism, after a certain moment of high imperialism and colonial occupation, in the wake of it, in the shadow of it, inflected by it—it is what it is because something else has happened before, but is also something new. (cited by Birchall, 2009, p. 230)

Since the beginning of the European expansion over the globe starting in 1492, there has always been strong connections between the state policies and practices of European and so-called New World entities such as Brazil, Australia, the United States, and Canada; and race-based exclusions. It can be argued that the new states of the West have been built upon the constructed racializing and colonizing hierarchies in which "dominant bodies lay claim to a sense of entitlement while oppressed communities struggle daily to resist claims of our illegitimacy and degeneracy" (West, 1993, p. 251). Post-colonial theory reminds us that the world of education is not located in a vacuum; on the contrary, it exists within a world that continues to be influenced by our colonial past and present in ways that impact what we deem to be common sense when thinking about economics, organizational management, class, and race.

Challenges and Opportunities That Emerge Through Critical Orientations

Exploring the challenges and opportunities that emerge through critical orientations can be helpful in framing the responses that the participants provide to the research questions. If district-level influentials can come to engage with the ideas presented above, they may be better equipped to re-interrogate the narratives that have informed how they describe the social and political terrain in which they work, and why they have placed responsibility for inequities where they have. The participants in this study may be progressively minded and yet feel completely stifled in the conservative socio-political context in which they work. On the other hand, I found that in many ways they are already engaged in the work. Either way, I believe that the sustained conversation can inform existing theory and praxis.

Progressive Influentials Within Rational Technicist and Neo-Liberal Environments

Within her topology of educational leadership, Rottmann (2007) identifies "advocate resisters" and "activist collectives" (p. 5) as individual and organizational leaders influenced by critical discourse. Advocate resisters define their work as resistance to oppressive social forces and "advocacy for marginalized communities to which they may or may not belong" (Rottmann, 2007, p. 6). She reports that such individuals know that rational technicist and neo-liberal narratives support social inequity, and they find space within education systems to challenge oppressive actions similarly to Foster's (2004) notion of institutional leadership. Influentials working in such environments know that they cannot be neutral, cool observers of social environments; rather, they need to, and do, act in a sustained manner upon small, everyday actions that address issues of inequalities (Ryan, 2003), that can bring about perceptible progressive change. For these influentials however, sustainable progress is often delimited to their continued presence, is accordingly unsustainable over time, and structural and systemic

inequities are more often than not to remain intact. That said, Rottmann (2007) reminds us that the work of these often solo advocates can and does make a difference; however, if sustainable change is to occur, others must become engaged.

When influentials begin to network with other like-minded individuals and work together on behalf of "common concerns, common identities, or common occupational positions that are marginalized with respect to the mainstream political system" (Rottmann, 2007, p. 8), there is a greater likelihood for advancement on progressive projects. Further, in light of an arguably huge disconnect between our current rhetoric about supporting initiatives to combat poverty and social exclusion and the widening gap between the *haves* and the *have-nots,* there is certainly room for us to make progress. Again, in contrast to influentials aligned with rational technician or neo-liberal traditions, advocates and activist collectives will believe that neutrality and objectivity are not options. Rather, in the forever-contested political terrain of education, they need to be continually aware of the local and the contextual, and of those who are not being served by the current manner of doing business, regardless of how it's being framed.

Lessons for Progressive Influentials from Critical Feminist and Postmodern Perspectives

A critical feminist perspective provides a lens through which the inequities of our socio-economic structures become glaringly apparent. In light of the continued pressures and changes in the larger society, there will be even more children who are not well served by our traditional leadership practices (Grogan, 2000). A feminist perspective may also be helpful in shaping understandings of how poverty and its effects are highly gendered, particularly so for racialized women. This perspective also informs us that superintendents and other influentials can adopt alternative frameworks through which creating greater equity is a goal and in which a growing comfort with contradiction and paradox is required.

From postmodernism we learn that influentials can actually be informed, shaped, and pressured by a rational technicist and neo-liberal informed discourse of educational leadership that can either buttress their conservative worldview or provide tremendous confusion and contradiction if they are progressively inclined. We are also reminded of the interdependence of knowledge and power, in such a manner as to have us interrogate who is and is not being served by the decisions and actions we make, promote, or carry out in the name of effective leadership.

CRT contributes to critical understandings of educational inequity in several ways. The notion of Whiteness as property is "the legitimation of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 8). A second contribution has been recognition of the importance of voice (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993), and "the assertion and acknowledgement of the importance of the personal and community experiences of people of colour as sources of knowledge" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 10). A third contribution of critical theorists has been to problematize the idealization of colour blindness (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). The contention that race does not matter precedes a belief that the structural challenges do not exist. If superintendents and other influentials are to grapple with the challenges faced in inordinate proportions by Brown and Black citizens in their communities, they must attend to how race continues to be socially constructed.

Post-colonial theory reminds us that the world of education is not located in a vacuum; on the contrary, it exists within a world that continues to be influenced by our colonial past and present in ways that impact what we deem to be common sense when thinking about economics, organizational management, class, and race.

The Superintendency

Grogan (2000) conveys that, while not particularly well researched in the educational administration literature, especially when compared to the principalship, the superintendency has attracted some attention from scholars and practitioners over the past 40 years. The past decade has produced ripe conditions for a re-emergent view of superintendents as individuals with positional power to influence, who can play a significant role in educational and societal reform. Rapid demographic changes are resulting in a need to educate a growing number of People of Colour and socially disadvantaged children; national economics have spurred an economically driven imperative to educate all children (see Björk, 2005); and a growing divide between rich and poor, Brown and White communities highlights the realities of racialized poverty and social exclusion. School systems are situated within larger "socio-political and highly normative systems" (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002, p.2). Counts (1969) and Freire (1970) argue that individuals with the capacity to influence, must accept that to be engaged in educational leadership is to be engaged in political action. These high expectations are extremely challenging, especially as Goldring and Hausman (2000), and Stone, Henig, Jones, and Pierannunzi (2001) have found that, within the school principalship, the primary field from which most superintendents emerge, while they do need to attend to the micro politics of the local (parent advisory councils, local community politics), these individuals are trained to believe that they are largely divorced from the macro politics of the larger society. Among others, Waters and Marzano (2006) have written of school superintendents beset by new demands of accountability, and the *Superintendency* (MASS/MSBA, 2009) includes the language of "benchmarks" and "indicators" (p. 36) as superintendents have been asked increasingly to ensure evidence-based practices are the norm in their organizations. In addition, Björk (2005) and

Björk, Kowalski, Brown-Ferrigno (2005), and have identified a number of academic and professional associations that have placed a renewed emphasis upon enhancing equity. In Manitoba, the summer 2011 institute of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) focused upon closing the achievement gap between those of middle and higher socio-economic status (SES) and those of lower status; MASS, the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA), and the Manitoba Teachers Society (MTS) co-sponsored a major conference focused upon social justice in the fall of 2010; the 2013 MASS summer institute focused on the equity and educational reforms in Finland; and the fall 2011 *MASS Journal* was focused on poverty. Kochan, Jackson, and Duke (1999) acknowledge a growing recognition that societal issues such as racism, sexism, and poverty place additional challenges upon school systems, while public expectations of what school systems are to accomplish is rising. As a result of these pressures, several emergent themes are evident. First, Furman (2003) observes a shift from a focus on "what leadership does" to "what leadership is for" (p.1), while Björk (2005) notes that a shift from management to transformational leadership in the literature has been a significant attempt to "re-center the field of educational administration" (p. 23). Second, a focus on ethics and equity have become core considerations in new efforts to improve educational outcomes for all children (Keedy & Björk, 2002; Goldring & Greenfield, 2002). Third, Goldring and Greenfield (2002) argue that superintendents need to use their positions as stewards of public education to engage not only staff but their greater communities in re-imagining the purpose of the enterprise to combat anti-intellectualism and to encourage holistic social programming. Pounder, Reitzug, and Young (2002) argue that, in essence, superintendents need to expand their work beyond the boundaries of their schools, because "part of leading for social justice . . . is

understanding that one is not just a leader but an activist for children, an activist who is committed to supporting educational equity and excellence for all children" (p. 272).

History of the Superintendency

Kowalski (2005) provides a brief history of the superintendency in the American context, while Farquhar, Leithwood, and Boich (1989) complete a similar summary of the Canadian school superintendency. Kowalski (2005) contends that the role has evolved though five distinct yet overlapping phases in which the position has become increasingly demanding and yet always reflective of social, political, and economic realities of the greater society.

In the American context, Kowalski (2005) argues that during the 1830s through the 1910s, a governmental imperative to assimilate immigrant students into the dominant culture required superintendents to be teacher-scholars. Callahan (1966) and Cuban (1988) found that superintendents frequently authored scholarly articles and played leading roles in educational associations. Superintendents were to use centralized control and standardization to ensure instructional and curricular conformity to develop "Americanized" and, I would argue on this side of the border, "Canadianized" citizens.

Callahan (1962), Cronin (1973), and Kowalski (1999) argue that transitions from agrarian to industrial economies in North America was mirrored by the adoption of classical theory and scientific management during the first decades of the 20th century, resulting in a new image of superintendents as managers, who adapted models developed on the assembly line floors resulting in the infusion of business values into education in general and educational administration in particular, Kowalski (2005) found that the management of organizational operations became especially important during the lean years of the depression. Kowalski (1995) argues that, while a balance between educational and managerial leadership is often sought in

contemporary times, the leadership attributes of the best educational leaders are quickly forgotten if schools are not run efficiently and the organization's budgets are not balanced.

Callahan (1966) reports that during the post-World War II years, dissatisfaction with democratic leadership and rapid developments in social scientific research contributed to a resurgence of criticism of public education. Through his systems theory Getzels (1977) argues that educational organizations were highly influenced by external factors, while Culbertson (1981) and Kowalski (1995) suggest that together with efforts to establish educational administration as an influential academic discipline, efforts were also made to extend the focus of superintendents beyond educational administration. Melby (1955) urges superintendents to be democratic leaders who could "mobilize the educational resources of communities" (Melby, 1995, p.250). Grogan (2000) notes that the influence of a rapidly evolving economy in the 1960s resulted in the transformation of the position into a business orientation informed by a scientific management theory in which the superintendent presides over a clearly delineated hierarchical administration.

Boyd (1974) and Cuban (1976) found that in the 1970s, superintendents were required to be much more politically astute, the position became increasingly politicized and, often, superintendents were appointed by school boards only to be released after subsequent elections of new trustees with a different mandate or set of interests. An ever-increasing demand for efficiency into the 1980s resulted in an emphasis on corporate leadership and political skills over educational leadership skills to the extent that the educational aspects of the job were not important: "They either were taken for granted or were plainly not matters that were going to get many superintendents in trouble" (Grogan, 2000, p. 121). Blumberg (1985) argues that superintendents needed to be engaged in high politics and, drawing on the work of Burlingame

(1981), suggests that this often led to dysfunctional and unethical behavior, such as hiding information and becoming entirely focused upon tactical game play rather than on education and learning. Blumberg suggests that, often, a superintendent's ethics needed to be subordinated to the "higher goal of keeping the system in balance and peaceful" (p. 68).

Significant school reform in the 1980s led to increased interest in the roles a superintendent might play in systems reform by a number of researchers (Burnham, 1989; Crowson & Morris, 1987; Cuban, 1984; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Paulu, 1989). Grogan (2000) states that other researchers have focused on de-centralizing (Doyle & Tetzloff, 1992; McWalters, 1992; Murphy, 1989; Tewel, 1994), on the superintendent as change agent (Johnson, 1993, 1996; Murphy, 1991, 1993, 1994), and on various definitions of superintendent effectiveness (Burnham, 1989; Crowson & Morris, 1987; Holdaway & Genge, 1995; Leithwood, 1995; Myers, 1992; Wills & Peterson, 1995). She also found that a renewed interest in the superintendent as instructional leader emerged (Björk, 1993; Glass, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c; Hord, 1993; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Myers, 1992; Paulu, 1989). To bring about organizational reform, Cuban (1988) argues that superintendents needed strong political skills. Grogan (2000) says much the same thing: "Where the superintendent differs from principals in this regard is in his or her knowledge of not only the big picture but also of how to use community resources effectively to address the most outspoken critics" (p. 123).

A final characteristic that Kowalski (1999) identifies in the continually evolving role of superintendents is that of communicator. A shift from a manufacturing economy to the information age (Drucker, 1999; Lipinski, 1978) resulted in demands for North American education systems to produce students who could compete in the global economy of Friedman's "Flat World" (2005). Blasé and Anderson (1996) and Gideon (2002) argue that, aside from

traditional roles, superintendents were required to be developers, quarterbacks, and public relations agents of major school improvement strategies by collaborating with parents, teachers, politicians, and taxpayers. Fullan (1996) and Smith (2008) argue that superintendents were called upon to be experts in organizational change and comfortable with systems thinking, while Chance and Björk (2004), Murphy (1991), and Schein (1996) add a need for proficiency in organizational restructuring. Carlson (1996) and Kowalski (1995) reinforce the conclusions that these demands are incredibly challenging for an overwhelming number of reasons, not the least of which is the continuous reality of varied political and moral stances, and the systems-level professional and experiential experiences that typical superintendents bring to the table. While Björk (2001) and Murphy (1994) suggest that while superintendents needed to play leaderships role in systemic reorganization, Heckman (1993) and Kowalski (1995) argue for a further requirement to affect cultural change as a component of restructuring processes that include engagement, political challenges, creation of shared visions, the invention of positive images, and the nurturing of committed support. In essence, all of the roles identified through the years by Kowalski (2000) have merged to become components of the contemporary superintendency.

In the Canadian context, Farquhar, Leithwood, and Boich (1989) contend that a number of competing forces have resulted in a significant evolution of the profession. In some provinces there has been increased autonomy given local boards, while a shift to unitary management structures has resulted in the increasing professionalization of the superintendency. Rather than public servants accountable to a senior officer at the provincial level, the superintendent in most jurisdictions has become the single officer "accountable to a board of lay people and solely responsible for the professional management of the educational jurisdiction" (p. 7). In most Canadian provinces, the inability of boards to raise taxes locally, a greater requirement to meet

provincially mandated accountability standards, and the amalgamation of many districts are evidence of greater centralization. Regardless, increased sophistication in society in general, complex knowledge and technology, and demanding social and economic challenges have resulted in complex organizations in which no single person can hope to effectively direct all aspects of the enterprise. The scope of the role has expanded to well beyond instructional guidance and curricular reform to "conflict management and brokerage among competing forces" (Farquhar, Leithwood & Boich, 1989, p.8). They also contend that other factors are resulting in the increased professionalization of the superintendentency, as superintendents work is often more closely involved with publically elected officials and association presidents than with teachers in classrooms.

Keedy and Björk (2002) have found that politics and ideological and moral differences are significant components of organizational and community life, including educational systems in general and the superintendency in particular. As such, when superintendents "act unilaterally or devalue public opinion" (Kowalski, 1999, p. 46), they are vulnerable to public contempt. This is especially poignant given the current pressures brought about by increasing racialized poverty and social exclusion.

A Provincial Context

In the province of Manitoba, the public school system consists of 34 school divisions serving a total of 178,025 students (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2012). Ranging from systems of 748 students to 30,472 students (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2012), each of these school divisions has a superintendent serving as the de facto educational and administrative leader of the organization, while reporting to elected school boards typically consisting of nine trustees. In the city of Winnipeg, there are six school boards

ranging in student population from 8,130 to 30,472 (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2016). As systems managers, superintendents of these urban boards work with staff varying from 1,130 to 4,360 and budgets extending from $94,357,000 to $354,802,000 (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2016). In each of these six metro school divisions, each superintendent is supported by a secretary treasurer and an assistant secretary treasurer, who manage the financial operations of each respective organization. Each of the superintendents also has a team of assistant superintendents who typically have specific portfolios, such as student support services, human resources, and curriculum, as well as supervisory responsibilities for a range of schools. In highly varying degrees, each superintendent is also supported by a number of divisional directors, consultants, and coordinators. A casual review of several recent advertisements for vacant superintendent positions provides insights into the expectations held for the position of superintendent. In essence, superintendents are expected to be: experienced and exemplary educators, financial managers, great communicators, knowledgeable of all aspects of running a large business, possess a strong work ethic, and an exemplary reputation. Salaries for these positions range from approximately $160, 000 to $230,000, a pay differential that is commonly between 10 and 15% higher than assistant superintendents, which are another 10-15% higher than principals of schools of roughly 1,000 students. The MSBA and the MASS (2007) co-developed the document *The Superintendency: A Resource Document to Guide Shared Leadership by School Boards and Superintendents*, which serves as a framework for the evaluation of superintendents and identifies organizational vision, governance, and professional practice as the key components of the work of the superintendent. While the job descriptions of superintendents vary greatly across the various school divisions, and without any explicit indications of the philosophical underpinnings of directions sought, the MSBA/MASS document

identifies educational, political, and managerial leadership, under an umbrella of ethical

leadership, as attributes of the superintendency. Among the specific skills and attributes that

effective superintendents are to have are effective communication skills, the ability to share

leadership, and the ability to link research to practice (MASS/MSBA, 2009).

The *Superintendency* (MASS/MSBA, 2009) provides recommended benchmarks to guide

the work of superintendents. In his model, effective leaders encourage "constructive

contributions by building teams and relationships and supporting all actions taken for the

common good" (as cited in MASS/MSBA, 2009, p. 34). The evaluation model provides

benchmarks that offer interesting insight into what is to be valued in the work of the

superintendency by the MSBA and MASS. A focus on vision demands that a vision statement is

in place that reflects community values (p.36). A focus on governance requires a high degree of

congruency between divisional policies and provincial and legal requirements (p.40). Finally, a

focus on professionalism and board operations requires effective organizational processes to

effect efficient operations, supports to ensure enhanced teaching and learning, and the

establishment of an organizational culture of learning. Inherent in the development of this

document is the belief that the superintendent can add tremendous value to educational systems.

The *Superintendency* (2007) does not require boards to ask "To what end?" questions.

Rather, the focus seems to be on the efficient leadership of systems, utilizing benchmarks that

can be met exceedingly well without any focus upon providing an education that meets the needs

of all learners and the community, and without being based on any social justice considerations.

Progressive Work Within a Neo-Liberal Context

A significant function of school systems is to replicate the existing political, social,

economic, and cultural norms of the larger society. Björk and Kowalski (2005) and Kowalski

(2005) remind us that superintendents are hired by and are responsible to elected boards of

trustees. As is the case with other levels of political life in Canada, including provincial and

federal politics, the political orientations of trustees largely mirror the dominant narratives of

Canadians on the whole, and, consequently, a prevalent discourse is that school systems are

largely successful and work well for those who wish to take advantage of the opportunities they

provide. Beliefs that elected trustees have on matters of social justice, social exclusion, and

poverty will largely be the same as others in the general society (Levitas, 1998; West, 1993). We

do live in a society in which one in six children lives in poverty, in spite of many years of

government rhetoric to eliminate poverty (*2009 Report Card*, 2009).

A casual review of the annual goals of Manitoba school divisions (MSBA website) will

not result in a conclusion that issues of poverty, social inclusion, and social justice are priorities.

The one employee who directly reports to school boards is the superintendent. By and large,

when a superintendency position is advertised, applicants tend to be principals, assistant

superintendents, and superintendents of smaller divisions, who have been successful in existing

systems. Having been involved in interview proceedings in six school divisions/districts, it has

been my experience that boards are interested in leaders who will manage well and create

positive impressions in the community, but generally are not interested in individuals who might

create significant changes in direction and focus.

Again, Björk and Kowalski (2005), and Kowalski (2005) share that the work of the

superintendent is incredibly broad. A review of the board minutes of Manitoba school divisions

portrays a heavy workload focused on managerial issues including staffing, contract

negotiations, facilities maintenance, workplace health and safety, and other matters. It would be

easy for most superintendents to arrive at work on a daily basis without any plans whatsoever,

and find themselves at the end of each day exhausted from the myriad of issues that arrive on their desks. One of the significant aspects of the job is the management of financial and human assets. A reality is that any change in organizational focus usually requires a shift in asset allocation, be it for additional staffing for disadvantaged schools or for increasing school budgets so that parents do not have to pay for field trips from their pockets. Existing practices and budget allocations are almost always supported, if not championed, by other influential decision makers including individual trustees, unions, parent groups, and business interests. These are only several of the challenges; however, framed differently, challenges present new opportunities.

The ability and desire of individual influentials to engage in their professional and public lives with a focus on addressing issues of inequities, including those based upon racialized poverty and social exclusion, is work worth doing (Bates, 2006; Foster, 1986; Giroux, 1983, 1988, 1997; Larson & Murtadha, 2002). As Cornel West (1993) so eloquently states, leaders are to become "organic cultural catalysts . . . [people] who can stay attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer, yet maintains a grounding in affirming and enabling subcultures of criticism" (p. 22).

In reality, however, many superintendents who are inclined towards progressive work play out their careers within socio-political contexts that are anything but progressive. Rottmann (2007) contends that "advocate resisters" and "activist collectives" (p. 5), regardless of their knowledge or attention to issues of poverty, social inclusion, and social justice, can stay attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer. This infers that superintendents must be highly aware of the highly political nature of the work, must recognize that there is much that is good in existing systems, and, if they are to not only keep their jobs but also have any ability whatsoever to work towards progressive change, must be highly effective, culturally literate, and politically

savvy players. Almost all school divisions have a visionary mission statement that usually speaks to the success for all learners, and the development of global citizens. Small steps such as having the statement read at all meetings or connecting annual goals to the statement take advantage of things that already exist in the organization. Most school systems champion collaboration and learning (at least in word, if not always practice). Effective superintendents do not have to be experts on matters of social justice, but they can be open to learning from those justice-oriented individuals who exist in all organizations. They can participate in networks such as the Ethical Leadership Cohort that has operated within MASS for the past two years (MASS/MSBA, 2009).

The second component of being an organic cultural catalyst is to be grounded in subcultures of criticism. Carspecken and Apple's (1992) model for critical research can certainly be used by superintendents and others to become change agents in their personal and social lives without having to be experts. Robinson's (1994) application of critical research to educational administration by attending to the identification of solutions to problematic conditions, the identification of individuals who can drive the problem resolution process, and the finding of ways to motivate people to do the work, what Lather calls "catalytic validity" (as cited in Fay, 1987, p.61), is also notable. For superintendents who want to do something in this area, there is much to do within the school systems in which they have influence.

As the chief administrator of the publically elected board, the superintendent is often uniquely situated to be influential in a wide variety of ways. The superintendent can influence progressive hiring practices by getting involved personally in hiring processes or strongly influencing those processes. The professional cohort of educators in any given division should reflect the diversity not only of a particular neighborhood school but of the Canadian reality on the whole. Superintendents can also shift hiring practices to hire social justice oriented teachers

and practitioners at all grade levels. In Manitoba, at least, superintendents have a considerable degree of flexibility with budgets and, as a result, have influence over professional development and resource allocation on progressive projects. Superintendents can also influence accountability measures. They can ensure, for example, high school retention levels and graduation rates, and they can do a much better job of disaggregating the data to account for the rates of district populations, such as Aboriginal students. They can also place much attention on these numbers through the monthly meetings with school administrators, reports to boards, and the annual reports to the communities that take place in all Manitoba school divisions. Superintendents can also be influential with curriculum and pedagogy—if not directly, certainly through others in influential positions. Many areas of Manitoban curricula are aligned with socially just concerns at the local and international level. Perhaps most importantly and challengingly, superintendents can begin to change the very nature of leadership practices in their jurisdictions.

Emergent Perspectives of the Superintendency

Grogan (2000) identifies Bell and Chase (1994), Brunner (1995, 1998, 1999), and others (Chase, 1995; Lindle, Miller, & Lagana, 1992; Rist, 1992, 1992b; Wesson & Grady, 1995) as researchers who have provided a focus upon gender and the superintendency in the past twenty years. Their collective work has included the leadership styles of women and new conceptualizations of power. A second area of emergent research highlights the political, cultural, and economic factors that impact urban school systems, with a central premise that the growing cultural diversity and social exclusion in urban areas has made the superintendency in these areas much more difficult. Much of this research suggests urban districts have been subject to a plethora of reform efforts that have often been ineffective (Cuban, 1976; Hess, 1999;

Jackson, 1995; Lunenberg, 1992; McCloud & McKenzie, 1994; Ornstein, 1991; Tallerico, 1994; Yee & Cuban, 1996).

Finally, Grogan (2000) identifies Beck (1996), Fenstermacher (1996), and Grogan and Smith (1998) as some of the researchers who have advocated for a focus on ethics and leadership, arguing that perhaps the most important competency of the position is to act morally and wisely. While these theorists differ in their interpretations of what it is to be moral and ethical, they all attend to the needs of a larger human community beyond the needs of students in schools and question how what happens in schools is mediated by the larger society, and, in turn, how school systems influence the larger society.

Looking back upon the past fifty years of the superintendency, Grogan (2000) suggests that contemporary superintendents needs to be reformers if they are to help systems to meet the needs of all learners. They must be knowledgeable of curricular and pedagogical issues while, as astute politicians, be builders of coalitions to accomplish identified goals. They also need to be child-centered leaders with an ethic of care. While many aspects of the job require the same acumen as was expected of previous generations of superintendents, new skills and aptitudes are required as "the social, political, and economic dramas of the community unfold" (Grogan, 2000, p. 125).

What Can Be Done? Rethinking the Superintendency From Critical Perspectives

Thinking about the traditional superintendency, Grogan (2000) contends that our knowledge has been limited by gender. I would argue that the superintendency has also been limited class, socially constructed race, and other blinders. For the better part of the past 100 years, superintendents have been encouraged to "think and behave in ways that have been dictated by a White, male-dominated discourse shaped by a different age" (p. 130). We know

little about how the superintendency has been linked to issues of racialized poverty or social exclusion, or how the position might be one from which equitable policies could emerge.

Critical approaches surface a number of blind spots, problems, and paradoxes in the work of superintendents. Grogan (2000) suggests a need for new theories of leadership that "provide a greater imperative for work that allows superintendents to survive in office long enough to effect changes that promises better outcomes for all students in the future" (p.132). She suggests that this work would include comfort with contradiction, working through others, appreciation of dissent, development of a critical awareness of how children are being served, and adoption of an ethic of care.

Grogan (2000) states that while successful superintendents are child centered, emotionally intelligent, community sensitive, ethical, reformist, and efficient educational leaders, we must recognize and grapple with the reality that many of these characteristics contradict each other: "Reform, for instance, often involves hard-nosed decisions affecting loyal personnel and their carefully crafted programs. Child-centeredness sometimes collides with the need for efficiency" (p. 130). While superintendents need to attend to a myriad of political pressures, rapid changes, and pressures, the realities of social, economic, and political inequalities are not going away. More than simply ease with ambiguity, Grogan argues that superintendents need to be effective in being pulled in different directions. Superintendents need to speak, explore, and co-create new possibilities. By creating environments in which multiple voices and perspectives will arise, superintendents will need to recognize that systems-wide, neo-liberal inspired initiatives often ignore or do not take into consideration localized context. Leadership resides in the relationships that are developed in the local, and, as a result, goals may be attained in "a very local and piecemeal fashion" (p. 132).

Johnson (1996) suggests that, rather than being removed and aloof, rational and neutral, superintendents need to be ever attendant to local conditions. Doing so helps them to gain awareness of how things really are, and it can shake an ill-placed confidence in what they know. Grogan (2000) suggests that a new approach to the work forces us to question why things are the way they are and makes us aware of who is best served by things the way they are.

Superintendents who are truly open to alternative ideas must realize they will be opposed. This requires getting to know the local contexts, the people who reside in those spaces, and the local power mechanisms that exist. When differing voices are taken into account, a better understanding can be gained of pluralistic contexts. Always guided by a focus on children and "a critical awareness of how they are being served" (Grogan, 2000, p. 133) will help superintendents to steer clear of the trap of paying heed to the loudest voice or only accepting easy solutions.

Again, Grogan (2000) argues that a critical awareness of how children are being served is to be pursued relentlessly. It requires a critical eye upon all programming decisions and critical perspectives on what is seen and unseen in schools. A critical awareness of how children are being served needs to result in an interrogation of the realities of kids and their families who live in conditions of poverty and social exclusion. It also means a readiness and ability to "change practices and policies that continue to disadvantage children in poverty, children of colour, and other children who are outside the mainstream" (p. 133).

Grogan and Smith (1998) have found that an ethic of care means dealing with individuals as people, not as positions or as representatives of social groups. Caring encourages real attempts to reach out and understand the lived experiences of the marginalized and how our work in schools impacts upon them, while not essentializing them as marginalized or victimized peoples.

A deep sense of care should also result in the establishment and maintenance of high educational standards and a commitment to equity (Noddings, 1999).

Grogan (2000) also states that superintendents cannot be effective on their own as their local contextual reality will always contain a mélange of enabling and inhibiting factors including local school boards, members of the legislative assemblies, union leaders, and other interested parties who will think alongside or in opposition to them: *Superwoman (Superman) does not live here.* Superintendents who pursue a discourse informed by critical feminist and postmodern influences often face opposition. Consequently, critically informed work is not only within systems, it is also about engaging individuals and communities beyond the local school district.

Alternative Images of Influence

West (1993) argues that the decolonization of the Third World has contributed to a new cultural politics of difference, "formed and fueled by the civil rights and Black power movements, as well as anti-war, feminist, gray, brown, gay and lesbian movements" (p. 16). The past 40 years have been characterized by a tremendous growth of African-American, Hispanic, Aboriginal, and immigrant People of Colour populations in many Western nations including the United States and Canada. During this time period, Bates (2006), Shields (2003), and Strike (1999) have found that increasing awareness of achievement and economic gaps between White and Black/\brown children, as well as the emergence of new African-American, Hispanic, Aboriginal, feminist/womanist, and LGBQ faces and voices in the academy and in schools systems, has resulted in a growing critique of traditional society in general and functionalist approaches to education in particular. As West (1993) states,

> the inclusion of African-Americans, Latino/a Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and American women in the culture of critical discourse yielded intense intellectual politics and inescapable ideological polarization that focused principally on the exclusions, silences, and blindness of male WASP cultural homogeneity and its concomitant Arnoldian notions of the canon. (p.16)

This growing diversification and subsequent interrogation of what it is to have a socially just society has in turn led to alternative and more critically informed conceptualizations of social justice and the work that could be in the domain of superintendents and other educational influentials.

Towards the heart. Larson and Murtadha (2002) provide a useful framework that includes alternative critical perspectives for addressing issues of justice, as well as for constructing post-structuralist theories of educational leadership. Their perspectives can certainly frame how superintendents make sense of inequities and what they understand to be the causes of inequities, as well as provide new insights into potentially progressive work by influentials.

Larson and Murtadha (2002) suggest that as women and People of Colour entered the traditionally White male domain of educational administration in increasing numbers during the past 40 years, research has increasingly focused on the leadership of marginalized groups, including women, whose ways of knowing would need to be recognized and revalued. Within this genre, several alternative perspectives have emerged. Starratt (1997) proposes that ethics of care, justice, and critique can assist leaders to provide "a rich human response" (p. 57) to the challenges faced by the disadvantaged. Noddings (1992, 1999) and Beck (1994) argue that teachers and leaders need to reframe their orientations away from fulfilling roles in a bureaucratic system towards developing rich relationships with students and their families.

Beck and Foster (1999) suggest that the use of new language—words like *compassion*, *forgiveness*, *wisdom*, *humility*, and *loyalty*—may be worthy of consideration and use, and that

images of home, church, and community may provide helpful ways for us to envision schools (p.355). Larson and Murtadha (2002) suggest that inquiries into the lack of academic achievement for People of Colour need to extend beyond the students, the teachers, and the school and address the realities of the lives of the families and the communities in which they reside.

Larson and Murtadha (2002) and Sherr (1999) point out that, while educational administration continues to be characterized by a strong bias towards cognitive knowledge, important educational and societal questions are at heart *spiritual*. Sherr goes on to identify two definitions of spirituality within the social justice literature: one characterized by attending to one's inner life; and the other demanding a deep involvement with others. For example, King and Biro (2000), and Murtadha (1999) found that a deep spirituality enabled female African-American school leaders to fight for greater equity.

Larson and Murtadha (2002) also found that *love* has become an increasingly central concept. Hooks (2000) argues that "all the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasized a love ethic" (p. xix) and, accordingly, leaders work with and for others not as persons of administrative power but as persons who care about others. Freire (1970) also finds love to be a powerful component of any social justice endeavors. Larson and Murtadha (2002) reasoned that, if meaningful work is to be done to address issues of inequity, role-based leadership must be abandoned for personal work with underprivileged communities "that have been marginalized in our schools and build trusting relationships with them, committing themselves to act out of love rather than fear, and to make decisions based upon principles of care, human dignity, love, justice, and equity" (p.144).

Engagement. Robinson (1994) argues that beyond deconstructing existing ways of addressing issues of inequity, critical researchers must also develop new theories and systems. Larson and Murtadha (2002) identified three potential pathways.

Engage the community. After examining the leadership of women and People of Colour, Larson and Murtadha (2002) recognized that rather than staying aloof from the realities of the poor and disadvantaged, strong influentials seek to understand these daily realities up close, which in turn helps researchers to see the importance of "putting the life world of children and families at the core of leadership theory and practice" (p.145). Giroux (1997), Grinberg (2001), and Freire (1970) have made strong arguments for involving the disenfranchised in decision making, with a goal of community development, not just high graduation rates. Freire (1970) argues that effective educational leadership rejects top down hierarchical practices and the notion that education is something to be bestowed upon others. Rather, leaders become deeply knowledgeable about and involved with the disadvantaged, whom they serve in such a manner as to create conditions through which they build personal and community capacity to "pave the road to their own economic and educational empowerment" (Larson & Murtadha, 2002, p. 146). The work of social justice oriented leaders is to engage the community in ongoing, dialogical processes in which all concerned gain insight into existing socio-economic and political realities, as well as develop a growing capacity to act upon their new knowledge. Freire (1970) argues that many well-meaning educational leaders preserve institutionalized inequities by continuing to maintain organizational and cultural systems that support existing norms and practices. Common results are a lack of trust in public institutions, a sense of indifference to participation in political processes, and an assumption that official leaders have to do the leadership work for the communities. Instead, leaders for social justice should "consider seriously the reasons for

mistrust on the part of oppressed populations, and to seek true awareness of communion . . .

helping the people to help themselves critically perceive the reality which oppresses them"

(Larson & Murtadha, 2002, p.163).

     Democratic engagement. A number of scholars have argued for the development of

community-based education systems through inclusive democratic action (Furman, 1998;

Maxcy, 1995; Reitzug, 1994; Slater, 1994; Slater & Boyd, 1999; Strike, 1993). Others contend

that issues of race, class, and gender must be central to all education and community-oriented

conversations, and that "deliberative communities of difference" (Larson & Murtadha, 2002,

p.148) must be developed through which to address social justice issues across class, race, and

gender limits (Larson & Ovando, 2001; Slater, 1995; Young & Laible, 2000). Similarly, Gray

(2000) suggests the development of institutions within which multiple values can be struggled

with while equity can be developed:

> The aim of *Modus Vivendi* cannot be to still the conflict of values. It is to reconcile
> individuals and ways of life honouring conflicting values to a life in common. We do not
> need common values in order to live in peace; we need common institutions in which many
> forms of life can co-exist. (p. 5)

In so doing, leaders who wish to address issues of complex, racialized poverty and social

exclusion must be able to talk about disparities that exist, but in deeply democratic ways. This

requires strong skills and a desire to truly co-create understanding and solutions. Anderson and

Grinberg (1998), and Blasé, Blasé, Anderson, and Dungan, (1995) caution against quickly

coming to consensus, which can mask contrived processes and manipulative facilitation rather

than truthful inquiry and open advocacy. It is further argued that the development of community

through democratic processes also invigorates the larger community by developing

democratically minded citizens who will be more likely to get involved in public affairs in

response to what several researchers have called "radical individualism" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swider & Tipton, 1991, p. 154), in which people do not connect themselves to public institutions. Purpel (1999) also recommends that leaders for social justice look to the work of social justice activists who control resistance by developing a new language of hope and commitment.

      Development of human capabilities. Sen (1992) questions the rationality of universal public policies intended to create equality, as they do not address the myriad of local and contextual issues that exist. He suggests a focus on the development of the individual's freedom to achieve, rather than achievement or outcomes so that understanding of the inequalities of freedom can be gained. He suggests that we consider what we would do if we had the means to include all, as this requires an analysis of the inequalities that are limiting the opportunities and achievements of some. Larson and Murtadha (2002) raise a number of other questions, including these: How do the hardships that children bring with them affect their freedom to achieve? How are these hardships viewed? What policies emerge from the prevailing view of these hardships? How do these views affect the education of those facing these hardships? Nussbaum (2000) places an ethical lens upon a capabilities approach. She suggests that how we structure schooling and education should be informed by what capabilities we want people to achieve, while Larson and Murtadha (2002) suggest that if we believe that people should be able to have good health and adequate shelter, we should be providing them with an education that develops these capabilities. Nussbaum (2000) also advocates for the physical integration and emotional comfort of all, so that all can live with concern for others, be socially active, and to "laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities, to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that person, and to have the capacity for both justice and friendship" (Larson & Murtadha, 2002,

p.155). Educational leaders for social justice must become aware of the differences that limit the freedom to achieve for many people. Attention to the development of capabilities and reinventing policies and practices is the work of educational leaders for social justice.

Examples from the Field

For inclusion to occur, the harmful effects of discrimination in all its forms—based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender—need to be continually considered and addressed. We need to connect not only with students but also with their families and communities in deliberate acts to be *present* (Senge, Scharmer, Jawarski, & Flowers 2004). This requires deliberate work to stop, see, and get to know the people that we serve and the lives that they live. Work needs to be done to help all people to fully participate in society: to discuss, dialogue, advocate, and defend for themselves, rather than having ourselves as well-meaning people do it for them. After all, personal agency matters. Contemporary people and communities are not static and homogeneous, and we ignore at our peril the strategies of resistance that impoverished peoples often use: prime examples being a focus upon athletics and music rather than academics in African-American youth culture, as a way to claim personal value and empowerment (Noguera, 2003), or the emergence of *gangsta rap* and gang culture in local Aboriginal communities. Simply placing additional resources into the hands of impoverished peoples—for example, more computers in schools—does not necessarily eliminate problems. A tendency to believe that singular structural remedies will work is limited at best, and counterproductive at worst.

Frankly, I have often found myself implicitly and explicitly acting upon perspectives that would be at home in both the conservative-behaviorist and the liberal-structuralist camps. I have lamented the sad reality of ugly bigotry that has manifested in my own family history and have

seen "savage inequalities," to use Kozol's phrase (1992). I have also at times found myself saying, especially about young Black and Aboriginal men, "Damn it, why don't those people dress properly, pull their pants up, stop talkin' fool talk, and get a damn job!" I certainly heard the same sense of questioning when I talked to school superintendents about their understandings of and experiences with poverty (Brothers, 2010).

It is with much reflection that I now consider that no singular discourse can accurately capture all of the causes of poverty and social exclusion; rather, one needs to be conscious of the multi-dimensionality of the individual actors, systems, and processes, which in turn informs the varied policy and action responses that we make in our schools. First, we can agree that "schools can't do everything but we can do something" (Levin, 2008, p. 38). This requires that we bring our minds, our eyes, and, most importantly, our hearts, as we attend to the lives of the students and communities we serve (Bates, 2006; Dillard, 1985; Larson & Murtadha, 2002). Second, we are to recognize that culture is structural and "is rooted in institutions such as families, schools, churches, synagogues, mosques and communication industries" (Bates, 2006, p. 13). We must soberly acknowledge that our school systems are not neutral, objective institutions and that we must question the ways in which practices, for which we are responsible, disadvantage some and privilege others.

Finally, we must come to terms with the tremendous despair that is present in persistently depressed communities that exist, whether we acknowledge it or not, in every school division in Manitoba. Multiple generations of oppression, poor education, and poverty have resulted in a subculture of deep malaise, self-loathing, and hopelessness, of which violence, the sexual degradation of women, and substance abuse are obvious characteristics.

Tremendous work continues to be done in many school divisions throughout Manitoba and beyond to mitigate the destructive ramifications of poverty and social exclusion. Presence (Senge, 1999), the mindful attention to each of the children in our care, is a beginning. A relentless focus upon quality teaching, upon developing capabilities to question, think, persist, and be mindful of our circumstances, while also experiencing joy and wonder, are all to be encouraged.

Finally, a growing literature is telling us that transformational educational leaders do what many of us, including myself, have long considered to be outside our purview. We may consider that to truly address the needs of all, working towards a truly inclusive and just society, we may ask of ourselves to develop the attitudes and aptitudes to forge new connections and to develop new social and political networks with community groups, or players in other branches of government, and become the "critical organic catalysts" (West, 1993, p. 22) for progressive development that we are meant to be. What follows are a number of strategies that might be effective. These strategies do not need to be initiated by a superintendent, but critically informed superintendents will find ways to help create environments in which such initiatives can come to light and be supported.

Strategies in schools. With all of the contemporary educational that has been developed, Levin (2008) argued that we know what is to be done to enhance learning for disadvantaged students. Yet, while many excellent examples of success supporting kids in poverty exist, conclusions to be drawn from a number of studies indicate that due to a lack of capacity within organization or will from individuals, "variable levels of commitment to and implementation of research based school improvement program strategies" (p. 403), and as a result, there continues to be much work to be done. Harris (1993) reports that improvements are rare in high poverty

communities due to often-limited resources, high staff and student turnover, and a historic lack

of success, which result in an operational malaise. It is within this context that a number of

theorists, including Levin (2008), Rothstein (2004), Noguera (2003), and Anyon (2005), provide

compelling arguments for taking on the real battle, which is out in the greater communities.

However, they also believe that there is meaningful work to be done by educators just the same.

A culture of hope and realism. Levin (1995, 2006, 2008, 2010) reports that, after many

years of work in schools, a sense of anger or outrage is not evident from educators concerning

the conditions of poverty. Perhaps this is due to a feeling of personal helplessness or a belief that

individuals and communities need to look after their own needs. When confronted with sobering

Manitoba data indicating that 90% of our most disadvantaged young people will fail school by

the age of 19 (Brownell et al., 2004), one thinks that moral outrage would be an appropriate

response (Levin, 2008). Together with outrage, however, there needs to be a sense, even a small

one that something can be done, and it often begins with one educator making a connection with

one child. Noguera (2003) shares a story that perhaps many educators working in high poverty

communities can relate to about a teacher who had growing frustration with the lack of

attendance and work by a seemingly bright African-American student. After weeks of his well-

meaning but incessant badgering, the student angrily responded, "Do you think you could get

work done at home when every night your mom brings a different man to have sex and smoke

crack?" (p. 149). With this new insight, the teacher was awakened to new strategies, including

assisting with her basic needs, a more nurturing attitude, and, pragmatically, providing her with

afterschool time and space to get her work done. Fullan quotes a morally driven principal who

said "I feel the moral responsibility to a child . . . at least in my little neck of the woods" (cited

by Hayden, 2007). Freire (1970), talks about responding to the significant challenges as "limit

situations" (1972) that require our hope and our work for change, tempered by a strong dose of pragmatism. From these small beginnings, a number of researchers, including Anyon, (2005), Bates (2006), and Noguera (2003), prioritize the role that context and culture play in the continued existence of poverty. Smith (2008) defines context as where "the cultural messages, climate, and physical environment of a site" while Fullan (2003) shares a key conclusion made by Louis Gertsner, former CEO of IBM, upon retirement, when he said "I could see that in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is the game" (p. 182). To address multi-layered factors contributing to poverty, educators must find ways to attend to the localized context of a particular community, school system, or school, and, as a result, there can be no general strategy that will work in multiple situations.

Improving instruction. Fullan (2003), Elmore (2000), and others have stated that the most important factor to impact student success from within the schools is instructional practice. Common characteristics of instruction in high poverty schools include lowered expectations, teacher led instruction, and an emphasis on behavior control (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2002). Edwards and McKinnon (1987) found that many teachers believe poor students are deficient and will continue to be so, given their home and community environments. Levin (2010) lists a number of practices that have a positive impact on student learning. The strategies that he argues have dramatically improved student success in the province of Ontario over a four year period of time include establishing a focus on a small number of key student outcomes; building improved instructional and relational practices within the teaching ranks; building organization motivation through positive reinforcement; and developing public and political support for effective and sustained improvement (Levin, 2008). The organization Broader, Bolder Approach to Education (2016)*,* supported by a number of leading researchers, including Noguera (2003) and Rothstein

(2004), advocate the use of progressive assessment strategies that inform instruction; qualitative

tools, together with standardized tests; and annual growth models, to focus on individual learners

rather than comparisons between successive cohorts. As well, they argue that instruction in

mathematics and language is important, but should not be prioritized to the detriment of a

holistic education that includes attention to physical education, the humanities, and the arts.

Additionally, summer enrichment programs help prevent the annual learning slide that often

affects poor children: the Community School Investigators (CSI, 2010), the Balanced

Experiential Education Group ("B.E.E.P." 2009), and the Aspire program in the Louis Riel

School Division are three Winnipeg examples. Providing literacy and numeracy support, these

programs also provide access to museums, rural life, and universities in ways similar to those

experienced in more affluent communities.

To support improved instructional practice, progressive systems develop holistic teacher

evaluation practices that prioritize development over threat of dismissal and internal reflection

over external judgment (Darling-Hammond et al., 2003), or, as Elmore (2002) states, "internal

accountability trumps external accountability" (p. 20). These practices reflect an

acknowledgement of poverty's harmful impact on schools, while affirming our collective

responsibilities to maintain high expectations and rigor, together with the provision of a caring,

pastoral support for each student.

Another important action that can take place within schools is the provision of educative

pedagogy that develops critically inclined young people, ready to fully participate in democracy

(Bates, 2006; Foster, 1986; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1997; Starratt, 1997). Students need an

education that equips them to critically observe the histories, the economics, and the politics of

their communities. All areas of the curriculum can be used for a more critical pedagogy:

mathematics for the exploration of the economics of urban development; social studies not only for fund raising but for critically examining the causes of oppression; language arts for the development of discussion skills and public speaking; and the arts for wider avenues to explore different perspectives and vantage points. There is no shortage of well-meaning young people in our schools who deeply care about other people and social issues. We can certainly do a much better job of equipping them for the world in which they live.

Education is political. Together with these instructional strategies and initiatives, there are a number of other practices that can be used within school systems, often within existing funding models. Issues of school improvement and poverty are highly political and require political work, advocacy, and tough decisions—often between two good ideas or causes. In the Seven Oaks School Division, for example, the superintendent, B. O'Leary, stated that the "board was tired of nickel and diming parents through the year" (personal communication, December 12, 2010), and, as a result, the division redirected funds to schools to pay for school field trips that were typically funded by parents. These increased opportunities for all children to participate in activities. Second, most early years schools in the division have attached daycare or child care centres, as well as universal breakfast programs. Perhaps even more unique in Winnipeg, students can stay for lunch without having to pay for supervision provided by well-meaning parents. In a recent initiative, the board arranged for the centralized provision of school supplies. For a comparatively low cost of $43, each student arrives at school in September with school supplies on their desks, rather than having poor and near poor parents paying upwards for $70 for similar supplies. Another political decision made in the division has been to maintain lower class sizes even as costs continue to rise. Whereas maintaining an average teacher–student ratio of 1-22 seems to be common sense, as well as well documented in the research (Broader, Bolder

Approach to Education, 2016; Noguera, 2003), to accomplish these low ratios means increasing tax rates and maintaining central office staffing levels that are also comparably lower than other school divisions. A growing body of research (Anyon, 2005; (Noguera, 2003; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003) indicates the importance of ensuring the cultural heritage and community realities of all are reflected within the formal and informal cultures of the schools. Generations of institutional, cultural, and personal oppression has resulted in lowered esteem, self-loathing, and, at times, problematic counter-cultural responses by members of impoverished communities, such as anti-intellectualism by African-American males and the adoption of misogynistic gangsta hip-hop by Aboriginal males (Anyon, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; West, 1993). In response, positive reflections of minority and Aboriginal people need be placed squarely in all aspects of the formal curriculum: in dance programs, social studies, and the sciences, as well as in a rethinking of what food is available in cafeterias, what sports are played, and what interpersonal values are supported. The creation of Aboriginal-centric schools in Winnipeg School Division and two consecutive years of graduation pow-wows in Seven Oaks are positive examples. Again, these are initiatives that superintendents do not need to create, critically informed superintendents will support the development of an organizational culture in which people will launch progressive initiatives.

This also requires purposeful action to ensure brown and black complexions are evident in the ranks of teachers, principals, secretaries, and superintendents so that poor and minority people can see themselves reflected in those who are deemed to be successful. At the same time, majority staff and parents and students need to see and interact with diverse representations of People of Colour rather than stereotypes. The Community Based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP), used by a growing number of Manitoba school divisions, is a fine example.

Aboriginal people are hired as educational assistants and supported annually as they complete their teaching degrees over a six year period of study, personal work, on top of running their home lives. It was started 6 years ago, in the spring of 2011, and Seven Oaks School Division hired the first three graduates of the program as teachers. As well, since 2009, 25% of teachers hired by Seven Oaks are of visual minority groups, and yet hiring these candidates has also been greeted by some as affirmative action and with comments such as "the parents won't be able to understand their accents" or "we are no longer about hiring the top candidates." All of these decisions are political decisions that take place in an environment in which resources are limited and opposition can readily materialize at the board table, from school administrators, parent groups, and members of the larger community. Progressive political work requires "critical organic catalysts" (West, 1993, p. 22), people who are attuned to the best within the mainstream, while being "grounded in affirming and enabling subcultures of criticism" (p. 22). Foster (2004) argues that such critical work is being done. Levin (2010) often reiterated that theory has much to learn from the field and Fullan's (2011) phrase "ready, fire, aim," remind us that we cannot wait to establish elaborate plans and systems, because we believe the challenges are too great. If we believe an action to be right, then doing so is often the right thing to do as an influential superintendent.

Another key area that I can touch on very briefly is the notion of educational leadership itself. Woven through the writings of nearly all the research used in this dissertation is the importance of policymaking and implementation, actions that are taken by people. While, in a general sense, management can be understood to include elements such as "finance, information systems, inventory, purchasing, production processes, and others" Rainey (2003) argued that organizational theory and behavior is to be concerned with people working together to pursue

specific goals through "leading, organizing, motivating, planning, and strategy making . . ." (p. 8). Key components of his general perspective on what an organization is include notions of a group of people pursuing goals and that, to attain these goals, leadership processes are required through which "leaders guide the development of strategies for achieving these goals" (p. 18). Peter Senge (1999) provides a more organic definition of leadership when he says it is "the capacity of a human community—people living and working together—to bring forth new realities" (p. 4). Informed by both of these definitions, leadership is critical to the success of all organizations. Senge's definition however, places a greater emphasis upon tapping into the internal capacity of the people in the organization.

To accomplish work that counters the effects of poverty and social exclusion requires leadership that is critical, transformative, educative, and ethical (Foster, 1980, 1986; Hoffman & Burrello, 2004). Again, critical leadership is oriented not just towards the development of a more prefect organization but also towards a reconceptualization of life practices where common ideals of freedom and democracy stand important (Hoffman & Burrello, 2004). Transformative leadership results in change, sometimes very small shifts, but changes all the same. Educative leadership attempts to raise followers' consciousness about their social conditions and, in so doing, to allow them, as well as the "leader," to consider the possibility of other ways of interpreting their social history (Hoffman & Burrello, 2004, p. 283). Ethical leadership expresses dissatisfaction with the existing social reality in which serious inequities exist. For boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, or parents who wish to lead for social justice, a growing research base is available from which to gain strategies. However, I do believe that additional supports, in the form of additional professional learning opportunities or opportunities to be part of a particular action team brought together to support a particular community, are the kinds of

incentives that would appeal to many hardworking, justice-minded educators. Another political

decision that I believe could be helpful is the purposeful development of strong community

schooling throughout all geographical areas of a school system. Decisions to place programs like

International Baccalaureate or French Immersion in a small number of schools, often in well-

heeled neighborhoods, may keep affluent families from sending their kids to private schools, but

"schools of choice" programs also skim talented poor and minority students from their

neighborhood schools to the detriment of those schools and communities, and they reinforce the

conservative-behaviorist notion that those who can, regardless of socio-economic background,

will be successful, but perhaps not in their own neighborhoods.

New work. As stated previously, challenges presented by poverty and social exclusion

are larger than schools. I believe this requires us to reconsider our current conceptualization of

what schools are to be; 9:00 to 3:30, Monday to Friday, September to June. Anyon (2005) argues

that the school could be the very center of renewed efforts to build "a unified movement for

social justice" (p. 177). Educators are exceptionally positioned to "construct a constituency for

economic and educative change" (p. 177). Educators are also citizens, well-educated citizens

who represent all political stripes and orientations. I agree with Noguera (2003) that external

solutions to these dilemmas are not going to come anytime soon. Thus, educators can work

beyond the walls of the school and the board office. Suggesting specific actions beyond any

recommendations, Anyon (2005) argues that those interested in solutions beyond conservative-

behaviorist or liberal-structuralist discourse, what West refers to as a prophetic criticism (2001),

requires that we risk offending political elites and being unrealistic to other fellow progressives.

Anyon (2005) reminds us of the aspirations of those generations before us who fought for the

seemingly unrealistic goals of home ownership, the vote, and health care. She asks us to consider

that before the American civil rights movement many southern Whites said that sharecroppers and tenant farmers did not want to vote: they were apathetic; or they were "content"; and some Black farmers told Robert Moses (2001) and other civil rights workers that they had not wanted to get involved in "dat mess" (p.17). Sharecroppers and tenant farmers were critical of the mass movement that emerged in the 1950s (p. 152).

Much is to be learned from existing social movements beyond school systems. Before it closed in 2010, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) supported over 150,000 low and moderate income people in their struggles for affordable housing, community reinvestment, and quality education in 75 neighborhood chapters in the United States. Skilled activists organized parents to prevent the privatization of a community school in Brooklyn and recently pressed the state of Illinois for 10 million for increased parent engagement in schools. Similarly, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) employs 150 fulltime professional organizers that train neighborhood residents in 10-day institutes to develop public speaking, writing, and advocacy skills. An example of their work is pressure in the state of Texas for increased funding and technical expertise in high poverty schools (Anyon, 2005). Further in the U.S., there are other groups who focus entirely on public education to "create social capital in communities and encourage parents and other residents to utilize their collective strength to force systems change" (Anyon, 2005, p. 157). Southern Echo in Mississippi, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) in Chicago, and the Community Collaborative for District 9 (CC9) in New York are all examples of community based organizations that build capacity for advocacy and leadership. In 2006, members of CC9 saw a need to stabilize the teaching force in their low income community, and, working together with teachers, union groups, and residents, they gained 1.6 million dollars from the City of New York for lead teachers and professional

development (Anyon, 2005). Using the example of Justice for Janitors, Anyon (2005) describes

how progressive labor unions establish links to educators deeply committed to mass mobilization

with members who are increasingly of colour and the near poor. Many examples exist of inner

city poor youth belying their stereotypes of "dangerous and uninterested in education" (p.163).

Winsett (2002) identifies 500 well established, politically progressive youth groups that are

active in urban areas in the United States. The Boston Area Youth Organization Project (BYOP)

is led by adults and teens with a goal of increasing youth power and creating positive change

(BYOP). They develop counter cultural values, build relationships across differences, train and

develop leaders, identify key areas of concern, and take action for justice (p. 162). They have

pressured the Boston city council for $1,000,000 for textbooks and to extend student bus pass

privileges from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Silver and Toews (2009) have reported on 30 years of

plans to eliminate poverty in Winnipeg. While government initiatives such as the Neighborhood

Improvement Program (NIP) and the Core Area Initiative (CAI) of the 1980s were largely about

"physical development programs" in which large funds were provided to private companies to

develop Portage Place, parking, and the Winnipeg Forks, little was done to eliminate conditions

of poverty (Lyon & Newman, 1986, p.9). One of the positive by-products of this lack of attention

to community concerns has been the creation of innovative inner city CBOs (Community Board

Organizations). Today, organizations such as the Spence Neighborhood Association, Rossbrook

House, the North Point Douglas Women's Centre, and the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre

represent grassroots individuals and groups who could be an important part of the means by

which inner city poverty will be overcome (Silver & Toews, 2009). When educators engage

others in communities as equals and as change agents, many good things happen. To expand

community development, Anyon (2005) provides a number of suggestions for educational

leaders. To address the lack of jobs in inner city communities, partnerships with local business and union groups to provide apprenticeship programs can be expanded so that non-college bound students can enter the local labor force. When co-operation occurs, schools typically improve and student achievement rises for several reasons, including improved instructional pedagogy, accountability, resources (Anyon, 2005; Gold, Simon, & Brown, 2002), decreasing student mobility (Whalen, 2002), and increased trust between the parties (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In these initiatives, Anyon (2005) emphasizes the importance of linking educational issues to larger community issues. In part due to the success of the LNSA supporting schools, local property values rose, which in turn led the organization to intensive lobbying efforts for housing reform (Halsband, 2003). The collaboration of school leaders, community groups, and educational organizers in Washington, DC, led to skilled tutors becoming available to students from Grades 8 through 12 in the projects in which they lived. Parents and older teens were trained to become more effective tutors and emotional supports respectively. Whereas 40% of these students typically graduated previously, 89.6% graduated by the end of a 3-year evaluation process. A similar program exists in the Regent Park neighborhood in Toronto, and another program has emerged in the Seven Oaks School Division (SOSD) in partnership with the Winnipeg Foundation. The Bright Futures Program ("Bright Futures," 2010) serves residents of the Elwick Manitoba Housing complex, and it has operated for the last 7 years with approximately 320 students taking advantage of 70 volunteer tutors. The area typically had a 52% graduation rate, and currently 66% of graduates who participated in the program are in post-secondary education programs.

        In many communities battling conditions of poverty and social exclusion, the teachers and school administrators are usually not from the neighborhood and, more often than not,

differentiated from the students and their parents by race and by class. As well, educators are

trained to teach and to manage schools, not to be community organizers. As a result, there is

much room for improvement in how educators work with the communities we serve. The

Chicago based Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform and the Institute for Education

and Social Policy in New York provide a number of helpful suggestions for educators interested

in social justice to consider (Anyon, 2005). One recommendation is to systematically reach out

and build personal relationships within the community by getting out, knocking on doors, and

getting to know the leaders of the local churches, the community centres, and seniors. A second

is to identify and address issues that emerge from the community members themselves. Rather

than amorphous goals, targeting after school job training for Indigenous students and their

parents makes the focus a community issue rather than a school issue. Anyon (2005) emphasizes

the importance, whenever possible, trying to "link educational issues to community issues

regarding jobs, housing, transportation, and investment" (p. 184). Another strategy is to create

proposals for change based upon localized community research, so that the school comes to

know the community to a much greater degree than often exists. I know that, personally, I have

tended to go to work in a given community, work, and then leave the community at the end of

the day without coming to know, to any degree, the localized issues of that community. To

encourage further exchanges between community organizations and educators Corbin (2003)

identifies the work of the Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO), which held

multiday meetings of 100 educational researchers and community organizers so that they could

come to learn from each other. Anyon (2005) concludes that any efforts to truly address poverty

and social exclusion must get "concerned actors together, working in concert" (p. 187) and I

would suggest that reaching out beyond a school division and networking and partnering with

other like-minded agencies is a significant component of the work of a critically informed superintendent.

In chapter two, it was established that complex poverty exists and it has a harmful impact upon individuals and their communities in ways that extend well beyond a lack of income. In this current chapter, it has been argued that while superintendents cannot lead by fiat, they can be influential and if critically minded, they can initiate and/or support initiatives and practices that can assist students living in poverty to gain the capabilities that can help them to thrive in contemporary society. Critically informed superintendents can be open to, and help to coordinate community linkages, the politics of the discourses involved, and bring together the "elites" for support. All of the initiatives identified are but some examples of promising programs, the establishment and maintenance of which, could be under the influence of a superintendent.

Conclusion

It is with much reflection that I now consider that no single discourse can accurately capture all of the causes of complex, poverty and social exclusion. Rather, one needs to be conscious of the multi-dimensionality of the individual actors, systems, and processes, and this, in turn, informs the varied policy and action responses that we make in our schools. Beyond liberal-individualist and structural-progressive approaches, first, we can agree that "schools can't do everything but we can do something" (Levin, 2008). This requires that we bring our minds, our eyes, and, most importantly, our hearts, as we attend to the lives of the students and communities we serve (Bates, 2006; Dillard, 1985; Larson & Murtadha, 2002). Second, we are to recognize that culture is structural and "is in institutions such as families, schools, churches, synagogues, mosques and communication industries" (West, 2001, p. 13). We must soberly acknowledge that our school systems are not neutral, objective institutions and that we must

question the ways in which practices, for which we are responsible, disadvantage some and privilege others. Finally, we must come to terms with the tremendous despair that must exist in persistently depressed communities, whether we acknowledge it or not, in every school division in Manitoba. Multiple generations of oppression, poor education, and poverty have resulted in a subculture of deep malaise, self-loathing, and hopelessness, of which poor on poor violence, the sexual degradation of women, and substance abuse are obvious characteristics.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter includes an overview of the methodological approach to this qualitative research project, including summaries of (a) the critical theoretical perspectives that have been used to understand the work of school systems superintendents related to complex racialized poverty, and (b) critical methodological approaches that have been used to advance alternative inquiries into school systems with an aim of enhanced equity and social justice. At a high level, this research concerns how complex poverty and racism, on the one hand, and school systems, on the other, influence each other, and, specifically, it concerns the positionality of the superintendent in this interplay. Given the experiences, dispositions, and skills of each superintendent, the context within which they find themselves will provide (or not) unique opportunities to forward critically informed agendas. Rather than components of a production function, "the epitome of structural-functionalist inquiry" (Heck & Hallinger, 1999, p. 153), this project has required questioning of how these influentials construct meaning, how they influence and are influenced by others, and how they came to understand what they can and cannot do.

In an early version of the proposed study, the data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations of this project pertained to the following research questions:

1. The research must result in the identification of potential solutions to problematic conditions (Robinson, 1994). *What concerns do these superintendents have about complex Indigenous and racialized poverty, and, if they have concerns, how can they develop solutions within their individual and collective spheres of influence?*

2. A conversation with Young (2013) informed the question, *How do these superintendents view the space, the terrain, in which they work?* For each superintendent, the social, political, cultural, and economic context is in

many ways unique, and, therefore, each of them, if inclined towards progressive work, has unique opportunities to address complex poverty.

3. Robinson (1994) states that research must go beyond the identification of structural constraints and actually address the "individual or the collective action of agents which can drive the problem resolution process" (p.61). Thus, *What is it that these school superintendents believe are causes of social exclusion and poverty, and what is the individual and collective work to be done within their systems, and beyond, to address these issues?*

4. Robinson (1994) also states that the researcher must find ways to motivate the actors to actually do something about the identified problem, which Lather calls "catalytic validity" (cited in Robinson, p. 61). *Can I, as researcher, together with the participants, create new questions as well as design, implement, and evaluate new action strategies to address these concerns?*

The research questions that have informed this study evolved from the questions above for two significant reasons. First, originally the research methodology was to be firmly grounded in the critical methodological work of Robinson (1994). This would have required a more rigorous critique of the work of the participants. The participants never claimed to be critically informed, and it became my intention to see how their thinking and experiences might inform further work in this area. As a result, the methodology evolved into a *naturalistic inquiry informed by critical theory*. Second, it became clear early in the study that specific and focused thinking and reflection on notions of race and poverty could not have been expected of the participants. As a result, the research questions became more targeted:

1. *How do the participating superintendents articulate their understanding of poverty and its impact on students' school experiences, and how have the following experiences informed these understandings: (a) early life experiences; (b) initial teaching positions; and (c) academic background and professional learning?*

2. *How do these superintendents describe the socio-political and organizational environment that informs and influences their work as senior educational administrators*?

3. *How do these superintendents describe their roles as senior administrators within these environments in relation to being able to influence systems*?

4. *What actions have the participants undertaken to address issues of racialized poverty?*

Critical Research Methodologies

This section of the chapter clarifies how this study is critically informed. Specifically, it is intended that through this study (a) research is linked to praxis by exploring how critically informed theories may be realized in practice; (b) a critically informed methodology might be used to help participants explore significant societal issues, in this case complex poverty; and (c), it was not the intention of the researcher to *critique* the work of the participants. Rather, through exploring the thinking, reflections, and work of the participants, new theories and critically informed practices might emerge, maybe not immediately, that generates more critically informed thinking by the participants and by myself. It is for this reason that the study is a *naturalistic inquiry informed by critical theory.*

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) locate critical qualitative research within a complex historical field that began in the early 1900s and evolved from traditional approaches to current postmodern interpretations. They contend that the social sciences and the humanities are to become sites for "critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community" (p. 4), so that critical qualitative research expands the "hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a democratic society" (p. 4). As such, critical qualitative

research consists of practices that make visible that which is often tacit, unseen, and taken for granted in the world. Further, Lather (1991) has stated that critical qualitative research "is done for explicit political, utopian purposes, a politics of liberation, a reflexive discourse constantly in search of an open-ended, subversive, multi-voiced epistemology" (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 5). Lather (1991) also comments that the post-positivist period of social sciences has been characterized by much "methodological and epistemological dissent" (p. 50). Within the field and from a critical research perspective, research that is committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society, "research as praxis" (Lather, 1991, p. 51), is a necessary component of social scientific work that is to be defined as truly critical in nature.

Research as Praxis

Fay (1987) argues that, in contrast to ontological views that claim self-reflection has no impact on self-transformation, we are capable of transforming ourselves and our communities. He also identifies critical social scientific theories that are helpful in this regard. A theory of *false consciousness* (Fay, 1987) involves a critique of previously accepted narratives, and subsequently a becoming open to alternative understandings of social phenomena. New understandings can lead to intellectual and psychological crises from which *transformative action* that includes action to alter marginalized conditions can result. While Fay's ideas are helpful in illuminating various forms of oppression and action, I believe that his model is too much about what the researcher is going to provide to the subjects, and I am mindful that any orientation in which researchers believe they have all the answers is a flawed proposition.

Robinson (1994) points out that a stated critical approach has often failed to "live up to its practical promises" (p. 73) by being solely descriptive and not being used to change social conditions. It is for this reason that I have not only been guided by critical theory but I have

infused critical methodological strategies into this project. It is my intention that another example

of the practicality of critical theory will be available to support the interests of equity and social

justice. As Robinson (1994) states,

> the effectiveness of a theory is enhanced to the extent that it generates explanations which point the way to a problem's resolution, it fosters the identification and motivation of agents whose energy and commitment can drive the change process, and that it incorporates a micro-politics that helps critical researchers collaboratively resolve the ethical dilemmas inherent in the approach. (p. 73)

To be effective, Robinson (1994) says a critical project must address three areas: (a) it

must identify potential solutions to problematic conditions that are often messy and extremely

complex; (b) it must go beyond identification of structural constraints and actually address the

"individual or the collective action of agents which can drive the problem resolution process" (p.

61), if the project is to be practical and useful; and (c) it must find ways to motivate the actors to

actually do something about the identified problem, what Lather calls "catalytic validity" (as

cited in Fay, 1987, p. 61). It was the researchers' hope that as a result of the project, with fellow

participants or with others, the participant(s) and the researcher would continue to explore

critically informed research or attempt critically informed practice.

A Critically Informed Methodology

I believe my research possesses what Morgan calls "evocative power" (cited in Lather,

1991, p. 61) in that the process helped the participants rethink larger societal issues, in this case,

complex Indigenous and racialized poverty. The process of dialogue assisted the participants to

be reflective upon the world in which they live, to question that which they previously took for

granted, and to look down upon themselves with *new eyes* as it were. I also believe the

participants engaged in a process of reflective inquiry or, as Comstock puts it, the dialogue

stimulated a "self-sustaining process of critical analysis and enlightened action" (as cited in

Lather, 1991, p. 61). For working superintendents, it was about how their thinking could evolve and then how this might be translated in their practice, and in how they might be influential in other ways. Another participant stated that he needed to work in a way that went beyond "scratching the surface."

Carspecken and Apple (1992) also speak to the action orientation of critical qualitative research. They state that, regardless of the social restraints placed upon us, all humans have the ability not only to understand their positionality as racialized, sexualized, and otherwise marginalized peoples, but can also, as individuals and members of groups, have a desire and will to merge their subjective states with their public identities. Consequently, critical social research can be characterized not only by empirical descriptions of an unfair world but also by research that creates opportunities for people to explore contemporary reality, and embrace an agenda for change based on the findings of research. In this regard, this inquiry did result in personal questioning by all of the participants, and by the researcher as well, and it could lead into future professional learning work within MASS and beyond. It could lead to further work within each participant's current portfolio or be reflected in future consultative or mentorship work in which they engage.

Creswell (2007) identifies a number of philosophical assumptions that led to an activist role for those involved in critical qualitative research. Ontologically, reality is subjective and the researcher needs to provide evidence of a variety of perspectives. Epistemologically, the researcher needs to establish rapport and reduce the sense of power that often exists within researcher and participant relations. The researcher also needs to acknowledge pre-existing values and biases and their impact upon interpretations of social phenomena. Further, the researcher needs to be aware of the power of rhetoric and the nuances of language as used by

subjects, and the meaning they bring to it. Finally, the researcher needs to study a subject with strong consideration for his/her local context. That is to say, the researcher needs to be open to revising interpretations, meanings, and questions, based upon knowledge that is constructed through the research. Responses to open ended questions allowed me to continually probe into the meanings of the participants, which I did on numerous occasions and which provided new insights. The responses I received from the participants also resulted in several changes in the subsequent questions and the themes that emerged. I was conscious that each of the participants worked in unique socio-political environments. Addressing issues of equity for one of the superintendents was much easier than for the others, due to the progressive nature of the one school board and a divisional history of openness to diversity. Anderson (1990) reminds us that schooling and education must be seen in the context of continued social and cultural reproduction, and, as a result, research must be concerned with the disadvantaged, recognizing that social relations are incredibly complex, and that we need to be openly ideologically concerned with social justice and equity. Lather (1991) states that openly ideological, critical research needs to reflect both theory and data:

> Building empirically grounded theory requires a reciprocal relationship between data and theory. Data must be allowed to generate propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data must pour. (p. 254)

A Naturalistic Inquiry Informed by Critical Theory

Using Carspecken and Apple's (1992) model for critical research, this project progressed through five stages: (a) the gathering of information from subjects in such a manner that, if others were present, they would largely agree with "what is" and "what took place" (p. 517); (b) the completion of a preliminary analysis of the interview transcripts and the additi   on of

my notes that reflected instances in which I thought a participant was sharing tacit "unstated, background sets of rules and assumptions" (p. 519); (c) the engagement of each participant in dialogue that provided greater control to the subjects, helped the researcher complete normative reconstructions, and encouraged the subjects to engage in greater reflection; (d) the gaining of insights into the relationships between participants and the social sites and social groups that they work within; and, finally, (e) the relating of findings from stages (a) through (d), to the roles superintendents could play in school systems "within an unequal society" (p. 541) in critically informed ways.

The work of Fay (1987), Carspecken and Apple (1992), and Robinson (1994) has been helpful in framing what became a naturalistic inquiry informed by critical theory. They raise the importance of continuous movement between the ideas of the researcher and those of the participants through reflexivity, openness to the co-creation of new mindsets, and the dialogical acknowledgement of the very different mindsets and of the dialectical nature of knowledge creation. Figure 8 identifies the ideas of Fay (1987), Carspecken and Apple (1992), and Robinson (1994) that were helpful in framing several of the questions from a critical methodological perspective. The center circle (purple) contains the research questions. The circle above (green) identifies the steps within a critical methodological study; recognition that an existing narrative may be incorrect (false consciousness), identification of a significant social problem (complex poverty), and then taking steps to address the identified problem Fay (1987). The rectangles around the periphery of the circles identify other concepts from critical methodology that influenced my research. The ideas of the researchers identified in Figure 8 also informed the creation of each of the research questions.

Ontology:
reality is subjective
Creswell (2007)

Fay
•False Consciousness
•What is the Crisis?
•Let's Act

Fay
•False Consciousness
•What is the Crisis?
•Let's Act

Epistomology:
Share power, Nuances
of Language
Creswell (2007)

Questions (Young 2012, Robinson, 1994)

1. Making sense of racialized socio-economic demarcations 2. Descriptions the socio-political environment, space.

3. What are school systems able to do, obligated to do?

4. What have these superintendents done to address issues of racialized poverty and social exclusion? 5. How do they describe/explain the outcomes?

Must have
Evocative Power
Cited by
Lather, 1991

Dialogical
Carspecken and
Apple, 1992

Reflexivity
Lather, 1991

Dialectic
Lather, 1991

Figure 8. Research questions informed by critical methodology. The diagram shows the research foundations that have informed the research questions that I addressed.

Participants

The study was situated in the Canadian province of Manitoba. Latest figures indicate that the current population of the province is 1,293,400 (City of Winnipeg, 2016). Winnipeg, Manitoba's largest city and capital, is at 718,400 (City of Winnipeg, 2016), of whom 164,6430 were children between the ages of 0 to 19 years (Brownell et al., 2012). Winnipeg has six school districts that serve student populations ranging from approximately 8,000 students to 35,000 students.

The research [or the study] was conducted with four participants who, at the time, were working as superintendents in Winnipeg. Using a small number of participants allowed me to spend significant time gathering and reviewing data related to the particular demographic and organizational settings of each of the participants, and it provided me with the opportunity to spend meaningful time with each of them.

At the time that the study was conducted, Winnipeg was served by six public school divisions. I wanted to work with superintendents who had been in their positions for at least three years. That was the case in five of the divisions, including Louis Riel School Division where I serve, thus I approached the other four who had been working superintendents in Winnipeg for at least three years, myself excluded. I approached each of the potential participants via telephone and email, followed by a formal process of informed consent. The four superintendents agreed to participate in the study. They shared insights that shed light into how superintendents can influence the interplay between school systems and complex Indigenous and racialized poverty.

Data Collection

Critical Document Analysis

Most school systems have vision or mission statements that claim to espouse the key beliefs and values of the organization. Notions of democracy, agency, and equal opportunity more often than not characterize such statements. Originally, I thought that an analysis of key divisional documents including mission statements, annual plans, and policy statements might contribute to making sense of the understandings of the participants. Through the interviews I found that, invariably, the mission/vision statements were developed beyond the influence of the participants. As a result, I decided to minimize the importance of these documents to the thinking of the participants in this study. The information is valuable and worthy of further study beyond the intentions of this study (see Appendix B).

Interviews

I engaged the participants in an ongoing conversation about poverty, schools, and school system leadership over an extended 5-month period. Subjects participated in two interviews of approximately 100 minutes each. For the third round of interview questions, three of the participants submitted written responses via email rather than a face to face meeting. Two of the participants participated in two more additional interviews of one hour each in order to gain further information about initiatives in their divisions. After each of the participants had participated in two individual interviews, all of the participants attended a group dialogue that lasted 90 minutes. Through a formal "letter of consent" (see Appendix C), I asked their permission to use their provided information (a) for my thesis and (b) possibly for other

conference papers and articles. The time and location of the interviews were determined by mutual convenience. The interviews were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed. The raw data have been seen only by myself and the three members of my advisory committee.

Copies of the transcripts from their interviews and the group dialogue were returned to each participant so they could check the accuracy of my representations of what they said. They had the opportunity to edit the transcripts in any way they wished to further clarify what they have said as well as ensure that it reflected their intentions and their thinking. None requested any changes. It is also my intention to store the data for up to three years during which time I can use it in publications in journals and in presentations to professional associations.

Interview One

During the first round of interviews, I engaged the participants in an initial dialogue. By dialogue, I refer to conversations in which participants are open to learning from others rather than trying to win an argument. Senge (1999) refers to the work of physicist David Bohm to identify three key conditions necessary for dialogue to occur: participants must suspend their assumptions; researchers must regard participants as colleagues; and there must be a context for the conversation, in this case poverty and inequality.

To create environments in which dialogue could occur, I began the first interview sessions with a detailed description of what my study was about; the time commitments for which I was asking; how I would handle data collecting and writing; and what sorts of input each participant would have (including dialogue and editorial control). Given the nature of the topic and the lack of anonymity, the participants needed to be given fairly explicit reassurances.

How do the four superintendents participating in this study make sense of complex Indigenous and racialized poverty in contemporary society and how have the following

experiences informed these understandings: (a) early life experiences; (b) initial teaching

positions; (c) academic background and professional learning? The question invited an

exploration of the personal opinions, orientations, and philosophies of each of the participants,

and of how these have developed (see Appendix D). However, given the dialogical nature of the

conversations, the order of questioning and phrasing used with the participants varied.

I created an environment in which the participants shared stories of their lives, and

examples of their thinking about race and poverty related to the question *How do these*

superintendents describe the socio-political and organizational environment that inform and

influence their work as senior educational administrators?

Interview Two

During the second interview, we re-visited the questions and the findings from the first

interview, and, as a result, some of the insights and conclusions gained were modified due to the

further thinking and reflection gained with time. After that, the focus of the second interview was

based upon research question number two: *How do these superintendents describe the socio-*

political and organizational environment that informs and influences their work as senior

educational administrators? For each superintendent, the social, political, cultural, and economic

context within which s/he was working was unique. The histories and systemic orientations of

each of the divisions meant that, whatever the orientations of the participants, their intentions

would be influenced strongly by each of their unique environs. I wanted to hear how the

superintendents made sense of their environments. I wanted to determine their awareness of the

political environments in which they operated and, as a result, how they agitated, organized,

promoted, and planned to achieve their respective agendas.

During the second interviews, we also addressed research question three: *How do these superintendents describe their roles as senior administrators within these environments in relation to being able to influence systems*? It continued to be my intention that the dialogical nature of the conversation would continue to create an environment in which tacit beliefs about complex Indigenous and racialized poverty and its causes would be brought to the level of cognition, be questioned, or reinforced. It was intended that responses to the third question would tease out whether these influentials saw these issues and their effects as systemic and beyond the boundaries of school systems, or if they saw the challenges as an inherent component of the work of superintendents in particular and educators in general. Again, through open ended questions and a collaborative, reflective stance, I heard different opinions from the participants on the influential role that they can play in addressing the societal challenges created by poverty and racism that cannot be fully explained through a Marxist or neo-Marxist focus on structural economics. Habermas (1972, 1979; Bates, 1984, 1994, 2003; Foster, 1986, 1995) and other critically informed theorists argued that leaders need to engage in public life through rational debate and a focus on social justice, from a critical perspective this would be required of school district superintendents. What again became apparent was that the environments from which the participants came did not necessarily prepare them to understand contemporary complex Indigenous and racialized poverty. After having reviewed the transcripts from the second interview, the researcher chose to contact the participants and present additional queries related to the second and third research questions. Many of the responses gained during the first interview did not seem to go beyond the surface, as, in a sense, the participants had not given much previous thought to the questions. Three of the four participants responded to the questions via email, while with the fourth another face-to-face interview took place (see Appendix E).

Group Dialogue

A group session was convened to explore a number of provocations based upon research

question four: *What actions have the participants undertaken to address issues of racialized*

poverty?

During the previous sessions, the participants had demonstrated a growing interest in issues of

complex poverty. As well, just by the fact that they were attending to the subject, something that

did not necessarily occur regularly in their professional lives, they were becoming reflective on

their previous experiences, their work and societal environments, and their potential

responsibilities related to complex poverty. It was due to these experiences that, rather than

direct questions, I sent the participants a list of provocations from the critically informed

educational leadership literature (Foster, 1986; Fay, 1987; Grogan, 2000; Shields, 2010) to

consider prior to our group dialogue. During the session, I provided a review of the previous

conversations, as well a summary of the themes that were developing from those conversations.

Following that, with the researcher taking the role of moderator, we explored the various

provocations that were provided (see Appendix F.)

The responses to these provocations provided insights into how the participants observed

their worlds and whether they believed they could influence change. Beyond observation, critical

theorists, including Bates (2006) and Foster (1986), and critical researchers, including Fay

(1987), Carspecken and Apple (1992), Lather (1991), and Anderson (1990), argue that action

must result in helping people to connect larger societal issues to the lives they live on a daily

basis. The responses did provide several informative strategies to address social inequality. They

also supplemented the critical social research by going beyond empirical descriptions and

supporting the struggles against inequality by educating people about the realities of the

contemporary socio-economic challenges, and embracing an agenda for change based on the findings of the research. As a result of the group dialogue and their previous reflections on their interview sessions, they concluded that racism and discrimination are more significant than they realized and that more needed to be done. To surface *who is responsible* is sensitive, as no one is interested in being blamed for what has not worked. While each of the participants had been involved in projects that were intended to mitigate the effects of poverty, many of them were aimed at specific schools and it became clear that there were few initiatives that existed at a systems level and were aimed at addressing the impact of racialized poverty. As a result, I decided that only several illustrations of promising practices would be shared. I identified illustrations that I thought represented very different ways that a superintendent could exert influence. This led to two more interviews with two of the participants that focused on the projects in which they played a significant role. It was in exploring the fourth research question that the fifth of Carspecken and Apple's (1992) stages of critical research could be brought to bear, by considering the interplay between social sites and institutions—school systems in relation to individuals and groups of actors.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Initially I planned to base each of my findings chapters on one of the participants, but the process of reviewing the data led to the development of general themes related to sense-making, the work of superintendents in context, and what is being and can be done to address complex poverty. After each interview, I read the transcripts and added additional commentary to the textual data I collected. Initially, I coded information according to the research questions. I then increasingly attended to the themes and patterns that started to repeat throughout all of the data sets. I also made and documented subjective interpretations of the comments made by

individuals and the interactions between participants, as well as between participants and myself. To assist me in this work, I used a notebook that initially contained several general themes, but then grew to contain words and phrases that served as "a summative, salient, essence-capturing . . . attribute[s] for a portion of language" (Saldana, 2009, p. 3). I also maintained a journal in which I tracked the choices I was making with regards to the emergent patterns and the categories that were being developed, and I shared these reflections with members of my committee.

In working through this stage of data analysis, two ontological categories were explored: "the subjective realm and the intersubjective, normative realm" (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, p. 518). I made additional comments about what I observed beyond the words of the participants, such as extended pauses and reflective comments like "I don't know, I never thought of that" or "I've never been asked that question before." I made subjective inferences about what I thought was going on for a participant, and it led to further questions during that particular session and later. The analysis of meaning included noting the meanings and speculation about the subjective state of individuals when they chose to say a particular thing or do a particular act (Carspecken & Apple, 1992) and placing these notes in a column aside the interview transcripts.

As I reviewed my transcribed notes, I looked for patterns and themes, starting with the research questions themselves, and then—by being attentive to the repetition of specific words, pauses, and changes in tone acknowledged in my notes, and by noticing what data seemed to be consistently missing—the eventual narrative began to emerge through the data. I then linked the emergent themes to critical theoretical models in a manner in which a priori theory informed my questioning and thinking, while I, together with the participants, continued to be open to new ideas and ways of thinking (Morin, 2011).

The themes provided in Chapter Six developed as a result of feedback from my committee after the first round of interviews. The themes developed for the rest of the findings chapters emerged through continued interpretation of the data. On a regular basis, I drew connections back to the external authorities identified in my literature review and created a chart that connected the research questions, the questions and prompts that I used, and excerpts from the literature. To assist my sense-making, I used the data mining software *nVivo* to help me mine the information I collected. Using the software, I first used the research questions as themes and was able to list each of the questions and prompts that were used, and thus to have each of the responses from the participants coded accordingly within a section or *node.* I was then able to conduct *queries* or searches based on key words that assisted me in developing the new themes which eventually developed.

Inferring subjective meaning. As the observable acts of others are often based upon unstated, behind-the-scenes sets of guidelines for social behavior, if we are part of a given culture, we can make sense of them. Before conducting my research, I predicted a number of normative rules that exist in the discourse of the superintendent. Specifically, I anticipated that as superintendents participants would feel a need to be knowledgeable about the subject of poverty as it relates to their jurisdiction and to impart a message that, as superintendents, they have the matter well in hand, and I found this to be true. I expected all of the participants to articulate the position that *all students can learn*, and, in fact, their jurisdiction is doing a very good job in this regard. I found this to be true as well. Finally, I expected that the participants would impart an implicit or explicit message that they and their organization are doing all that they can to address issues of poverty, but that the real work is beyond their capacity as educational leaders. All of the participants spoke of the daunting nature of the issues and, while they indicated that school

systems can improve things for kids and their families, they also shared that the challenges are much larger than the education system.

Norms. I made notes after each session with a participant. I added this additional normative information to targeted comments and statements by participants and labeled this information as *1* in a separate column in each of the interview transcripts. I expected that given my position as a colleague in the field, I would be given a high degree of respect by all participants. As well, I expected shared beliefs commonly held within neo-liberal orientations of most school systems in Canada: specifically, that individuals do in fact need to take personal responsibility for their rights, that schools are about preparing people for the world of work, and that receiving an education is the route to opportunity in contemporary society. I found norms also referred to various modes of displaying attention and respect as I related with the participants (Carspecken & Apple, 1992). As an educational researcher from the academy, I expected a degree of assumed respect that, at the same time, would be tempered by the fact that, as a colleague, I continued to be one of them, a frontline district-level administrator. I was curious as to how one of the superintendents would relate to me given that in a previous portfolio, I was his subordinate. That participant treated me as a colleague. I was also curious as to how each of the participants would express his/her identity: as all-knowing superintendent and/or unguarded champion of kids? What I found was humility, given the scope of their positions and the societal challenges that exist, expressions of hope for all children, and a sense that there is important work they can do. However, none of them expressed a sense that they were "all knowing" and powerful.

As I worked to uncover meaning from the conversations, I became aware of and open to not only the words of the participants but also the tacit understandings that often lie underneath

the surface of words. I believe it fair to say that often educators fall back upon politically correct mantras like "all kids can learn" and "we are all about relationship building here." I gained insights into what the participants believe and what informed their thinking. I wondered if there were a false set of notions to which the participants were clinging to concerning not only the realities of social injustice but also the role that they may play in perpetuating a system that does not serve the needs of many students and their families. Beyond the percentages of people living in poverty, there are actual young people in our schools who are living without adequate food, shelter, hope, and love. The ramifications of living in a city that is increasingly divided between those who have and those who do not; the social and political ramifications for influentials who observe the disadvantaged can result in the question "why don't those people just catch up?"

Intersubjectivity. All of us are influenced by normative structures in how we represent ourselves publicly, make inferences of others, and make inferences about how others perceive us (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, 1992). From the perspective of critical research, structures that are used by participants and researchers alike to "represent the self publicly, to make inferences about the selves and subjective states of others, and to make inferences about how others perceive one's own self" (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, p. 523) are components of a normative world that can be understood and shared by others. As such, participants in my study may have chosen to present themselves in ways that relate to the culture of their school system, role models they had as they prepared for the superintendency, or an intention to act in a manner contrary to how they had seen others do the job. These are normative structures in which individuals can make claims, through how they represent themselves, as to who they are, and they can be expressed through the interviews and the group discussions. I had opportunities to see each of the participants previous to this study, one-to-one and in group settings. Through the dialogue and

the group session, I found that each of the participants presented largely as they did in my previous observations and recollections. None of the participants presented in a manner that was "different" from previous observations.

Making inferences cannot but lead to assumptions about the subjective states of the participants (Carspecken & Apple, 1992). As indicated in the previous section, I anticipated that participants would express almost universally that all students can learn. During my interviews I did hear this, and yet it was of value to investigate the "intentions, deliberations, wishes, feelings, and states of awareness" (p. 522) of the participants, as well as my own. As a critical researcher, I found that the participants expressed care and concern for children, including those who are poor; they shared the belief that all students can learn, including those who are poor. The differences between the participants was related to what further action was required, who was responsible, and what, if anything, they could do to improve equity. Given my understanding that so much of how we act and what we do is informed by often tacit understandings of the social world of which we are not even conscious, it was also of value to "discover whether or not participants are even aware of the normative rules of which others think they are aware." (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, p. 523). Subjective objects of study are represented by terms such as "intentions, deliberations, wishes, feelings, and states of awareness" (p. 522).

As noted earlier, I made notes after each session with a participant. Together with normative information, I also noted when participants were questioning a previously held assumption, when I was curious about why a participant had not thought about the work that they had been doing, and also expressions of personal guilt, and a lack thereof, related to the subject matter, observations which provided further insights into thinking, perspectives, and reflections

of the participants. I then added this information related to the subjective state of participants as *2* in a separate column in each of the interview transcripts.

The interviews progressed to become reflexive and dialogic conversations. The work of Bernard and Ryan (2010), Hasse-Biber and Leavy (2006), Bogdan and Biklen (2007), and Matsuda (1995) encourages this direction in effective qualitative analysis and interpretation. Again, Carspecken and Apple (1992) state that engaging in this level of dialogue yields a deeper, more collaborative knowledge production; it allows the researcher and participants to delve deeper into the normative reconstructions that began in stage two; it empowers the participants to push further into the subject of study and surface and interrogate what were tacit understandings; and it aids in the discovery of normative structure. The participants did identify new ideas, pose new questions, and co-create new meanings. For this to occur, I needed to create an environment in which it was clear that I am not the expert. Yes, I am working from a pre-determined theoretical perspective, but I did not have the answers. This process led to a series of changes to the subsequent questions asked, the themes that emerged, and the eventual structuring of the findings chapters.

Again, there are normative structures that inform what people can say and how they should act in specific situations or "public realms" (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, p. 531) such as the formal meetings of provincial superintendents. Foucault uses the term *technologies of thought* to identify how those with power use language to control and often maintain existing metanarratives (Martin, 1988). I was observant of previously noticed cultural patterns that had been established between the participants through their numerous previous interactions. As superintendents in Winnipeg, not only were they all members of MASS but they had attended meetings with one another on a monthly basis for years. Having gained data by engaging in one-

on-one dialogues and listening to the group discussion, allowed me to obtain different

information from individuals, since what they were free to express in an interview could be very

different from what they felt they could state in a group situation, and vice versa. These sets of

what Carspecken and Apple (1992) call "contrast data" (p. 531) not only helped me gain

information specific to individuals, it also provided insights into the group norms of the systems

leaders, as well as, potentially, into the group norms of the individual school systems. Again, I

found that, largely, their behavior was similar to what I had observed in previous settings, and I

found their behavior and responses in the individual meetings to be similar to that in the group

dialogue.

Normative structures are the often tacit guidelines that inform how we as individuals

operate within a social setting (Carspecken & Apple, 1992). Individuals need to implicitly know

these guidelines in order to produce actions that will be understood by others and to understand

the actions of others. This works in the same manner that one needs to understand English

grammar in order to say something in English that makes sense to other English language

speakers. During my interviews and during the group dialogue, I asked probing, open-ended

questions in order to have individuals question their own thinking, as well as to generate new

understandings.

I found that superintendents can make a progressive impact upon the organizations and

communities they serve. I found that critical methodology can be used as a catalyst to foster

generative change. Further work can be contemplated by the participants or others to consider

alternative narratives and rethink the work of superintendents. Several of the participants did

suggest this in words to the effect of "there is more work ahead" and "I should be doing more

and I have to do more."

Carspecken and Apple (1992) suggest that stage four work includes two areas: social integration and system integration. Social integration refers to the work that superintendents and other organic cultural catalysts (West, 2001) can do on a face-to-face basis to serve as role models, to support, question, plan, and foment action that can alleviate the challenges of poverty. To different degrees, the participants did provide evidence of their work in this regard. As Carspecken and Apple (1992) have found, system integrations are much more nuanced, and it is difficult to investigate the relationships between social sites and social groups and to determine whether the influence of the superintendent has resulted in systems level change. I believe that I heard evidence that this is in fact the case amongst the participants, but gathering evidence in this regard was beyound the scope of this study.

It is in this stage that I had hoped we could begin to see all participants, and myself as researcher, as involved in a collaborative project. It is in this project that new questions were generated by the group to address the systemic nature of the dilemma. As a collaborative project, I cannot say that this occurred. The participants were extremely busy people pulled in a myriad of directions and not ready to join forces in a collective *new direction*.

The factor that can differentiate critical theoretical approaches to educational administration from mainstream qualitative approaches is to be found in stage five. Specifically, what is the role that can be played by superintendents to mitigate the harmful impact of poverty within their spheres of influence? Can they in fact take the knowledge gained in stages one through four and create a generative process in which people work to create a more equal society?

A naturalistic inquiry informed by the critical theory model goes beyond Marxist paradigms of class struggle and recognizes the importance of personal agency in the recreation of education systems. As I will share in the findings chapters, I did see evidence of this.

This study involved school system superintendents, not exactly a group who seem to be going without daily meals and the basics of survival. The dialogical approach introduced at stage three needed to be continually revisited in order to meet the validation and political requirements of critical research. By continually being open to discussing personal views about poverty, I did observe participants who were "open to being mistaken in his or her interpretations" (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, p. 548). As well, dialogical methods allowed for the democratic production of new theory that is so necessary, because the existing knowledge and the capacity for future problem solving is multiplied when in the hands of the people, rather than in the hands of the researcher. In essence, responses to question four resulted in a visitation of the data, findings, arguments, and recommendations that emerged from stages one through four. I concluded that superintendents can help to address the causes of social injustice, racism, and poverty.

Ethics

In my capacity as a superintendent and assistant superintendent for the past 16 years, I have known each of the participants on a professional basis. I do not, nor have I at any time worked in a position of authority over any of the potential participants. Due to these professional affiliations with potential participants, individuals could have felt additional pressure to participate in the study. In the "Invitation to Participate" letter (see Appendix B), I shared my awareness that they may have felt pressure to participate due to our current professional affiliations, and, accordingly, I clearly stated that, if any of them did not wish to participate, they did not have to. I wrote the invitations in a neutral tone as a way to diminish any emotional

appeal to potential participants. It was made clear that participation or non-participation would have no effect on our existing professional relationships.

Overall there were minimal risks involved in this study. An obvious risk is the fact that the names of the participants are not hidden. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw their consent and discontinue their participation in this study at any time without prejudice or consequence, simply by indicating so via email, in person, or by phone. If they chose to withdraw, all of their data would be immediately shredded or erased. None of the participants withdrew from the study. Benefits include the opportunity to receive feedback about the study results and a greater understanding of the leadership orientations and praxis of the participants.

All interview information received from participants has been stored digitally by pseudonym on a computer to which only I have access and which is password protected. All data, including my notes written prior to, during, and after the interview, are accessible by myself only. All copies of any electronic and paper data will be confidentially destroyed after seven years (2023).

All researchers at the University of Manitoba are required to complete the Course of Research Ethics (CORE) prior to submitting an ENREB proposal, and this I completed successfully. As my study involves human subjects and as I wished to share the results publicly, I had my research proposal for this study successfully approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, a number of practices have been adhered to. Participants were informed that the study had been approved by the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Review Board (ENREB) (see Appendix I). If participants had any questions about this study at any time, they were invited to

contact myself or my advisor by telephone, in person, or via email. They were also invited to call the Human Ethics Secretariat at the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Review Board at (204) 474-7122. No requests came.

Conclusion

As it will always involve people in highly variable and contextual circumstances, leadership will continue to be contentious and elusive. The concept of social justice will continue to be debated and highly contested. The superintendency is a unique position from which much influence can be brought to bear either to maintain the status quo or to promote a significant questioning of how things are to be done in education systems. As a result of the research that has gone into this paper, I am even more convinced that reflective, critically oriented practices can only help us to effect meaningful change in systems and for people. These changes might be fitful and incremental rather than steady and bold, but they are progress nonetheless. The work continues.

FINDINGS: CHAPTER FIVE

SUPERINTENDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF RACIALIZED POVERTY AND ITS

IMPACT ON SCHOOLING, AND SOME INFLUENCES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO

THESE UNDERSTANDINGS

Introduction

As I think about how I have come to this place, completing a PhD while I have already experienced a career as a teacher and an educational administrator, I conclude that my attraction to issues of social justice and leader ship germinated well before I was born. In the larger sense, my dissertation is born of the influences of 500 years of colonialism. Closer to this present moment, the influence of my parents, my experiences growing up in Canada, and my journey as an educator have led to my questions, my doubts, and my hopes for a better tomorrow. (present work, p. xxiii)

The excerpt above is taken from the prologue of this thesis. In that section, I have written

about the influences of people and organizations upon my thinking and my actions, as well as a

myriad of choices I made, influenced by the organizational and cultural structures that influence

each of us and that we in turn influence. For many years I struggled to make sense of what I now

recognize, through this thesis work, as complex racialized poverty. This chapter, the first of three

findings chapters, addresses my first research question: *How do the participating superintendents*

articulate their understanding of poverty and its impact on students' school experiences, and

how have the following experiences informed these understandings: (a) early life experiences;

(b) initial teaching positions; and (c) academic background and professional learning.

The analysis in this chapter attempts to develop four main arguments drawn from the literature

presented in Chapter Two:

1. It locates the participants' understandings of poverty within a conceptual framework that links Silver's (2014) discussion of "complex and racialized poverty," its impact on school experiences/success (Gaskell & Levin, 2012),

and critical perspectives on schooling and the superintendency in light of the notion of dominant narratives of poverty and of schooling (Foster, 2004; Larson and Murthada, 2002; Grogan, 2000).

2. It assumes that knowledge is socially constructed on an ongoing basis. This is important to note as the superintendents reflect upon how they have come to make sense of contemporary class and racialized divisions in the greater society, and upon how they determine what is to be their work.

3. Drawing on the work of Leithwood (2005, 2013), who identifies as a central dimension of educational leadership the (co-) construction and nurturing of an organizational vision, and of Grogan (2000), who discusses critical leadership, the analysis suggests that both a well-developed understanding of complex and racialized poverty by the superintendent and a heart for people who are oppressed are necessary aspects of divisional leadership for improved educational outcomes for students living in poverty. While having a *heart for people* can manifest in leaders being paternalistic and well-meaning caretakers of people, critically informed leaders who have a heart for people use their influence to create environments in which disadvantaged people gain greater control of their lives and ownership of the changes that are required to occur to move out of poverty.

4. If people in positions of organizational leadership/influence are not only to craft a vision and bring about action (Leithwood, 2010) but ensure that such effort addresses issues of complex, racialized poverty, they must have a heart for people who are oppressed (Gaskell & Levin, 2012; Silver, 2013) and *act*. This is a necessary condition in a Manitoba context where local school boards retain considerable decision-making authority/autonomy within a larger societal context in which complex poverty is a well-established norm in Winnipeg (Silver, 2016).

The purpose of this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, is not to focus on profiling and in some manner evaluating individual participants in this study. Nor does it provide the depth of information that would be needed for such an endeavor. Rather, the purpose of the chapter is to draw on their experiences, insights, and comments, to begin to explore some of the dimensions of understanding and activism that might be associated with a superintendent's ability to influence in a positive manner the school experiences of children living in poverty.

While preparing to interview the participants to inquire into their understandings in this area, I was conscious that while I have read and studied in this area for decades, I continue to struggle with notions of race, culture, and poverty to the extent that my acceptance of the idea of complex Indigenous and racialized poverty has only been developed as a result of hours of work over the past decade and I continue to slip back into thinking and practices informed by the social narrative of meritocracy as well as neo-liberalism. Reflecting upon the development of my own understandings, I was not surprised to find that each of participants had very different perspectives and understandings of the terrain. In conducting the interviews for this research I was very curious about how they viewed poverty and how, if at all, their understandings were connected to Indigenous and racialized Canadian experiences and identities/identifications. I was also interested in how their perspectives may have changed through their early life experiences, their professional roles, their academic preparation, and their professional learning. What I found was that notions of race and colour are deeply embedded into the historic narrative of the larger community. I found that the views of the participants have been, and continue to be, socially constructed, "not either divinely inspired, inherent in our minds, or in a world external to us" (Young, 2008, p. 5). Each of the participants were on their own journeys towards understanding why poverty exists, why it impacts certain communities more than others, how does it influence schooling and how does schooling impact poverty, and what superintendents can do to better support young people living in poverty.

This thesis seeks to explore how superintendents can influence improved experiences for students living in poverty. As this perspective has been informed by a critical orientation, attention to Leithwood's (2013) emphasis on leaders having a vision and nurturing that vision in their organizations implies that superintendents must include in this "vision" a deep

understanding of the nature of poverty and its interactions with schooling, and they must see this

as a priority for their work and the work of the division. Foster (1986) argues that leadership

must focus on freedom, democratization, and the betterment of all people. Among others,

Grogan (2000) argues that the work of the superintendent should be about a more equitable

distribution of resources and opportunities and also suggests that the contemporary

superintendent needs to be a reformer if she is to assist systems to meet the needs of all learners.

In spite of the positive language of Manitoba provincial government policy, challenging poverty

is not typically a component of the job description for a superintendent or a necessary

expectation, and thus it can be a risky proposition, as it can run counter to a larger narrative of a

meritocratic society.

In the remainder of this chapter, the participant's understandings of complex racialized

poverty, as well as an analysis of their understandings will be provided.

Conversations About Poverty: The Participants Understandings of Complex, Indigenous

Racialized Poverty and Schooling

This section of the chapter presents comments from each of the four participants about

their understandings of poverty and schooling in Winnipeg. I believe that two ideas from Silver

(2014) are particularly important for this section. Silver argues that we need to consider poverty

as,

> existing on a continuum, with poverty as a shortage of income, often as a temporary
>
> phenomenon that may not cause lasting damage to those who experience it, at one end of
>
> the continuum . . . . And at the other end of the continuum is poverty as a more complex

multi-faceted, long-term and intergenerational phenomenon that includes a shortage of

money but much more and produces great damage to those who experience it. (p. 2-3)

Associated with complex poverty, Silver lists a variety of "causally connected problems" (p. 4),

including inadequate housing, poor nutrition and poor health, elevated exposure to crime and

violence, low levels of educational attainment, intergenerational exclusion from the labour

market, and negative interactions with various state agencies including schools (p. 4).

The second key idea from Silver is that the origins of complex poverty need to be

understood primarily as structural and political rather than individual and pathological—which,

he argues, constitutes the dominant narrative among many Canadians. As he argues,

> How we understand poverty has important implications for how, or even if, we set out to
> solve it. The blaming the victim mode of explanation is especially problematic because of
> the policy implications that follow from it. That is why it is especially important to
> understand that however much it may appear that those living in complex poverty are the
> cause of their own problems, and however much it may be the case that at times their
> behavior reinforces that appearance, the root causes of poverty are socio-economic. Change
> the socio-economic circumstances, and the vast majority of those living in complex poverty
> will change their behavior. To blame the poor for their poverty, as so often happens, is to
> fail to see beneath the surface appearance of things. (p. 66-7)

Pauline Clarke

For much of her administrative career, from 1987 to 2008, Pauline Clarke was the

Superintendent of Winnipeg School Division's Inner City District. In our conversations about

racialized poverty in the inner city, she saw the central issue as one of poverty, not racism or

Indigenousness. She noted, "people talk about Indigenous people and newcomer communities

and so on, but the thing that's in common for them and other people, too, is poverty. Why is it

there?" While recognizing the challenges of race and colonialism, Pauline framed the larger

challenge as being poverty itself. Focusing on structural features of the Canadian labour market

and the effects of unemployment, Pauline reflected on her days as principal at William Whyte

School, and how, "even in those times all those years ago, we were working with families where the opportunity hadn't been there for anybody to have a job." She said "poverty is about the lack of jobs and a lack of income which leads to other serious ramifications, such as poor attendance at school and substance abuse." She posed this question for those living in Winnipeg,

> What are the opportunities that have been provided so that people can work, for example, and do work that is meaningful and that they're going to be successful at? If you talk about Canadian citizens, I think Canadian citizens have the right to think that they will be able to get work and make a life for themselves.

Her comments about success speaks to more than income, it speaks to the psychological, social, and physical trauma that often impacts impoverished people, their families, and their communities, as indicated by a number of researchers (Silver, 2006; Vaught, 2011).

Elaborating on these structural aspects of poverty and school success and the role of both provincial and federal governments in sustained community development work Pauline commented:

> I think that the whole question of housing [in the inner city] has been an issue for I don't know how many years. Is the federal government responsible? Is the provincial government responsible? Who is going to improve housing? Who is responsible for that? There are opportunities to do things but it never comes to fruition in a consistent way. How do governments encourage businesses to stay in the inner city? The stores leave. The banks leave. The supports leave. How are they encouraged to go back? Governments have to do that. . . . You need political will for a lot of this.

Emphasizing the importance of sustained government support and funding, she went on to discuss the tri-level agreement between the federal, provincial, and municipal governments that for three years in the 1980s gave rise to Winnipeg's Core Area Initiative (CAI) and saw a large infusion of additional funding for inner city schools (Gaskell & Levin, 2012), an initiative that she considered "a missed opportunity."

> One of the things that we had started working on was an early years school program to work with parents in parent-child centres to give them a place in the community where they could do the things that we want them to do now—talk to each other, help them improve their own skills, help them apply for jobs, toy lending, whatever. These parent-child centres—we had six of them in the inner city—were very successful, very successful. When the core area funding was running down, parents went to the government to continue, but [they were told that] there was no way to continue it. . . . Even when there were things that were successful through this funding—that if they could have just kept going with them could, it could have had a long-term effect and results—it was just swept away.

Pauline believed that poverty was the problem and that it could only be addressed through large-scale solutions beyond school divisions. The establishment of parent-child centres in the inner city helped to mediate the effects of poverty not only on children, but also their families.

Ron Weston

Ron's career in education, which included teaching in northern Manitoba, a principalship in rural Arborg, Manitoba, and the superintendency in Lakeshore School Division provided him a broad range of different experiences of rural poverty and diversity prior to taking on the role of superintendent in the St. James-Assiniboia School Division (SJSD) in Winnipeg. St. James-Assiniboia School Division represented a quite different context for Ron compared to Pauline's context in Winnipeg School Division. As Ron noted, "when I came to St. James I realized that I was coming into a community that was a lot like the communities that I grew up in [in Southern Ontario], as far as there wasn't a lot of diversity in St. James then—and there still isn't as much as there is in other parts of the city, but it is changing" [see Appendix A]. In this context, Ron claimed that issues of diversity attained a higher level of priority in the division and with the school board as diversity began to increase. As a starting point upon coming into the SJSD superintendency and taking over from a high-profile, long-serving predecessor, Ron's early

priorities were to effect greater inclusion for special needs students in the division and to provide

parents with a greater say in where their children went to school.

For Ron, part of his role was to educate the board on the changing character and needs of

the student body. He commented,

> I have had good trustees all the way along. . . . They've always been interested in improving what's going on in the school division. So we had conversations and showed them evidence and started to look at the demographic data. . . . Here's the changing nature of the neighbourhood. It used to be 5% home diversity scale and now it's up to 14 and now we're looking at 20 [percentage of homes with people identifying to be Indigenous or of Colour]. . . . That was the kind of conversation that we were having.

In our interviews Ron spoke at length about his experiences observing Indigenous poverty in his

first northern teaching job, and of the ethnic diversity in Lakeshore School Division, but our

conversations did not go deeply into other matters that had not been a significant component of

his experiences, including understandings of complex racialized urban poverty or the specifics of

its impact on schooling. Acknowledging a responsibility of schools to serve the needs of

newcomer and war-affected students, he noted:

> Poverty is poverty. It is blind to ethnic background and colour . . . . The biggest issues that we have around some of our challenges in schools are issues of poverty that have always existed, and we need to challenge that and say, "how do we get these people away from poverty."

He continued, reflecting upon a statement by a fellow superintendent, who at a meeting

commented:

> You know, they're coming to us poor. We're not going to make them rich, right? So, they're coming to us poor and that's all there is to it. So, let's accept that. Now what can we do to help make them [be] successful so they can, you know, the next generation can move out of poverty?

The comment by that fellow superintendent indicates care for those living in poverty and

a desire to make improvements to provide the supports that will enable these people to successful

in the next generation. Living in a society in which everyone, with the exception of Indigenous

peoples, are the products of immigration, it is *common sense* to see is that by providing everyone

with the same opportunities and with time and personal effort, everyone can succeed. A powerful

narrative in Canada is that our society is a meritocracy. What the statement does not do is make a

connection between colonialism, systemic racism, and poverty.

Brian O'Leary

For Brian, the issue of poverty has been a lifelong concern. He commented, "I would say

Indigenous poverty is our greatest challenge as a community in Winnipeg and Manitoba."

Reflecting Silver's continuum of poverty, the racialized reality of poverty in Winnipeg, and the

different policy implications, he observed, "I think there's different kinds of poverty. As a

university student, I was poor. But I was getting a degree. . . . Plus I had a very good support

system behind me if I happened to have fallen through." He sees the racism that impacts

Indigenous and racialized people as very different:

> I think in Canada, Indigenous poverty is different than immigrant poverty. Most people
> come here, and, for some refugees, it may be different. I think Black poverty in the States,
> coming from 150 years ago being an enslaved population, is different than poverty, than
> White poverty. I think there is, where it's multigenerational and people don't see a way out,
> I think it's different than an immigrant who expects to take a step back before moving
> forward again. Or a university student who, "Yeah I'm poor and all my friends are poor."
> It isn't just economical. It impacts on all aspects of a person's identity. Indigenous and
> racialized poverty, and the lack of income are very different, with different policy
> implications for schools.

Recognizing that the elimination of poverty is not something that schools can do alone,

nonetheless, Brian sees schools as either locations that reinforce a cycle of poverty or locations

where poverty can be addressed. In his words,

> For me, a lot of what I do has been that inquiry: not what can we do to alleviate poverty? But what's our piece of this? What's our responsibility? Are we making it better, or are we making it worse? I don't think it's within the capacity of the school system to end poverty or to eliminate all the effects of poverty, but we can do something. Let's focus on—What is the something we should do? What are the one thing or several things that we should not be doing?

Talking about one specific initiative within his division, the Wayfinders program (described more fully in chapter 7), Brian articulated to me a clear strategy for improving student success: "We can boost graduation rates and boost postsecondary entrance rates hugely with a focused, targeted intervention that is working harder, working longer."

Kelly Barkman

Reflecting upon what has been done related to poverty and race in the River East School Division (RETSD), Kelly said, "not well enough. I mean, yes, we do have some. But our system of policies are, they're short statements, intense statements." He said while many activities are taking place in schools, the fact that they are not being driven from the board through policy or through the superintendents' team by direction, "allows one to not have to work on that area if it's not an issue of the day, if I could use that term." Kelly said that slowly the board is beginning to make progress: "We've just started to have Jason [assistant superintendent] talk and start working on policy and with a group of kids who are Indigenous. Then we're also now starting to look at protocols on dealing with poverty and that area." In essence, Kelly was saying that if there is really good work being done in this area, it is because "we're relying a lot on the great principals, teachers, and staff, in my school division. That can be very hit and miss." On numerous occasions Kelly also made it clear that, together with others, there is more that can be done to address issues related to complex Indigenous and racialized poverty beyond mere sentiments. He said:

So, those are areas where I sit back and go, what else can I do? What else do I need to do? What else should I do? What else can I do? And I have more and more of those thoughts as my career, you know, starts to wind down.

Kelly spoke of becoming aware of a societal ethos, or narrative, in which society in general is viewed as being a meritocracy, and newcomers, Indigenous people, and the poor simply require assistance at times in order to take advantage of all of the benefits and opportunities that are to be had in our well-functioning society. Kelly was again met with the pervasiveness of this narrative when he went to RETSD. He said, "it's predominantly White, conservative, so it reminds me in some ways going back to my childhood at Steinbach [rural Manitoba] and there is a work hard mentality, expect, you can be who you want to be no matter what." With this presiding mentality, getting all stakeholders to engage in questions about the lack of equity can be challenging. It is very easy for many to assume that what we observe on a daily basis, like how people can be economically successful, is objective, neutral, and true. Rottmann (2007) spoke of this as rational technicism, and Kelly's words too spoke of this in retrospect.

Making Sense: Influences on the Development Perspectives
and Understandings of Poverty and Schooling

For Bates (2006), Foster (1986), Giroux (1983, 1988, 1997), Larson and Murtadha (2002) and other critical theorists who work in education and educational administration, the ability of individual actors to engage in public life through rational debate and a focus on human emancipation is paramount. The focus on human emancipation speaks directly to poverty and schooling; meaningful engagement in rational debate, it is argued here, requires effort, inquiry, and understanding. This section of the chapter explores four potential sources of individual understandings and perspectives raised in the interviews with the participants: their early life

experiences; teaching experiences; their academic experiences; and their in-career professional learning/development activities.

Early Influences

The four participants in this study are all of an age that places their formative early life and school experiences in the post-World War II decades. Two of them grew up in Manitoba, one in Ontario, and one in England. In both Canada and England this was a period of substantial social transformation, with the dismantling of the British Empire and the increasing multiracial make-up of the British Isles, with economic growth, with the development of social-democratic political-economic ideologies and the welfare state (Field, 2011), with increased ethnic, cultural, and racial/racialized diversity (Short history, 2015), and with the development of human rights legislation. This initial section explores briefly, the participants' comments related to their experiences of, and perspectives on, poverty and diversity within their own family contexts and in the society in which they were growing up.

Pauline Clarke. Pauline Clarke, Chief Superintendent of the Winnipeg School Division (WSD) referenced her British roots: "Clearly, when you listen to me, I wasn't born here." Describing something of her family background she told me that her grandfather was a shoemaker who had his own shoe shop in the south of England. While serving in the First World War, he was gassed and due to that ordeal was no longer able to work: "So, upon his return my grandmother had to work, because there was no social security net or anything." That reality influenced her father. They needed to become self-sufficient in the world. "From my grandmother, there was never any discussion from her about anything to do with looking after other people." Pauline is well known for years of work that supports children, families, and schools in neighborhoods of significant poverty. Asked where her interests in working with these

communities came from, she responded, "Where did that come from? I don't know. I've never been asked about that before." She then talked about living with her parents in Singapore for three years when she was younger. After serving in the British Army, her father brought his family back to the south of England, where he worked as a teacher.

After the Second World War, Britain was becoming increasingly racially diverse. Pauline stated that, because the British economy was in ruins, "Britain turned to the Commonwealth and encouraged—really encouraged—a lot of people to come and settle in Britain." Upon returning from Singapore she remembers arriving at the naval port city of Portsmouth, and seeing a tremendous amount of diversity. She remembers plenty of People of Colour working in the transportation system, buses and trains in particular, "and it was the beginning of [Caribbean] people working in hospitals in predominantly menial jobs."

Attending school in the 1960s, Pauline claims she had little or no knowledge of the Indigenous people of North America beyond American TV shows, "which were like *The Lone Ranger* and all those shows from the 1960s—*Rawhide*. I can't even remember them now." Pauline talked about how her knowledge of the world was informed by lessons on the importance of the British Empire: "Basically what we were told was all the good things Britain had done. Britain had brought a system of justice; Britain had brought railways to Africa and India." During our dialogue, I asked Pauline how her family viewed People of Colour. She told me that her mother often remarked upon visits to an increasingly Pakistani Bradford in the 1950s and 1960s, "Wow, Bradford has changed from when I was growing up." But Pauline did not recall ill feeling in the comments: "But that's all it would be. It wouldn't be anything one way or the other. It was just a commentary, I suppose." Her father did make comments related to his experiences in the Second World War:

He was on one of the last boats to get out of Singapore as the Japanese came down from Malaya. His resentment of the Japanese—when we went back . . . to Changi Prison Camp for some of those terrible atrocities. When I was growing up, if he would ever see Asian people in England on the street—even up until his death . . . It didn't matter where they were from. He didn't differentiate, just Asian people. He would always say, "Why did I fight in the war because they're here now? What was the point of me doing that?" Could I say that was racism? No, that was his experience and his life experience and what happened to his friends who died going to the prisoner of war camp. He could never forgive, and he could never understand why he went through all that.

Ron Weston. Ron Weston, Superintendent in the St. James School Division (SJSD) also has British roots and believes his family immigrated to Ontario in the late 1800s. He suggested that his family were members of a "WASPY United Church," did not spend time with Catholics, and were "strong Orangemen." Ron's family lived in southern Ontario and his father was an Ontario Police Officer (OPP): ". . . So I moved every four years to different towns throughout southern Ontario." Ron expressed the view that his father's experiences in World War II gave him a worldlier view. Reflecting on his thoughts after attending his father's funeral, he commented, "I could see this wide range of folks from all sorts of different backgrounds at his funeral and thought he would just be so happy to see this because he was really concerned about his parents' sort of mistrust of, you know, other people that weren't like them, so that's very interesting."

Brian O'Leary. Brian O'Leary, Superintendent of the Seven Oaks School Division (SOSD) also has a story of humble family beginnings tracing back to the potato famine in Ireland in the 1850s and 1860s and a family presence "in Winnipeg well over 100 years." Brian grew up in the Wolseley area of Winnipeg. His mom stayed at home, while his dad was a door-to-door salesman as a result of suffering a disabling injury when he worked on the railway. Brian noted, "in a sense, I grew up working-poor, I would describe it as. I was usually the kid that would get

the hand-me-down hockey equipment or scout uniform that was different than anybody else's." The family home was extremely modest: "We lived on the main floor of a rooming house, and shared a single bathroom with five roomers." Brian grew up with an awareness of fiscal hardship and the impact it can have on families:

> Everybody went to the neighborhood school, whether you lived with—as one of my friends did—a single-parent mom in a single room on Young Street or you were a doctor's kid who lives in Armstrong Point. There wasn't that kind of segmentation that goes on today, where people will often pick a school based on who they want their kid to associate with. There were kids that were new to the country. There were kids—less so than today—who were visible minority. There were Indigenous kids in the school.

Brian is very well known for being a staunch advocate for the disadvantaged, Indigenous people, and those who have been racialized. I asked him where his long time advocacy in this area came from. He indicated that it started early, from his neighborhood experience growing up in Wolseley and living in a working poor family. He also talked about life in the 1960s and 1970s and growing up in a home where there was lots of political conversation, in which the realities of ethnic and economic discrimination were discussed. He also networked with a number of student advocates and while in university considered "getting involved in politics; going into teaching, very much seeing it as an expression of belief and idealism."

Kelly Barkman. With regards to any contact with Indigenous or racialized people in his developing years, Kelly stated, "in the '50s, '60s, and '70s, Steinbach [southern Manitoba town] was a very White, wealthy place." After 30 years in education, the past 10 years working as a superintendent in Winnipeg, Kelly remarked that he is now seeing the pervasive nature of racism and poverty and how we usually address it through superficial "feel good" events. He commented, "racism will not be solved with system events highlighting what is wrong or just fun events like Folklorama or multi-cultural days. These are good events to have for awareness but

do not go deep enough to stop systematic racism." On numerous occasions Kelly also made it clear that, together with others, there is more that can be done to address issues related to complex and racialized poverty beyond mere sentiments. Kelly believes that school systems can do a better job of adapting to the needs of marginalized people. Unfortunately, "not everyone in an education system, ours or others, has this philosophy [to assist]. Part of my work is to make this a priority—not a right versus wrong situation—but a dilemma where it is a win/win for all.

Early Teaching Experiences with Poverty

Two of the participants in this study, Pauline and Brian, began teaching in Winnipeg early in their careers and spent much of their careers as teachers and administrators in inner-city schools. The other two, Ron and Kelly, began their teaching careers in northern and rural school settings respectively, and came to Winnipeg area school divisions as superintendents. This section of the chapter seeks to explore their recollections of early career experiences with poverty and schooling.

Pauline Clarke. After being appointed to vice principal at William Whyte School, Pauline shared the comments of some colleagues of the time who said, "Do you know where William Whyte is? That's not a very good school," to which she said, "I knew nothing about William Whyte. It was just another school. What are you talking about?" William Whyte is located in the inner city of Winnipeg and enrolled approximately 550 predominantly Indigenous students at the time she was employed. She noted, "up until that point, I had really no understanding of anything to do with inner-city poverty, Indigenous people. I was just someone from England who had come to live in Winnipeg, and was working." Going to William Whyte changed Pauline: "It affected me so much, seeing what poverty does to people's lives and the challenges that people face." Pauline said, "I could see the children had been sniffing. Oh my

goodness, your heart goes out. I would go on home visits, and I would see the holes in the wall and the bed on the floor and nothing else." She reiterated, "really that's the piece that has influenced whatever else I've done since then in terms of my passion—I guess you could say— for wanting to support the inner city." After William Whyte, she continued to work in several portfolios from vice-principal, to principal, to the superintendent's department, all strongly correlated to disadvantaged neighborhoods. She spoke of the desire to have an impact: "Yeah, once I was really engaged in the inner-city work in the superintendent's department, then I could see the bigger picture of how I might be able to have an effect. I could see that more for myself than I had ever really thought about before."

Ron Weston. An influence upon Ron's thinking about race and poverty was his initial teaching job in a small Indigenous community in northern Manitoba. When I asked why he went there, he said, "well, it's interesting. Because I didn't know a lot about like … had a pretty skewed view, I think, from my Grade 8 textbook or my high school textbooks." He said he was really hoping to go to the Arctic, but landed a job in Brochet, Manitoba, "which was cool enough." Ron said he wanted to get exposed to the native Indigenous people of Canada: "You know, the standard curriculum stuff back during the '60s and '70s in school. I wanted to learn about potlatch and all this stuff that you learned about, and I get up there and I see that it was not so."

Ron spent a year in Brochet, a community with treaty, non-treaty, and Métis dynamics, and "it was abject [Indigenous] poverty right across the board." It was August when he arrived in Brochet, and he saw all these kids walking with these pails up the path and "my experience with walking with water with pails, goes back to my uncle who had had a hobby farm . . . water for cattle or horses." Ron asked the principal,

> Where are all the horses that these kids are taking water to? And he looks at me and he goes, well, that's not water for horses, that's water for their houses. So they all had to go to a stand pipe in the middle of their neighborhoods and get pails full of clean water because they didn't have water to their houses.

On May 1, 1981, Ron left Brochet, because "we had a couple of fellows who were released from Stony Mountain Penitentiary and flew home and they started shooting up the community." For a few weeks they continued breaking into teachers' housing and the school. The RCMP couldn't get in because the weather was poor for flying." Ron remembers a few days later,

> I'm walking down the road from the Bay back towards the teachers' compound in the school, which is probably about half a kilometer, and, out in the mist, I see all these black figures coming and I'm going what the heck is this and it was the Swat Team (RCMP). They managed to get the Twin Otter [airplane] in and they brought in like 15 guys and they're all in their black outfits.

Brian O'Leary. It was his early teaching experiences at Isaac Newton School, in a neighborhood similar to William Whyte that Brian says he really learned of the needs of the racialized and poor, and began his critique of inner-city schooling. Speaking at some length of this he told me of his experiences:

> I wanted to do something where I made a difference, in where I felt that whatever line of work I was in I was contributing to making the world a better place. I ended up doing a lot of part-time work as I was going through school—I worked in inner-city communities and ended up teaching in an inner-city community. I was excited beginning teaching to get what at that time was probably the most challenging classroom in Winnipeg. I kind of embraced the challenge. After doing it for a long time I sat back and thought, 'I probably couldn't work any harder. I am as talented a teacher as anyone I know. I am struggling to make this work. It's taking a huge piece out of me. . . . I lost students to suicide. I lost students to jail. I saw how marginalized the kids I taught were within the school they were in. I was liked by the staff if I could keep my kids [the "bad" kids] away from everyone else's kids. I had a classroom that was virtually all boys and virtually all Indigenous. . . . We had lots of really bright kids. You could see it in their sense of humour. You could see it in their eyes. You could sometimes see it academically. But they were very marginalized. We described them as "at risk" and "alienated" and all of those things. We were letting them down. We

were focused on settling for way too little. If they came into the building, that was okay. By settling for too little, we were just ensuring that they would get left behind. In fact we were part of the process of kicking them to the curb. Other schools didn't kick them out; they referred them to "an appropriate program." Then if we ended up failing them, then they would generally blame themselves.

Kelly Barkman. Kelly Barkman's upbringing was different from the other three superintendents. He grew up in the rural, prosperous, and conservative town (now a city) of Steinbach Manitoba. His family immigrated in 1920 as part of a large contingent of relatively affluent Mennonites who settled in southern Manitoba, and they quickly established very successful agriculture and manufacturing businesses. Kelly said his father was a "town leader, if you want, and my mother was from a prominent self-made family." Within a generally conservative community, he observed, "we were from the very ultra-right conservative part of the Mennonites."

Kelly said that his dad "encouraged me to be reflective, show compassion, and to really look at people for who they are, not their culture, their skin colour, or the religious background." With regards to any contact with Indigenous or racialized people in his developing years, Kelly stated, "in the '50s, '60s, and '70s, Steinbach was a very White, wealthy place." He said that the community reflected the protestant ethic that, if people "work hard, you know, know your faith, don't rock the boat, you will prosper." Kelly's early contact with Indigenous people or People of Colour, was extremely limited and, as a result, "in some ways because I only had good experiences and I was taught about being respectable to everybody, I came to Winnipeg not without maybe being naïve."

Academic Background and Professional Learning and Reading

An argument advanced in this thesis is that, if the leadership work of superintendents has to concern itself with the construction and nurturing of a divisional educational vision, and if substantial influence is to be informed by a critical perspective, then superintendents must become deeply knowledgeable about matters related to the origins and consequences of complex poverty and of Indigenous and colonial histories. This learning and work is complicated. Given the nuances and intricacies of socio-political and socially creative narratives that inform our lives, such learning is unlikely to take place "naturally." University level education programs, professional learning opportunities—whether formal and credentialed or informal networks and self-directed activities, such as collegial conversations and individual reading—provide a potential avenue for this understanding, either to reinforce dominant narratives of poverty and schooling or to open up counter narratives that may offer more possibilities for effective change.

Since the mid-1990s, to work as a teacher, school administrator, or superintendent in the kindergarten to Grade 12 education system in Manitoba, individuals must have a Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate or a Provisional Professional Teaching Certificate (Manitoba Education Professional Certification, 2015) that is based upon a first degree and a two-year bachelor of education degree. It is here that the professional knowledge base is initially constructed. Currently, there are no additional provincial regulations that dictate who can become a school administrator or a superintendent. However, Manitoba Regulation 115/2015 recognizes two levels of certificates: level one—school administrator's certificate; and level two—principal's certificate, through which candidates can identify courses, professional development sessions, and other examples of professional learning that could demonstrate their continued development and readiness for increased organizational responsibility. Most school

divisions in Manitoba have not required completion of these certificates, and in 2014 a

committee composed of university, MASS, and MTS representatives came together to create a

new pathway for professional learning to develop people for the principalship and further

positions of positional influence. The new School Leaders Certificate is based upon completion

of either a 30 credit post-baccalaureate program focused on educational administration or a

master of education degree in educational administration. This new certificate replaced existing

level one and level two School Administrator's Certificates. In both cases certification is not

mandated by the province, and a number of school administrators do not hold either of these

additional credentials.

While there are not provincial certification requirements specific to the superintendency,

MASS, the professional association of which each of the participants is a member, is an

organization that provides professional development for the superintendents, assistant

superintendents, and directors who make up the MASS membership. Its programming has been

very focused on issues of poverty, diversity, and racism for several years. The journal that the

organization publishes twice a year has highlighted Indigenous Education (2010), Poverty

(2011), Pathways and Possibilities (2014), and Equity (2015). Over the last 4 years some 32

members of MASS have participated in an *Exploring Ethical Leadership Professional Learning

Project* (Klassen & Bryant, 2015) that involves a series of two-and-a-half day sessions over the

course of 4 years, in which participants discuss articles and host a number of speakers, including

internationally renowned scholars Robert Starratt and Nel Noddings, to assist the group in

exploring issues of the responsibilities of educational leaders. A key theme of the project has

been to help participants reflect upon the implications of Starratt's argument that their work is to

be informed by ethics of justice, care, and critique (Starratt, 2005).

As educators, each of the participants is university educated, and each of them shared that they have continued to be learners throughout their careers.

Pauline Clarke. Due to a high demand for teachers in England at the time, Pauline was able to start working as a full-time teacher prior to attending college, and then was in school administration ten years prior to completing her master's degree. "Therefore," she said, "my experiences predate my studies." The specific areas of interest of superintendents can vary widely beyond the focus of this dissertation. A significant area of focus for Pauline, as an influential presenter, educator, and author, has been student assessment (Clarke & Sutton, 2006). With regard to Indigenous and racialized poverty, and similar to the reflections of the other participants, many of the influences upon Pauline have come from reading books and articles. In her case, Pauline spoke of Lorna Earl's and Steven Katz's *Leading Schools* (2003). She also spoke of significant work with influential people such as Race Relations educator Enid Lee and Winnipeg Indigenous influential Myra Laramee, of whom she commented, "We've worked with her for years. Her understanding of what happened [residential schools] . . . helps guide me." Pauline has also been influenced through her work in Winnipeg with a long list of organizations that work with Indigenous and impoverished communities including the United Way, President's Advisory Council on Indigenous Achievement, the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council, and the Paul Martin Indigenous Education Initiative.

Ron Weston. Two writers who Ron claimed influenced him strongly are Thomas Sergiovanni and his writing on servant leadership and Larry Cuban. With regards to ethical leadership and issues of social justice, Ron said that "a course I took during a summer institute with John Weins, Dwight Botting, and Dave Coulter was perhaps the most influential in helping me define my strengths and areas that I had to do more study in." Again, individuals come into

the superintendency with a wide range of areas of focus that may or may not include looking into

poverty and race. Ron stated, "Leadership was an area that I focused on early in my career,

followed by teaching methodologies and assessment in the last decade."

Ron talked about his ability to have his school administrators participate in book readings

every year. Signaling the multiple possible foci for divisional professional development, he noted

that in the last 3 years the books have been focused on the use of technology in teaching and

learning. With regard to professional conversations and learning related to Indigenous people

and poverty, he said,

> I don't think we've had a conversation yet. We've got real conflict. We've got people who are saying, "wait a minute. We can't say the Lord's Prayer, yet we can talk about the seven teachings? How does this work?" And we've not had that conversation about how do these two things jive or what does this mean for our public education system. So the problem is we're not talking about those things. They're being accepted as fact…. This is the Department policy. There's a lot of people out there that are beginning to say: "Shouldn't we be talking about this in a much different way?" Well, I think we should.

During a group conversation with all of the participants, one of the superintendents commented

about the new information that has emerged from the national Truth and Reconciliation

Commission. Ron responded:

> Was anyone surprised by that [the commission's findings]? In what limited reading I've done or what I've heard of the Aboriginal, of the Truth and Reconciliation, was there any new information in there that we didn't already know? I don't know from what I read, and from what I read, and I only read the media reports, and the large pieces in the paper, and Maclean's Magazine, and things like that. I didn't get any new information. We knew this was going on. So how do we talk about this new narrative of government trying to do things, and then say, "Okay, well how are we going to work together?" And for those of us, and when I was in the Interlake, I worked with many Aboriginal communities. We were well-intentioned, good hard working people, and then I ran up against their political systems that are no different than Broadway [Manitoba provincial government].

Brian O'Leary. Brian talked about his work with his board, in which they "carve out

significant chunks of time to do some blue-sky thinking, do some dreaming." He said they hold

annual retreats in which they spend focused time discussing social issues such as poverty and the

response that the Seven Oaks School Division should have. He also talked about the importance

of learning from other jurisdictions and programs. His observations of the Pathways to Education

program in Toronto influenced the development of the Seven Oaks Wayfinders program (see the

following chapters). He visited Jeffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone, the MET School in

Providence Rhode Island, and has served on the board of the progressively minded National

Principals Leadership Institute (NPLI). He said he has been strongly influenced by the work of

Ben Levin and Jim Silver. Books that he and his school administrators have read in the past two

years include Wade Davis's *The Wayfinders* (2009) and John Ralston Saul's *The Comeback*

(2014). In the spring of 2015, Brian delivered a Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED)

presentation titled *Making a Difference! How Schools can Contribute to Social Justice*

(O'Leary, 2015).

Table 2

Participants Academic Backgrounds

	Academic Credentials	
	Undergraduate	**Graduate**
Pauline Clarke	Certificate of Education (1969), Homerton College, University of Cambridge	Master of Education (1985), University of Manitoba
Ron Weston	Bachelor of Arts, University of Guelph Teacher certification, Brock University	Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education, University of Manitoba
Brian O'Leary	Bachelor of Arts (1977), University of Winnipeg	Master of Education (1997), University of Manitoba

	Bachelor of Education (1978), University of Winnipeg	
Kelly Barkman	Bachelor of Arts (1977), University of Winnipeg Bachelor of Education, University of Winnipeg	Masters of Education (1997), University of Manitoba

Analysis: Making sense of poverty and its relationship with schooling

The research questions that informed this chapter are *How do the participating superintendents articulate their understanding of poverty and its impact on students' school experiences, and how have the following experiences informed these understandings: (a) early life experiences; (b) initial teaching positions; and (c) academic background and professional learning.* In the literature review of this thesis, ideas concerning complex Indigenous and racialized, the social construction of ideas, the notion of a meritocracy being a powerful narrative in Canadian society, critically informed counter narratives, and the notion that superintendents can be critically informed influentials were explored. At the beginning of this chapter, it was stated that the analysis in this chapter attempts to illuminate the perspectives of the participants on, (a) complex Indigenous and racialized poverty, (b) the position that knowledge is socially constructed, (c) the requirement that superintendents have a heart for the people they serve, and (d) the need to move beyond vision and act to address issues of complex, racialized poverty.

As state earlier in this chapter, while I have read and studied in this area for decades, I continue to struggle with notions of race, culture, and poverty to the extent that my acceptance of the idea of complex Indigenous and racialized poverty is the result of hours of focused learning and even then, I continue to slip back into thinking and practices informed by the social narrative of

meritocracy as well as neo-liberalism. It is with this in mind that I reiterate that it is not my intention to judge the thinking of the participants, rather, to learn from how they are learning through their experiences with, or without diverse cultures.

Making sense of poverty. The conversations with the participants indicated that their thinking about poverty and its effects varied, and their responses to questions were influenced by their lived experiences. Pauline was clear that to her poverty, not Indigenous culture, history, ethnicity was to root of the problem. She said, " … the thing that's in common for them [Indigenous people and newcomers] and other people, too, is poverty. The same was true with Ron who said "…. poverty is poverty. It is blind to ethnic background and colour." Kelly talked about arriving in RETSD and seeing that similarly to Steinbach where he grew up, the culture strongly adhered to a belief in a meritocracy. Brian reflected that he had come to believe that complex Indigenous and racialized poverty is real and it has a significant impact upon children in schools. The responses of the participants mirrored what was stated in the literature in several ways, (a) a narrative of a social meritocracy is pervasive, (b) each of the participants has lived an adult life immersed in a mainstream culture that recognizes that poverty exists as a problem *on its own*, not from a legacy of racism that has placed additional barriers upon Indigenous and racialized communities, and (c) while racism exists and complex Indigenous and racialized poverty exists, becoming aware and accepting new critically informed counter narratives is difficult given the pervasiveness of the meritocratic narrative in individual perspectives, organizational histories, and in organizational structures and practices.

Knowledge is socially constructed. From our conversations related to race, Indigenousness, and poverty, it was clear each of the participants had been on their own journey in which their current epistemologies had been uniquely influenced by familial and childhood

experiences, the communities that they were raised within, their teaching experiences, specifically, who did they teach and when, and, their formal education and ongoing professional learning. Brian's focus upon social justice was born of dinner table discussions about racial and economic discrimination, and from living in a community in which people of privilege and the disadvantaged went to school together. This set the stage for him to choose to be a teacher working in disadvantaged communities. Within his early teaching experiences, Brian worked hard and with passion within what can argued was a neo-liberal and meritocratic approach to education. His students, mostly Indigenous, were segregated from the rest of the student body built upon the idea that Brian would take the kids who could not make it, and keep them away from the other teachers and students. As well-meaning as he was, Brian learned from the experiences and over time, shifted his thinking in a significant manner, *due to his experiences in this educational context,* away from thinking alternative schools were appropriate, to thinking that all teachers need to welcome, and then address the needs of all of the students. Brian's thinking evolved through his experiences and his reflections of his experiences. Ron commented that upon arriving in St. James, it was similar to communities he lived in southern Ontario in the sense that they were overwhelmingly White. Like so many in his generation, he had few opportunities to learn about Indigenous people. While curious about Indigenous people, his comment about wanting to go to northern Canada was not only a reflection of him, but of the dominant narrative concerning Indigenous people in Canada at the time. Again, asked why he wanted to go to northern Canada Ron said, "You know, the standard curriculum stuff back during the '60s and '70s in school. I wanted to learn about potlatch and all this stuff," which was a totally inaccurate portrayal of Indigenous communities in Canada that all Canadians of Ron's generation and mine were exposed to and shaped our construction of our thinking. Pauline's

thinking evolved as she came to Winnipeg and worked directed with disadvantaged communities in the Inner City. "It affected me so much, seeing what poverty does to people's lives and the challenges that people face." These socially constructed experiences were unique to each of the participants and informed their individualized conceptions of complex Indigenous and racialized poverty.

   A heart for people. Bates (2006). Dillard (1985), and Larson and Murtadha (2002) indicate that having a heart for people requires that influentials bring their minds, eyes, and, most importantly, their hearts, as they attend to the lives of the students and communities that they serve. Throughout all of our conversations, Kelly made it clear that while he was very open to learning more about critically informed approaches to serving children, he recognized that his own school division was not doing enough in this area. Kelly expressed on numerous occasions, his care for the disadvantaged while also being perplexed about what he could do next, "I sit back and go, what else can I do? What else do I need to do? What else should I do? What else can I do? And I have more and more of those thoughts." Acknowledging his evolving construction of knowledge, as well as his heart for people, Kelly stated that caring is not enough, "a system needs to adapt to [acknowledge] the privilege of some [families] while addressing the marginalization of others." He also acknowledged that a meritocratic and paternalistic narrative that he was previously comfortable within, one from within which he volunteered with newcomer families to help them become Canadianized, was lately being shaken by his own children. "I really get heck from my four kids, because I think my generation have also said to kids, 'You can be anybody you want to be.'" Speaking of his own kids, he said, "then all of a sudden, they realize, well, there's so many barriers there and they can't. What of the Aboriginal kids and the racialized?" Early in his career, Brian demonstrated his heart by deciding to work in

the inner city with disadvantaged students, "I wanted to do something where I made a difference." In hindsight however, while his care was genuine, his approach was that of the system at the time, the maintenance of an alternative classroom in which students received work that was not as rigorous or engaging as mainstream classrooms and expectations were low.

> We described them as "at risk" and "alienated" and all of those things. We were letting them down. We were focused on settling for way too little. If they came into the building, that was okay. By settling for too little, we were just ensuring that they would get left behind.

Later in his career, Brian shifted his thinking towards building the capacity of individual students to become success within the mainstream by eliminating alternative classrooms, providing mentoring supports through programs like WayFinders (more on this program later), building within the students, ownership for the changes that needed to occur. Paternalistic programs like alternative classrooms, or even well-meaning programs like tutoring and breakfast programs are not enough on their own, "If you want poor kids to achieve, they've got to work harder. They've got to work longer." From a critical perspective, care from the heart mean working with disadvantaged people so they can take ownership for the changes that are required.

Heart requires action. Care is not enough. Kelly made it clear how frustrated he was by the lack of action in RETSD and stated that there was much more that he could do as a superintendent. While she lamented the ending of government funding for parent-child centres, Pauline worked with the WSD to fund the ongoing maintenance of six of the centres. As he began to see the changing demographics of the SJSD, Ron, acted to share this information with the board on a regular basis, "part of my role was to educate the board on the changing character and needs of the student body."

Conclusion

It is with much reflection that I now consider that no singular discourse can accurately capture all of the causes of poverty and inequities. Structures are not totally responsible for inequities, but neither are personal traits. Rather, one needs to be conscious of the multi-dimensionality of the individual actors, systems, and processes which in turn informs the varied policy and action responses that we make in our schools. First, we can agree that "schools can't do everything but we can do something" (Levin, 2008, p. 38). This requires that we bring our minds, eyes, our understandings, and then our hearts, as we attend to the lives of the students and communities we serve (Bates, 2006; Dillard, 1985; Larson & Murtadha, 2002). We must soberly acknowledge that our school systems are not neutral, objective institutions and that we must question the ways in which practices, for which we are responsible, disadvantage some and privilege others.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this thesis seeks to explore how superintendents can influence conditions and opportunities for students living in poverty. It is proposed that (a) if superintendents are to be critical in nature, they must have a "vision" that includes a significant understanding of poverty and its interactions with schooling, and they must see addressing the creation of and the effects of poverty as significant components of their work; (b) leadership/influence must focus on freedom and democratization (Foster, 1986); and (c) contemporary superintendents need to be a reformers, if they are to assist systems to meet the needs of all learners.

The data presented suggest that knowledge and perspectives are socially created, and that each of the participants had unique experiences with, and perspectives about, race and poverty and that these experiences and perspectives have been informed by their upbringings, teaching

and leadership experiences, and professional learning. The data also suggest that each of the participants has lived in a society largely informed by a narrative of a meritocracy, and that, in light of a myriad of competing demands and interests, some indicate that their understandings about poverty and race are starting to evolve late in their careers.

This chapter also suggests that the field of education generally attracts "good people," most of whom have not actually experienced complex poverty, or participated in substantial professional experiences and learning related to poverty. Being a good person is not enough. In teacher preparation programs, graduate programs, and professional learning experiences, influential need to be challenged in the areas of race and poverty, to see with new eyes what Fay (1987) calls the *false consciousness* in which we can conclude that a truly meritocratic world may not be true.

The participants are very good people. The challenges of complex Indigenous and racialized poverty have not been significant areas of focus for teacher preparation programs, nor are they necessarily to be confronted along the career paths of many divisional level influentials. To address these concerns requires different thinking and different work. Different thinking requires (a) focused attention to what poverty is and its impact on schooling, (b) a new focus upon how schools could evolve to make a difference for communities impacted by complex racialized poverty, and (c) an activist commitment to and the political skills associated with moving vision to practice. The next chapter looks at issues of context and political/organizational skills; as I have quoted Cornel West (1993) as saying, leaders are to become "organic cultural catalysts . . . a person, who can stay attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer, yet maintains a grounding in affirming and enabling subcultures of criticism" (p. 22). Chapter Seven will look to some effective outcomes.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS: SUPERINTENDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF THEIR ABILITY

TO INFLUENCE SCHOOL DIVISION POLICY AND PRACTICE

> School divisions, located within larger geo-political environments, provide superintendents particular opportunities to exert influence upon the lives of school board trustees and administrators, teachers and students, and upon the larger society. They do so however, within locally contextualized boundaries including political, economic, and cultural realities that create what can become quite unique environments. From a critical perspective, Foster (1986, 2004) argued that school systems leaders such as divisional superintendents must think and act critically, tranformatively, educatively, and ethically to help create environments in which progressive action can occur. (Present work, p. xiii)

Introduction

As was the case at the beginning of Chapter Five, the excerpt above is taken from my

prologue at the beginning of this thesis. In this chapter, I provide insight into how the

participants have been influenced by larger societal narratives, and how they have utilized

particular opportunities to exert influence upon the thinking and actions of other influentials and

the people and communities they serve. Section 93 of the Canadian Constitution designates

education as an exclusively provincial jurisdiction,[1] but Manitoba, like every Canadian province,

has in turn established a system of local school board governance. For the purposes of this

chapter, components of the socio-political environment in which the participants work include

the Department of Education and Advanced Learning, school boards, senior and school-based

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[1] Section 91 of the Canadian Constitution provides an important exception to this in that it assigns to the federal government responsibility for "Indians and Lands Reserved for Indians." In Manitoba, the relationships between these two systems and the reality of First Nations students moving between the two becomes a significant aspect of this research.

administrators, and the greater community. This chapter, the second of three findings chapters, addresses my second research question: *How do these superintendents describe the socio-political and organizational environment that informs and influences their work as senior educational administrators?* I also address my third research question: *How do these superintendents describe their roles as senior administrators within these environments in relation to being able to influence systems?*

The analysis in this chapter attempts to develop two main arguments drawn from the literature presented in chapter two:

1. The concept of *leader/leadership* has been under considerable debate in educational administration (Grogan, 2000; Heck & Hallinger; Leithwood, 2013; Rottmann, 2007). A narrative that continues to have potency in North America is that leadership is synonymous with a powerful individual. However, Leithwood (2010) concludes that there is little evidence that individual systems level administrators—superintendents—can (or should) create change on their own. They do not command all decision-making on their own; rather they navigate within highly contextual environments in which power is exerted by them and upon them by government, publically elected boards, and varied community influences (Foster, 1986; Grogan, 2000; Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Rottmann, 2007). What superintendents can do to differing degrees, depending upon their abilities and the context within which they operate, is to be *influential* and inform vision, policy, and practices within an organization (Grogan, 2000; Leithwood, 2013; Rottmann, 2007).

2. Leithwood (2005, 2013) argues that the work of systems leaders, including superintendents (influentials), comprises the (co-)construction and nurturing of an organizational vision, developing people, and redesigning the organization. These are not things that superintendents can do by command. Within highly contextual environments, the participants have had opportunities to shape and position themselves within organizational and socio-political structures (Grogan, 2000; Leithwood, 2013; Rottmann, 2007). The work of critical educators in general and critical educational leadership in particular, within the context of specific organizational environments, should be "to raise ambitions, desires, and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issue of educational struggle and social justice" (Giroux, 1988, p. 177).

As in Chapter Five and in the thesis as a whole, my purpose in this chapter is not to focus on profiling and in some manner evaluating individual participants in this study, nor does my methodology provide the depth of information that would be needed for such an endeavor. Rather, the purpose of the chapter is to draw on their personal and professional experiences, insights, and comments to explore some of the dimensions of understanding and activism that might be associated with a superintendent's ability to influence in a positive manner the school experiences of children living in poverty. Premised by the assumption that effective superintendents exert influence in collaboration with other educational participants, the purpose of the chapter is (a) to gain insights into how the participants see themselves positioned as leaders/influentials within the context of their school systems, and (b) to gain insights into what they believe they can do, from their positions, to influence others within their school divisions and beyond. I will begin by exploring the positionality of the superintendency and the terrain within which superintendents work and then the work they do with the Department of Education. I found that the most unique component of the work of the superintendent, work that no one else is positioned to do, is to work directly with school boards and the Department of Education. It is within this context that I then interrogate how the participants are influential with the department and their school boards. I found that how they develop and maintain personal relationships, how they develop trust, how they initiate and frame communications, how they develop organizational purpose, and how they develop partnerships and coalitions in their relationships with the Department and their school board is especially pertinent to the influence that they can bring to bear.

The Positionality of the Superintendent: Leader or Influential?

As superintendents, the participants in this study are the head administrators for each of their respective school divisions, take direction from the Department of Education and Advanced Learning, are informed by their professional organization (MASS), report to publicly elected boards, and manage operations in at least 20 different schools. During the interviews I was interested in how the participants understood the socio-political context within which they are positioned, as well as what they believed they could or could not do to address issues related to poverty and school experiences/success from their position as superintendent. While I did hear that the participants had similar understandings of the structural dimensions of the organizational relationships within which they work, I was not surprised to find that each of them had different perspectives and understandings of what they believed they could, or could not do, within the context of their particular organizations, and that these understandings were largely socially constructed. Grogan (2000) argues that superintendents cannot be effective on their own, as their local contextual reality will always contain a mélange of enabling and inhibiting factors including local school boards, members of the legislative assemblies, union leaders, and other interested parties who will think alongside or in opposition to them. Superintendents who pursued a discourse informed by critical influences by definition will often face opposition. Accordingly, critically informed work is not only within systems, it is also about engaging individuals and communities beyond the local.

A significant function of school systems is to replicate the existing political, social, economic, and cultural norms of the larger society. Björk and Kowalski (2005) and Kowalski,

(2005) remind us that superintendents are hired by and are responsible to elected boards of trustees whose attitudes are likely to mirror the dominant narratives of the larger society on the whole, and, consequently, a prevalent North American discourse is that school systems are largely successful and work well for those who wish to take advantage of the opportunities they provide. Beliefs that elected trustees have on matters of social justice, social exclusion, and poverty are likely to be the same as others in the general society (Levitas, 1998; West, 1993).

Negotiating the Terrain: Structures and Governance

This section of the chapter presents comments from the participants about how they view the terrain in which they work including interactions with the Department of Education and Advanced Learning, school boards, school influentials, and influentials from the greater communities.

Björk and Kowalski (2005), and Kowalski (2005) share that the work of the superintendent is broad and that superintendents who are inclined towards potentially controversial work often play out their careers within socio-political environments in which structural and systemic inequities remain and challenging the status quo is difficult. School systems are locations in which social reproduction is strong. Rottmann (2007) contends that influentials informed by critical discourse, "advocate resisters" and "activist collectives" (p. 5), working in such environments can often be more effective acting in a sustained manner upon small, everyday actions than trying to bring about large changes rapidly at a systems level. For these influentials, if progress is to extend beyond their continued presence and to be sustainable over time, they often need to network with other champions or influence the thinking of other influentials and potential influentials. Critically informed work in school systems is being done and there is evidence of this in this study. The work is to be done by influentials who establish a

vision for critically informed work, and who have the motivation and ability to do critically informed work.

The Minister and the Department of Education and Advanced Learning

Section (2) of Manitoba's Education Administration Act states simply that, "the minister is responsible for the supervision, control and direction of all public schools and of all other schools pursuant to this Act." From 1999 to 2015, the ruling government of Manitoba exercising this authority was the New Democratic Party (NDP), and it provided in the 2015-2016 school year, approximately 64.5% of school boards annual operating funds, with the remainder coming from locally set education property taxes. In this regard, Manitoba is the only Canadian province that continues to assign school boards this large-scale taxing authority, thus adding to the powers of local school boards (Henley & Young, 2008).

Typically, the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning communicates directly with the chairperson of a school division, and the deputy minister, the head administrator of the department, communicates with superintendents. I asked Ron how he and superintendents can be influential beyond their jobs, and he said that,

> maintaining good open communication channels with those bureaucrats such as the Deputy Minister is wise. Also, ensuring active participation by trustees in their provincial association, and ours [superintendents] in MASS. I think we [MASS] have a fairly clear process for bringing resolutions forward and making our voice known to the province, and also I think the association does a good job at those kind of things.

During 2001-2002, Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth (now titled the Department of Education and Advanced Learning) developed a plan for improved public education called the *Education Agenda for Student Success* (Manitoba Education, 2002). The first of the six priorities in the plan, "improving outcomes especially for less successful learners" (Manitoba Education,

2003a), targeted disadvantaged youth. A significant component of its plan was to infuse

Aboriginal perspectives into the core of instructional practice, a plan supported by the creation

and distribution of the document *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula* (Manitoba

Education, 2003b). Over time the Department has continued to introduce a number of initiatives

that relate to complex racialized poverty. The Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents

(BSSAP) program was launched by the Department in 2004 with a goal of increasing the

involvement of Indigenous parents in education. Up to $15,000 is available to individual schools

for developing partnerships and programs with parents and the community that will contribute to

the educational success of Aboriginal students. The Community Schools Partnership Initiative

(CSPI) was launched in 2005. Currently, 39 schools located in areas of significantly low socio-

economic status throughout the province have been granted community school status and receive

additional funding. The Department's intention was,

> to increase student success in communities of particular need in our province. The main
> goal of Community Schools is to help communities achieve a new level of success, by
> encouraging the involvement of parents, community leaders, and community agencies as
> "partners"—providing a range of services and supports that any given community needs.
> (CSPI, 2015)

Currently, the Aboriginal Education Directorate "provides leadership and coordination for

departmental initiatives in Aboriginal education and training" (Aboriginal Education Directorate,

2015). The Department also provides an Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant (AAA) to all

school divisions to support targeted programs that improve academic success for Aboriginal

students. In 2011, the Department continued to produce a wide range of resources to support

Aboriginal education.

Table 3

Resources Provided by the Aboriginal Education Directorate

Resource	Website
Aboriginal Education: Grade 12 Current Topics in Aboriginal Education	http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/foundation_gr12/index.html
From Apology to Reconciliation: Residential School Survivors	http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/far/doc/index.html
Aboriginal Education: Native Studies and the Nature of the Discipline	http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/native.html
Aboriginal Education resource guides	http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/publications.html

Several recent developments are noteworthy. In 2008, MEYC released *Bridging Two Worlds: Aboriginal Education and Employment Action Plan 2008-2011* (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2008), an updated action plan to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal people. In January 2016 and in response to the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Department released Indigenous student achievement data from the 2014-2015 school year. The then Treaty Relations Commission Manitoba (TRCM) commissioner, Jamie Wilson, states that "only by increasing measurement can we hope to increase outcomes" (Province Boosts, 2016). Also in January 2016, the office of the Auditor General of Manitoba produced a report based upon audit work it conducted between September 2014 and June 2015. The resulting report, *Improving Educational Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students* (Office of the Auditor General, 2016) provided 19 recommendations to the Department. In summarizing his report the Auditor General says:

> We found that the department needed to provide more leadership in guiding and coordinating the efforts of its partner departments and the school divisions in achieving Action Plan goals. And it needed to more systematically identify the key barriers to Aboriginal student success and the initiatives to overcome the barriers. . . . The Department can do more to ensure its initiatives and related funding levels help Aboriginal students succeed in school and graduate with their peers.

Key recommendations from the report include the adoption of a unified approach to supporting Aboriginal students, creating a greater focus on Aboriginal students, and identifying the key barriers to academic success for Aboriginal students. The Social Planning Council of Manitoba, in partnership with MASS, Manitoba Education and Training, and the MSBA, produced a report titled *Towards Equity in Education* (Social Planning Council of Manitoba, 2016). In their report, they too reiterated that many children are living in poverty, schools are only one part of a broader social support network, but they can have a significant and direct impact on the quality of a child's daily life and future life outcomes. Among the key findings of the report are: increasingly collaborative work between key educational partners is critical, and; school systems must develop coherent systems level strategies to address the effects of poverty (Social Planning Council of Manitoba, 2016).

Compared to education ministries in other provinces, the Department of Education and Advanced Learning is less controlling/invasive (Bedard & Lawton, 2000), and the participants say that they are comfortable working within a provincial framework that they deem to be quite unobtrusive. While the provincial government shares the funding of all school divisions with the local school boards, the participants were consistent in their perceptions that the Department of Education and Advanced Learning does not exert very much pressure or leverage on the internal day-to-day operations of their school divisions. In spite of occasional run-ins, all of the participants commented that they had generally good relations with Department officials and appreciated the collaborative relations which they saw as different from the more hierarchical

structures they had heard of in other provinces. Ron said, "the Department sends forms, we fill them in. Other than that I see very little by way of leadership from the Department. We try to influence them on decisions that directly affect us on funding, etc." School divisions do have to comply with many initiatives that are announced by the Department, and Pauline argued that "when it comes to funding in areas like Aboriginal and racialized complex poverty that we know require more strategically considered resources in order to bring about sustained improvement, we perhaps could be more strategic than sometimes occurs." Commenting on the importance of school divisions being able to generate local tax revenues and manage their own budgets, she commented that her trustees will often return from community liaison meetings and say, "the parents are so happy with what's going on in the schools." They are happy, she notes, because "we're [the school board] giving them programs and supports way beyond what an education system [if only funded by the province] might typically, you know, the community support workers and the, you know, whatever it is." As the funding of programming is shared by the province and local ratepayers, she lamented that "we know where the challenges are, but how do we put things in place that we know are good ideas and fund them appropriately so they're not just kind of 1-year wonders and off they go again."

Pauline said the Department has influence "when they're doing something that I think is helpful—then I'm happy to work [with them]. They have influence if we can develop a partnership or something that we would like to establish, and so on." On a day-to-day basis, she said that "I would say not a lot of influence." I spoke to the dilemma I saw in her answer in that freedom from the Department is a great thing for critically informed superintendents, but not such a great thing if matters are stagnant in a school system, with which she agreed. "I think that the province has probably on some areas held back too much. I think they struggle knowing what to do. I think part

of it is who they hear from about what they should be doing. And depending who they hear from,

that may or may not suit us or you or anything else."

Brian said that the work of the Department is important and necessary. He also said the

Department is known for requesting a plethora of written reports and tasks that may or may not

be aligned to the work that critically informed superintendents want to accomplish, and thus "it is

possible to spend all one's time responding to the agenda of the Department. Again, there are

reporting requirements or initiatives that can certainly constitute a full agenda if you don't have

one of your own." Brian's further response shows a recognition that all matters are political and,

as such, (a) the absence of influence from the department does not necessarily equate with

progress in equity agendas and (b) some aspects of power and influence are socially constructed.

As a result, what one superintendent may be able to do, and how s/he does it, will be very

different than another superintendent with different inclinations and working within a different

socio-political context. As Brian stated,

> If you have an agenda of your own, there is some of their things, for example *Building Student Success With Aboriginal Parents* (BSSAP). We take the pilot funding that they give us for two schools, and we add resources of our own and we're doing six schools. We tell them, "We love your initiative." We will host a provincial gathering, and they end up coming around to do a documentary film on some of our schools and what they're doing.

In Manitoba, it has been through regulation and funding that the province supports and

constrains the activities of school boards and superintendents. The Department has exerted

influence by creating priorities and initiatives related to at-risk populations and Aboriginal

education and by funding specific programs such as BSSAP. In so doing, the province has

provided leadership and supports in this area for school boards and superintendents. That said,

the participants indicated that while supports and initiatives have been provided, the Department

has been less invasive than is the case in other Canadian provinces, and, for the most part, they are comfortable with this relationship. A tension seems to exist between divisional autonomy and alignment to departmental direction. A new question to be explored is to what extent have superintendents assisted with the implementation of Indigenous and poverty related initiatives from the Department. Ron talked about the importance of maintaining open and consistent communications with departmental bureaucrats; Pauline shared that she is eager to align divisional work to that of the Department when it suits the direction of WSD; and Brian made clear the importance of strategically aligning the work of the Department and that of SOSD. Ron also talked about the importance of trustees and superintendents working through their professional associations (the MSBA and MASS, respectively) in order to influence the directions of the department of education.

School Boards

As indicated earlier in this dissertation, all of the superintendents are hired by and are responsible to local, elected school boards. Their area of direct influence, work that others cannot do, is the work they do with school boards.

Pauline described the formal procedures of the Winnipeg School Division (WSD) board's work, how its work must be aligned to the Public Schools Act, and, as is the case with all boards, how "they also create their own set of by-laws." There are similarities between boards, but there is also a wide variety of ways in which public meetings are run, agendas are developed, and committees are put in place. All superintendents' report to an elected school board, in spite of the fact that, as career educators and full-time employees, they are generally expected to be much more knowledgeable of technical and pedagogic issues related to schooling. Ron said that this distinction between the authority that comes from being an elected representative of the local

community and the professional expertise of educators creates a potential governance challenge

as members of the board,

> come together one to four times a month, maybe, different committees and as a board. They're not living it [the business of public education] each and every day. . . . Thus, we cannot expect trustees to know what we can get to know, and yet we as superintendents report to them.

In terms of school board practices, Pauline spoke of the typical governance guidelines and tasks

that are in place with most publically elected school boards: the following of *Robert's Rules of*

Order, and the development of and adherence to by-laws and policies. She also found, with her

over two decades of experiences at the board table, that matters and practices are highly variable,

"it's really dependent on the trustees who have leadership roles on the board . . . to make sure

that the rules are followed." Pauline has found that board members and boards do not necessarily

adhere to established guidelines and rules. She noted, "my experience over the years has been

that depending on who was in the position of chair, sometimes matters get dealt with more

effectively than others, because the board is guided through the process the correct way," and

"the rules aren't necessarily followed the way that was anticipated." She also shared that WSD

has a code of conduct, but that it has been problematic for some trustees over the years to

participate in accordance with it. After I had completed my data collection, on June 4, 2015, John

Wiens produced his report, the *Winnipeg School Division Governance Review Final Report*

(Wiens, 2015), which had been written at the behest of the Minister of Education and Advanced

Learning. That report hi-lighted a number of concerns with governance in the WSD that

dovetailed with comments made by Pauline:

> I've seen a number of people who have come onto the board feeling that they can act a certain way. And they've had to realize that they're there as only one of nine, not as an individual, and they have to work together. And that has been a learning process. Some

trustees have taken and understood that. And other trustees have felt that that's just something that's there. But whether it applies to them in any given circumstance is—you know—the luck of the day kind of thing.

As we were wrapping up our second conversation, something Ron said surprised me in light of his governance beliefs: "As much as some people try and make the board the place for things to happen, stuff doesn't—I mean, the stuff that happens at the board table, usually it's a crisis by the time it gets there." When I pushed Ron on this comment by asking if that means a superintendent can push an agenda without waiting for the board to get onside, he replied, "in the big picture, particularly as it relates to the 'strat plan' [strategic plan], the board has to be onside. I respect the board's ability to reflect the community values and you follow that lead, but you can also act independently within the policy framework." I interpreted this to mean that it is difficult for a superintendent to push an agenda without having the democratically elected board on side, and furthermore that he believes divisional direction should come from the greater community through the elected school board. With regards to the work that superintendents and other influentials can do, the questions are what influence they can exert and what influence they should exert. School divisions are to be governed by publically elected trustees, and so even the most equity-based superintendent should be responsive to the board s/he reports to. This is a dilemma from a critical perspective, as there are questions about what superintendents can do as influentials, and what they should do if they are acting democratically. In essence, it is possible for an influential superintendent to advance an equity agenda in ways that are authoritarian, and the question is, if they can, is it the right thing to do?

Kelly said he believes superintendents can provide effective support and influence: "[With] clear communications, trust, clear governance structures, and time to address significant

issues, the board can govern and the superintendent, with much more time and resources, and most usually educational and systems expertise, can provide influence." Again however, boards are provided plenty of latitude in how they govern, including the relationship developed with a superintendent. Ron said "sometimes, somebody tries to jump over the fence and play in my yard; and every now and then, I jump over the fence and try to play in their yard. We remind one another, but that's the ongoing tension between board and superintendent, right?"

All of the boards to which the participants reported tended to be policy driven. They provided direction to the superintendent and to the larger systems through the development of policies. Ron said, "I've always worked with boards that have been very policy driven, and saying to the board, the way you have me act is by having all of you agree to a particular policy. I don't take direction from one." He reiterated that to influence the board he attends to "process, process, and process. Accuse me of being hide-bound by policy and parliamentary procedure, but it is the only way that a board works." Similarly, Kelly stated that, while a board can make decisions through consensus, it is often nine different people, with different agendas and frames of reference. In his view, "I like to make sure that there's a group of people working together because it's not like-minded people, but people with different ideas coming together."

The Superintendent as Influential: What Works?

The participants' interviews provided considerable insight into how they believe they can be influential in their positions, within their respective school divisions and beyond. Their relationships with their school boards and individual trustees are two-way because: they tend to be the employee with the most interaction with their respective boards and thus have opportunities to be influential with the boards, and, as the only people who report directly to their

boards, as well as being the people who implement board policies, each of them can in turn be strongly influenced by their boards. The next section of this chapter presents five dimensions of superintendent influence drawn from the superintendent interviews: (a) relationships and attentiveness; (b) trust; (c) framing arguments and the use of language; (d) purpose; and (e) partnering and coalitions.

Relationships and Attentiveness

Pauline shared that much of her influence with the board is informal: "I think that in my position, a lot of what goes on is done in less formal circumstances so that there can be discussions about things that have happened, may happen, are on somebody's radar, and with or not necessarily with the chair." She went on to say that she was working with six newly elected trustees (2014-2015), "so there's a lot of time that goes into helping them. It's not necessarily even helping them, but taking the opportunities as they can be found." Pauline also identified the work that boards have to do with what she called, "externals," the media, MSBA, communities, and said that "every board has a different idea about how that should be." She also said her job in this regard is to assist: "So whether you describe that as politics or not, to me, it's just how I in my role have to help and support the people who are elected by the public, so that together we can move the agendas of the division forward in a constructive and positive way."

Pauline shared that an important component of her work is done through informal meetings and communications. She said, "I'm not a social kind of person. I'm a very private person in myself. In my workplace, that carries over because are who we are. I'm not the kind of person that says let's go out for a cup of coffee, let's go for lunch. It's me as opposed to the role, and I have to be myself." To support and influence individual trustees, she arranges for telephone conversations, meetings in her office, or arrangements to stay after formal meetings: "I tend to

find those opportunities. Last night, for example, we had a meeting of a committee and I sat for another half an hour afterwards with three of our trustees to talk about a number of issues." In another example, Pauline talked about a trustee who often speaks to the media: "You know—I will spend a lot of time talking to him about how that works, what might happen, what might not happen. It's just taking every opportunity I can in an informal way to chat about things." Pauline also stated that, "if it has an influence," she will bring up issues with the full board, "and I will say whatever I need to say to all of them and say I hope you can understand why I'm saying this to you as a group—whatever the topic might be. I will do that as well."

Kelly indicated that the "influencing" that he does as the superintendent with trustees also involves working with individuals "behind the scenes" as well as the board of the whole on issues like poverty and racism, because there is in our society "lots of different opinions as well as lack of awareness." I asked Kelly if he is able to ask big questions and raise large concerns with his board and if so how? He indicated that it is tricky:

> There's different personalities that go around the table. Political power is often not equally distributed around the nine trustees and influencing them to address particularly large social issues requires attention to not only educating the board, but being well aware of the varied socio-political orientations, and the inter-group nuances of the board. So I think on one hand, they expect me to slap it down, but I have found that that's not always the best way with them. I found the best way is I need to make sure that I'm organized, I'm planned.

Kelly used the word *empower* to describe how he influences people. Kelly said that people need to "understand who I am, what I stand for." He recognizes that because he is the superintendent, there are expectations of leadership from him. As a result, Kelly said that if an issue is important, he proceeds in accordance with several key questions: does action on the issue require a command from the superintendent, a consultation after which he has the final say, or does the issue need to be addressed through reaching consensus?

He noted, "I use obviously the consensus method in working with my 'why.' I mean, otherwise, the why, if it's a direct command, it's not going—nobody's going to be with me."

When asked about his type of leadership, he articulated the following:

> So my type of leadership . . . I don't do a lot of influencing as the band leader in the front. A few times in my career—even as a teacher where you're leading the band in the front and, all of a sudden, you realize there's no damn band in front of you. . . . But the majority of my influencing is working with the why, working with consensus. I've used this analogy before. Again, Nelson Mandela is one of my heroes—but that whole thing of you're the shepherd at the back. You know where you need to go, or you think you need to go, but your journey and the sheep's journey of how to get there may look very different.

Talking about when to be direct with members of her board and when to be subtler, Pauline said, "one needs to be bold at times, direct at times, and subtle and to have a nuanced approach at other times." Going further, she inferred the importance of picking up cues that the timing or situation is right to influence, "taking an opportunity when it's there or timing something differently if, sometimes I might say something, and then sometimes I suddenly think, no, not this time." Thinking about how she comes to her decision about how to influence, she said:

> How do you come to the point where you think you've got that? I mean, I think my judgment's okay. And I think it's been proven to be okay. But how do you get to that? What creates that in a person? As an influential, if all of us think our judgement is correct, but we have different beliefs, how can we make progress? I'm sure you think your judgment's good. If we all think our judgment's good, but we're all different, how do we get ourselves to the piece that is more what you're researching here [equity]?

In response, I referred to Cornel West who called for change agents to be critical organic catalysts. Her response was, "that grounds you because then you're speaking from a belief that is the right kind of belief. And it guides you through everything you're doing."

Trust

Trustees have to develop trust with senior administrators, if school divisions are to function effectively. Elected boards cannot develop the necessary capacity to understand all of the complexities of organizations as large as those led by the participants, given the fact that trustees are assumed to work in their positions for roughly 10-15 hours a month, compared to senior administrators often logging over 200 hours in the same time period. Brian said trust is a necessary prerequisite for taking on challenging socio-political initiatives. Prior to introducing new and potentially controversial initiatives, superintendents need to ensure that key managerial functions of the system are well attended to and are *seen* to be well attended to: "You have to attend to the things that might get you undone, fiscal management, and human resources." He went on to say, "if you do those things well it buys you the credibility to take on other stuff." Ensuring that core operations are operating well allows influential superintendents to build up a certain professional capital with boards and others, and it builds the degree of trust that translates to "points in the bank, but you also have to be prepared to cash them out." With the increased trust, influentials can say to a board on a critical issue, "you need to trust me on it," and "you need to know that they will." Brian has been able to push an equity agenda in Seven Oaks. Brian said, "I think we've managed well enough that we've been able to kind of free up some resources in pursuit of those dreams [addressing equity issues], or we worked in partnership with people." Brian explained that if issues of equity can get onto the agenda and become a priority, funds need to be either shifted from other areas, or the board needs to be emboldened to make a case to taxpayers for more funds. Brian shared several examples of partnerships that leverage outside funds to decrease the financial and public opinion liability of the board. The Sistema program located at Elwick School, in a community of high complex Indigenous and racialized poverty is

one of those initiatives: "So, you've got kids in the poorest neighborhood doing 3 hours a day, 5 days a week, all year, of music after school from 3:30 to 6:30. They're opening the season for the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra on stage at the Centennial Concert Hall. They stand as a symbol of what kids are capable of." Pragmatically, Sistema was presented to the board as a strategy to address its focus on equity. Brian also highlighted the partnership with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

Ron also shared the importance of building trust. Ron is the longest serving superintendent of the participants, and maybe in the province, at 24 years, a tenure that ended with his retirement in September 2015. "It's a long time to work with boards. Never been fired, so always left on my accord, and never been asked to leave. I guess I always work on—we work together." From his experiences, there are a number of important aspects to exercising influence. One is the clarification of ground rules: "Our ground rules are, what and how are we going to communicate with one another? What are we going to agree? Or things that we're going to do."

A second example Brian provided was the WayFinders program. Located in the same community as Elwick, Wayfinders provides a storefront location at which students can receive significant tutoring and mentoring. In both of his examples, care was taken to identify program priorities with the core beliefs of the board and to demonstrate that they could be delivered in a manner that was not too risky financially or politically—trust.

Initiating and Framing Arguments: The Use of Language

Foucault (1972) argued that the use of language can be a technology of thought, a strategy through which themes and narratives are popularized and legitimized. The participants used language purposefully, to frame the conversations they had with members of their boards.

Kelly spoke of the importance of framing conversations. In order to begin conversations about matters of equity with other influentials, "I need to be very organized. I need to have done my research." He reiterated that he also needs to do some influencing behind the scenes: "What I mean is I need to have conversations with every one of the board members or collectively with them around the table, instead of saying to them, listen, I'm the superintendent. I know what I'm doing. This is what we need to do." In his behind the scenes work, Kelly shared what the language he uses sounds like: "I really believe in this. . . . This is my why. . . . This is what's currently happening, or I think we need to move forward." Then Kelly shared that there has been more success, more often than not, in getting the board, including individuals with more political power at the table, to engage in significant conversations and to be open to his influence when he uses his softer approach. I then asked Kelly if anything related to Indigenous people, race, or poverty and schooling has come up at the board table. He responded, "I want to be honest with you. It only comes up if our senior administration brings it up." As a case in point, he shared that the division is moving towards the use of more authentic data on student success. For some at the table, student success is viewed as student academic achievement only. Kelly and his team have brought forward additional information such as community profiles and rates of poverty throughout the division, and the percentage of students who identify as Aboriginal. By bringing this information to the board, he hopes that they will begin to see the inequities that exist in the system, and make resources, time and programs available to address those inequities.

Brian said, "it is important to make arguments personalized and linked to children and students." He shared the importance of how to initiate or frame an argument, whether it is with parents, government, unions, or the board. Sharing an example of the development of a LBGTQ policy, Brian said there were trustees who were staunch Catholics, and they said, "we're not

comfortable with this. We know that the majority of the board's going this way, we don't want to stand in the way, [but] we're not comfortable." To frame the issue in a manner that would address the interests of the trustees, as well as forward a progressive agenda, Brian asked, "Would you be comfortable saying to the people in your parish, 'these kids should be safe?'" The trustees thought and then responded: "Yeah, we're comfortable saying that." Brian finished the conversation by saying, "you don't have to say anything more than that. Now you're on board, and if someone challenges you, that's all you have to say." Brian shared another story that illustrates the subtlety of addressing the concerns of a myriad of interests and personal dilemmas while still advocating a critically informed agenda: "I've got a trustee who's not comfortable, within a sense, with all of the Aboriginal teachings and spiritualism." The same trustee also says, "we've got to do something to be more successful with these kids." After much thought and debate, the trustee eventually concluded, "if this will help us be more successful, then I'm for it. But I'm for it for equity, I'm not for it because we need to embrace their spirituality."

Pauline used the word *maneuver* to describe how she has influenced others. I asked her about this, and she seemed almost shy about it. She said, "I think for me, it starts with planting some seeds." She went on to talk about sharing ideas of what needs to happen and how to develop those ideas. She shared an example of early years student assessments that had been in place since the 1970s. Trustees were beginning to talk of the need to thoroughly review the program: "Instead of it being reviewed, I went in and saw an opportunity for myself to say to the board of trustees, 'would you be willing if we came back with something? . . . We took this and built on it and we expanded it through to Grade 1 and 2.'" She looked at what was already in place, she planted an idea with the board, she then came back with results, and the division was able to build from there.

Divisional Purpose

All of the participants indicated in their own ways that they recognized the need to do more than manage their organizations. Brian used his influence to create time and environments in which trustees could get in touch with larger societal issues: "I think we [Seven Oaks School Board] are different. We carve out significant chunks of time to do some blue-sky thinking, to do some dreaming." He indicated that this allows opportunities for the board and the senior management team to educate themselves on large societal issues and dilemmas, such as the current realities of Indigenous communities and that of newcomers, issues about which many trustees and administrators may not otherwise be knowledgeable. Without taking the time to do this, Brian said, they would not be able to get to these larger issues and they would continue to be focused solely on weekly managerial issues.

Brian shared that it is critically important to find ways to make challenging dilemmas, such as complex Indigenous and racialized poverty, a focus. He says he does this in a variety of ways: "It's always [on the agenda] at retreats, at budget time, and I tend to do it with questions." At budget time, a key question that always gets asked is, "What are we doing to forward the equity agenda? Are we making a difference?" Brian also tried to make the agenda personal for trustees by arranging for an Indigenous student leadership group to come and present to the board on the progress they are making and the challenges they have. "It puts the trustees face to face with these students." He also arranged for student liaison meetings with all high schools with the topic for discussion being Indigenous education.

Kelly made it clear that, on reflection, he could be doing more to push an agenda to

address complex Indigenous and racialized poverty. Talking about the conservatism of members of his board, he said, "it's not necessarily only them. It's my perception about getting things to them, for them, and around them." Kelly said that, to improve in this area, he can influence by,

> showing leadership in what matters and is right! As superintendent, I have the ability to provide direction or influence change through strategic moves and actions. I need to be and demonstrate ethical and educational leadership. I have the ability to facilitate a process where other influential others—i.e., trustees—move towards and establish priorities which would include levelling the playing field—equity.

Partnering and Coalitions

Brian articulated the political requirements of being a critically informed influential and the courage of conviction it requires. A growing literature indicates that influentials need to develop the attitudes and aptitudes to forge new advocacy skills and develop new social and political networks with community groups and players in other branches of government to become "critical organic catalysts" (West, 1993, p. 22). These are people who can negotiate the interactions and culture of the organizational and cultural mainstream, while being grounded in the foundations of critique and hopefulness.

If we concur with theorists including Levin (2010), Larson and Murtadha (2002), Grogan (2000) and West (1993) that equity work involves disrupting dominant narratives about poverty and schooling, and developing critical organic catalysts, then it requires work that expands beyond (but does not exclude) technical management. West (2001) argues that critically informed influence requires that we anticipate a likely reality of offending some other influentials who think we are pushing too hard, as well as colleagues who think we are not pushing hard enough. Anyon (2005) reminds us that much progressive work is done with coalitions of like-minded people who go beyond the traditional boundaries of their jobs and live

up to their principles in all aspects of their lives. To do anything other, she suggests, is a luxury afforded only to those with the social and economic capital to limit their influence to their official work. Either way, the work is both within and beyond the scope of school divisions.

I challenged Brian by suggesting that programs like Wayfinders take money and political commitment, resources that can be used for other purposes, or not at all in order to keep taxes minimized. I asked him how he gained the board's trust to tackle apparently "outside of the box" solutions that are seemingly expensive. He indicated that in this case he did not require significant board resources. Returning to the issue of building relationships with the provincial government, he noted, "the genesis for that was when I met with two provincial government ministers. One of them asked, 'What were you hoping to do these days?'" Brian shared ideas about the potential Wayfinders program and one of the ministers took notes. He was intrigued, and he said, "How can I move this forward?" To which Brian said, "Can you put some decision-makers together, and let me pitch them?" He brought together the minister of education, the minister of advanced education, and the minister of finance. Brian provided the men with several options: "I gave them a number of, 'You can roll out little or you can roll out big, but here's the potential impact.' They launched the fund initially, and then got some [additional] funding after that. We got some funding from the Winnipeg Foundation at the time, and then there was a contribution from the Seven Oaks School Division budget." When asked how he received Winnipeg Foundation funds Brian said it was "a cold call and an application." With trust, influentials can now present ideas and initiatives that have the potential to make change. As indicated earlier, Brian believes all influentials involved in public education ought to be doing these things if they are doing their job.

Senior Leaders and School Administration

Ultimately, the superintendent has managerial responsibility for all that occurs in his/her school division, a tall task with dozens of schools, over 1,000 staff and at least 8,000 students for each of the participants. All of the participants established goals and plans on an annual basis that were informed by the thinking of school administrators, staff, and, in some cases, the greater community.

Typically, each of the participants met with their senior management team weekly and with all of their division-level coordinators and school-based administrators every one or two months. In addition, meetings with level grades (early, middle, senior) were also convened on a regular basis.

Influence and Framing

I asked Ron how he has been influencing the thinking and the resulting decisions that have been made in St. James over the course of years. In his response he referred to structure as well as to culture. Structurally he works closely with his superintendent's team: "I've always worked that way. The team meets every Wednesday afternoon, the day after board meetings. We deal with stuff that comes out of the board meeting." They meet in three distinct groups: a general meeting that includes all the human resources team, the financial services team, and the maintenance team. After these meetings a superintendent's team meeting is convened. This is a similar process to that which occurs in the workplaces of the other participants.

Culturally, Ron talked about the importance of developing common values. He said that, while there may be disagreements over certain policies and procedures, having shared values is really important. Ron said a key for him being able to work on teams with common values has been that "I've been fortunate enough to be able to hire the people I work with. I managed to

convince them (the board) that this is the way I wanted to work." As a team, Ron stated that their objective was to "work with the board and our administrators as two entities. That's where we can have the greatest influence."

Concerning the positional power of the superintendency, Ron said:

You know, I have the power, right? So, I can do what I want with that power, or I can choose to include a whole bunch of people and say, I know I have the power and I know I have some influence and I know I have some resources. So, I have to give as much of that away to other people, is my view, and then that really, when I take a look at, if it is a power issue, whether it be an economic power issue, a gender power issue, or a racial power issue—you have a lot of control over a lot of stuff.

He talked about superintendents having power over budget lines and some resources that others do not: "But I have the same power and the same control over gender issues and the same control and same power over racial issues that you have regardless of where you fit into the big skew of things in the social media, right?" Ron was saying that, as a superintendent, he has to have an understanding of the power relationships and how "you can do a lot of good things, but not in a way that's maternalistic, paternalistic, or patronizing."

Pauline's work as a superintendent need to be looked at through the lens of the unique historical context of the WSD. WSD created a superintendent-level role to deliberately address issues related to complex Indigenous and racialized poverty. In 1982, Jack Smyth was appointed chief superintendent. One of the first things he did was to ask Pauline to be the assistant superintendent for elementary schools and become his executive assistant. Early into Pauline's tenure, Smyth realized that inner-city needs, and specifically, the needs of Indigenous students were not getting addressed the way they should. He gave her responsibilities for Indigenous education. The WSD developed the inner city school district with 12, then 16, and then 21 schools, with Pauline at the helm.

To influence his staff, Brian talked about setting an agenda to assist them to challenge social issues. As an example of the kind of persuasion he utilized, the divisional keynote speaker in the fall of 2015 was John Ralston Saul. Similarly, Kelly said:

> With boards or staff, I always break it [an issue] into the why, what, and how. So when dealing with the why, we're looking at racism and poverty in this particular case; I want to have a lot of discussions with the board. This can often take a long time because I think, if one doesn't really know your why, going into what do you need to do and how are you going to do it, either (a) will never work out well, or (b) people will not understand it, or (c) it won't be accepted.

Working with his leadership team of assistant superintendents and the secretary treasurer, Kelly again talked about the importance of significant dialogue to determine *why* a particular issue or approach is important. During these discussions, he attempted to clarify his perspectives and then invited others to share theirs with the intention of arriving at a shared *why*? After that, he guided them to discuss what they might do.

When I asked Kelly about how he influences the system, he said, "and then that's the actual how." The key people to influence are the teachers who are working with kids on a daily basis. Kelly said that it is important that they find out how to address larger issues. He also surfaced an issue: "To be honest with you, if I could be critical of our organization, we've had surface conversations, but nothing more than that." He was even critical of himself when he said, "I'm going to translate even that to my work as a superintendent. I walk away sometimes from my work, and I think our conversations on equity and on racism and on poverty and on—I'll use the '60s term—teaching the whole child . . . We're doing only surface stuff." When I pressed Kelly on this point about framing and initiating, he reiterated: "It's not there. So the conversations still are going on. I think they're important conversations. But I do worry that it's just sometimes on the surface." That said, Kelly also indicated that the division is beginning to

investigate its data to shed further light on what is occurring with regards to issues like poverty.

Thus, it is more than framing existing stories; it is initiating the development of new ones:

> When I'm talking about data, I'm not only talking about academic data. I'm talking about data as in innovative projects, mental health, poverty—the whole gamut. I'm talking about bringing things forward so that, to me, then we really can see better—not we can see totally. We can see better about how well we are doing. How well is our *whats*, because right now, it's opinion only. By beginning to explore comprehensive data, better understanding is to be followed up with, "so now what are we going to do?"

I asked Brian if he has received any opposition with regards to establishing programs to address equity issues with funds that could arguably go into additional teachers or increases to teacher salaries. He answered, "yeah. We have had pushback over the years from the Seven Oaks Teachers Association (SOTA). I would say they overplayed their hand, and there's been a significant regime change." Brian initiated a division-wide school supply program through which the division used its purchasing power to have school supplies arrive at each school in September. Parents paid $40.00, significantly below what parents would otherwise pay if shopping on their own. This initiative saved parents from a shopping trip and also helped school culture in the sense that no students can be seen as not having the "right" supplies. The program required staff to figure out how to distribute the supplies. "But we did face questions—we were buying school supplies, and our teachers were opposing it because, 'It's not my job to carry it to my classroom.'" I asked Brian how he addressed the complaint, to which he said, "just my point has always been to stay on the high road. This is why we're doing it. I'm not going to give you an answer as to whose job it is to carry to your classroom." Asking him to explain further, he said, "I'm not going to give you an answer. If you're in a school and your classroom is right across the hall, what would you carry across the hall? If you've got serious back issues and your

classroom is up three flights of stairs, by all means have the custodial worker bring them up for you."

Brian has been influenced by the cognitive linguist George Lakoff who introduced the concept of conceptual metaphors "that play a systemic structural role in shaping how we think, rather than merely an episodic, decorative role in making our language more interesting" (Rosenberg, 2014). Similar to Foucault's (1972) notion of *technologies of thought*, Brian said that "if there's a talent I have as a leader, I would say finding ways to take some complex ideas and meaningful ideas and frame them so that people can get on board." As an example, Brian talked about increasing the number of Indigenous people and People of Colour working in classrooms in Seven Oaks: "Instead of talking about affirmative action, we said we want our kids to see themselves reflected in the staff in the building. . . . It's very hard to quarrel with that!" Brian said if he framed the same issue as creating quotas such as "20% Aboriginal, then who are we hiring and who are you firing to get there?" He said he always tries to bring all conversations concerning equity to individuals and groups of children in ways that allow decision-makers to relate to the question of "How can we make a difference for those kids who most need them?" A challenge is to assist decision-makers to see that addressing equity does not come at the expense of those more privileged: "It's important to manage the politics of 'if we help those kids, we are going to hurt those ones.'" Brian says he challenges people with the question, "What kind of a world do you want to live in and what's your place in it?"

Brian was clear: "A good school division can be the rising tide that lifts all boats. In our system we have done that, not that we are perfect with every child. Our participation rates are great, graduation rates are fabulous, participation in the arts are great. . . . You can have it all." In his view, in order to influence others, it is often a matter of connecting with people who can

make a difference: "In this whole endeavor, our main tool is connecting people to their own sense of idealism that brought them into it."

The Greater Community

Kelly spoke to one of the challenges of being in a position of organizational leadership within a meritocratic narrative within which Foster (1986) said it is extremely difficult to go against. Whether they believe in the narrative or not, systemic influences upon superintendents make it difficult to act in any manner that deviates from the narrative. This inhibits their ability to be critical, even those so inclined, to address racialized poverty and schooling.

When he was thinking about attitudes in his community, Kelly said he believed that many support notions of citizenship and volunteerism in schools: "I think we're like-minded in a lot of areas, because I really believe that social justice and that form of citizenship is important to have in schools." He worried, however, that such concerns do not run too deep and are perhaps a very superficial perspective on inclusionary democracy. He said, "some schools have made equity their main priority. This includes working on racism, Indigenous education, and poverty." He felt that many school leaders are providing direction: "They are empathetic, passionate, caring, and willing to do the right thing to level the playing field." Regarding Indigenous education, he said, "we have the right leaders in this area. Leaders who are Aboriginal and providing excellent role models and mentoring. A significant challenge, however, is developing this same philosophy or culture in the privileged school communities." What Kelly is reflecting here is the need for an in-depth understanding of poverty and racism. There can be plenty of rhetoric and maybe even good intentions but limited effective action without deeper understanding.

To expand the conversation with the larger community, Kelly said, "I have some ideas, but I'm not quite sure whether this community has ever been on board." Kelly repeated a phrase

he often heard in the community, "we [people of all ethnic groups] just need to work harder.

That's all they say—we need to work harder." Kelly said, "it's not about just working harder."

Beyond helping students to gain the tools to live better economically, "a system needs to adapt to

[acknowledge] the privilege of some [families] while addressing the marginalization of others."

As Kelly talked about influencing the larger system, a narrative from his days in Steinbach that

resurfaced is that society is a meritocracy and we simply have to work hard and all can succeed.

He noted, "I really get heck from my four kids, because I think my generation have also said to

kids, 'You can be anybody you want to be.'" Speaking of his own kids, he said, "then all of a

sudden, they realize, well, there's so many barriers there and they can't. What of the Aboriginal

kids and the racialized?"

The larger narrative seemed to be a bit different in the community served by Seven Oaks

School Division, a reminder that all dominant narratives are always partial and contested. I asked

Brian about the seemingly open minded governance in Seven Oaks, and he responded:

> In a sense, part of your question is—How am I able to do what I do? Partly because I work
> on the North End a little bit. We don't have a lot of people—we have some, but not a huge
> amount with a sense of entitlement, protecting their interest. The first reaction to difference
> is not fear all the time.

Brian's comments reminded me of how localized context is important. He talked about meeting

colleagues from other school divisions who were "worried about Ebola. Okay, now they're

worried about Muslim militancy. There is a climate in that community that is just fear-driven,

and there's no reason to be afraid." Part of the reason he believes SOSD is able to push forward

an equity agenda is because,

> I think I'm also in a school district that prides itself on being progressive. We're on the
> North End. We've all come from something, and we've all needed the education system to

help us do well. Our continued welfare and the continued welfare in the community depends on the education system doing well.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I had set out to address my second and third research questions: How do these superintendents describe the socio-political and organizational environments that inform and influence their work as senior educational administrators, and how do they describe their ability to influence systems? The analysis in this chapter developed two main arguments: within the socio-political environment in which superintendents are located, the concept of being an *influential* is perhaps more accurate than being a *leader* (Grogan, 2000; Leithwood, 2013; Rottmann, 2007); and, within highly contextual environments, the participants have had opportunities to influence policies, structures, and culture (Grogan, 2000; Leithwood, 2013; Rottmann, 2007), and, if their work is to be critically informed, it needs to be concerned with issues of poverty (Giroux, 1988, p. 177).

The participants did describe the socio-political and organizational environments that inform and influence their work as senior educational administrators. While an agenda for Indigenous education and equity has been provided by the Department of Education and Advanced Learning, the participants indicated that the department has not been overly directive or involved in the day to day operations of divisions, something that they were appreciative of. The participants reported to elected boards made up of people with a wide variety of personalities and perspectives that largely mirror the dominant narratives of the larger society. Pauline found the practices of elected boards can be highly variable, while Ron indicated that it is extremely difficult to push an agenda without having the democratically elected board on side. While it is contested and varies within local contexts, superintendents work largely within a

social narrative of meritocracy in which all students can be successful if they and their families choose to be successful. For superintendents who are interested in addressing equity, the environments in which they work, influenced by rational-technicism and neo-liberalism, can be stifling and challenging.

The Auditor General's report on the progress that the Department of Education and Advanced Learning has made with Aboriginal education (Office of the Auditor General, 2016) indicates that, while the Department has demonstrated a significant leadership role from initiating multicultural education, developed curricula for Indigenous education, and provided grants to support development in disadvantaged communities, more is to be done to "provide more leadership in guiding and coordinating the efforts of partner departments and the school divisions in achieving Action Plan goals" (p. 1). As stated earlier, a question for further investigation is, If the department has provided direction and resources, what is the responsibility of school divisions, influenced by superintendents, to push forward a more critically informed agenda?

The participants recognized their positionality as one of considerable power and official leadership. Ron said, "I know I have the power," while Kelly said, "I have the ability to provide direction or influence change through strategic moves and actions." The influence that the participants exerted was done through a variety of characteristics and practices.

Through my discussions with the participants, I gained evidence that they have been influential through several characteristics: (a) choosing to be critical and influential, (b) purposefully building relationships, (c) gaining and maintaining the trust of other influentials, (d) using language skillfully and, (e) extending their influence beyond their school divisions by creating partnerships and coalitions.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS

VIEWED THROUGH A CRITICAL LENS: THE WORK OF SUPERINTENDENTS

Introduction

> In all aspects of my administrative career, I believe that I have at least on the surface, attempted to democratize human relations and system operations . . . I prefaced this section by saying *"on the surface"* because in reality, perhaps it was not true. . . . My focus was never on what was happening with the most advantaged of our students, never mind the least advantaged. Perhaps this is because the managerial work was too demanding, or perhaps I was right in thinking that if we attended to the formal leaders, the important work of ensuring greater justice for all learners and addressing the effects of poverty would be accomplished by the folks on the front lines. I have since taken the time to explore Foster's (1986, 2004) understanding of organizational leadership that is attributed to social justice. After evaluating some of my work against this model, I have found myself wanting. (Present work, p. xxii)

As at the beginning of the previous two chapters, the excerpt above is taken from my prologue at the beginning of this thesis. As I reflected upon my own practice in the opening quotation of this chapter, I came to understand that caring for others is not enough. The dominant narrative of a societal meritocracy is so pervasive that it is difficult to not view the assumptions within that narrative as *common sense*. This can make it very easy for influentials, like myself, to not even consider that complex racialized poverty has historic and structural foundations, or the ways in which schools may be implicated in these foundations.

This final findings chapter revisits and builds upon chapters five and six to examine the ways in which superintendents' spoke about efforts to improve the school experiences of children living in poverty. In doing so, the chapter addresses the thesis's final research question: *What actions have the participants undertaken to address issues of racialized poverty?* The analysis in this chapter is grounded in three main arguments introduced in the previous two chapters:

1. If superintendents are to contribute to improving the school experiences of students living in poverty, they must have developed a deep and ongoing understanding of the character and origins of poverty and its interactions with the structures and practices of schools – an understanding that provides a counter-narrative to the dominant narratives of meritocracy in schooling and the wider society.

2. That in addition to an understanding of poverty, effective superintendents must develop sophisticated political skills in order to: create an environment within which critical conversations about poverty and schooling occur; develop the necessary organizational and political relationships to procure the indispensable resources to effect structural changes; and, at the same time ensure that the school division's existing operations are well taken care of because not only is it the right thing to do, but it is also vital to developing and then maintaining the political capital required to be able to address critically informed dilemmas.

3. As identified in the preceding chapters, effective superintendents also need to be willing to act while recognizing that in certain circumstances, their actions may involve greater individual career risks than inaction. While willingness to act may be seen as an individual disposition of the superintendent, this research suggests that in the absence of strong provincial mandate and oversight, while poverty is to be found in all divisions, initiatives related to education and poverty are more likely to be found in those divisions with the highest incidents of poverty.

Superintendents in Manitoba occupy an important position within the hierarchy of a

school system. To varying degrees, they exercise influence over the educational policies and

practices of their respective school division and through them, the lives of many young people.

Informed by Gaskell's and Levin's (2012) work on making a difference in inner-city education,

in this chapter I argue that as individuals, school superintendents can be influential in the

creation and maintenance of improved educational opportunities for children living in poverty.

That said, as individual players within systems, they cannot eliminate poverty and inequalities in

educational experiences on their own for several reasons: (a) as documented in the previous

chapter, superintendents work within highly contextualized, complex webs of professional and

public relationships that provide not only unique opportunities, but also constraints on their

authority; and (b), the organizational culture of a school division may strongly reinforce a belief

that the purpose of schools is to reproduce the cultural, political, and economic structures of a

larger meritocratic society in which inequality abounds. Further, even if superintendents *could*

eliminate poverty and inequalities in educational experiences on their own, this action would

contradict the development of increased collaboration in decision making, community inclusion

and development, and democratic practice - key touchstones of a critically informed stance and

as such, an individual power broker, even a well-intended one, should not *own* the work

independent of others (Grogan 2000; Larson & Murtadha, 2002).

    In the rest of this chapter I provide descriptions and analysis of three divisional

initiatives directed at improving the school experiences of students living in poverty in Winnipeg

provided by the participants in this study that seek to illustrate something of the possibilities of

improved practice and the different ways in which the superintendent may contribute to that

practice.

Towards Effective Practice

    Central to the focus of this thesis is the evidence showing that socio-economic status is,

across international jurisdictions, a powerful predictor of school success and that complex

poverty constitutes a major barrier to achieving successful school/educational outcomes

(Brownell et al., 2012; OECD, 2008). The critical stance of the thesis asserts both a language of

critique, that schools are implicated in these outcomes, but also a language of possibility, that it

can be otherwise.

Accepting that knowledge and practice is co-constructed and contextual provides some

protection from a simplistic and misguided belief that 'blueprints' or 'templates' for improving

the school experiences of young people living in poverty exist. It also provides against any

individualistic notions of 'heroic leadership' in which a single superintendent can create changed

thinking and practice in their respective divisions on their own. Nonetheless, in this section of

the chapter, attention is given to some initiatives with which the participants were associated

with and which they identified as significant contributions to improving schooling for students living in complex poverty. These illustrations are based upon the reflections of participants in the study. They are not presented as exemplars but they do provide concrete examples of attempts to create more equitable schools in the local context and they also provide examples of the different roles that superintendents may play in these efforts.

Illustration #1: The *Wayfinders* Program - Superintendent Leadership

An important example of a divisional initiative through which disadvantaged youth were provided with improved educational services is the *Wayfinders* program that has been operating for seven years in the Seven Oaks School Division. The superintendent was instrumental in setting up *Wayfinders*. Stated in his own words, it was a concrete example of "something we can and should do."

Located within a larger suburban neighborhood known as *the Maples* in the south east corner of the division, the program is a mentoring and tutoring program that targets young people living in the Elwick community which includes a high number of Manitoba Housing units (subsidized housing) and average household incomes mainly in the second lowest quintile (U2) in Manitoba (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Seven Oaks School Division Average Household Incomes
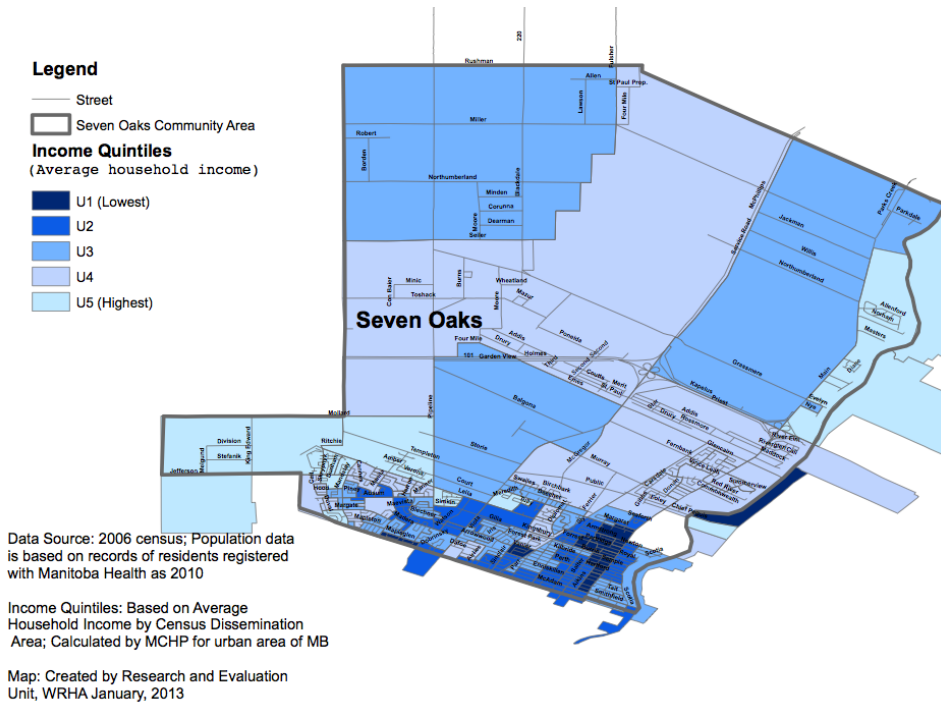
The *Wayfinders* Program was initiated in response to research findings published by the

Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP) entitled, *How Are Manitoba's Children Doing?*

(Brownell et al., 2012) that provided a description of how Manitoba children are doing in the

areas of physical health and emotional health, safety and security, successful learning, and social

engagement (Brownell et al., 2012, p.1). The report documented the correlation between life-

long health and educational attainment and reported upwards of 50% school dropout rates as

early as grade nine in low socioeconomic Manitoba communities. As is the case with many other

similar communities in Winnipeg, the Elwick community has had a pattern of demonstrably

lower academic achievement than areas characterized by higher socio-economic status.

Figure 10, below, identifies high school completion rates for the year 2003 by specific

neighborhoods in Winnipeg.

Figure 10. Winnipeg High School Graduation Rates by Winnipeg Neighborhoods.
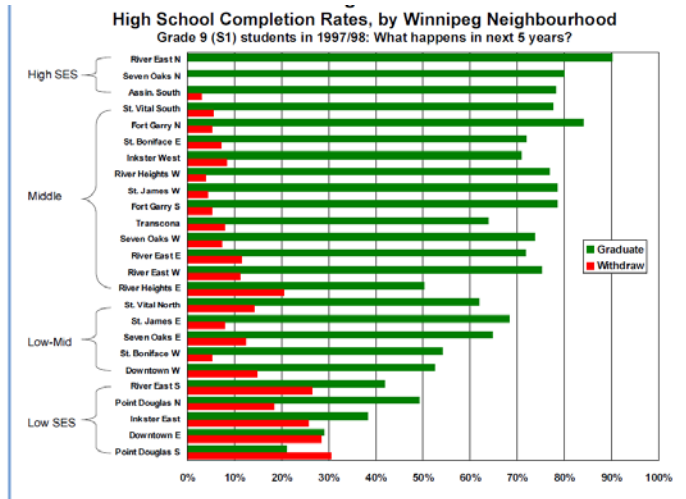
Students in the Elwick neighborhood are drawn from the Seven Oaks E and Inkster neighbourhoods and had graduation rates between 35% and 65%, and dropout rates between 12% and 27%, compared to 77% to 100% graduation rates in high socio-economic (SES) neighborhoods.

Started in 2007, *Wayfinders* was a divisional program targeted at changing those schooling outcomes. The program was based upon the *Pathways to Education* started in Toronto's Regent Park (Pathways to Education, 2016). Aimed at students in Grades 9 through 12, the program has since supported seven annual cohorts of approximately 70 students each. Originally called *Bright Futures*, the program was based out of a storefront centre in close proximity to Maples Collegiate, a high school with 1600 students, and has since expanded to a second storefront site. *Wayfinders* started off as a centre through which students could receive tutoring support for their studies. Within the first year of its development, the emphasis on tutoring shifted to mentoring and the development of nurturing relationships between youth

living in impoverished conditions and successful university students, teachers, and community

members. In capturing the evolution of *Wayfinders*, Brian expressed the view that young people

"needed to gain a positive vision of themselves through mentoring, before they were ready to

take on the tutoring." This, for Brian, constituted a critical point and a systems-level shift. What

was a tutoring program quickly evolved into a mentoring program as university students, and

adults from the larger community developed strong relationships with the students that went

beyond study skills. As Brian mentioned,

> in a sense it shouldn't have surprised me. First comes the motivation then comes effort—
> which is why we're doomed when we do these attendance policies or put 'at-risk' kids
> together. It's all in a negative basis. It's never figuring out what kids' strengths are and
> kind of building on those.

Rather than create an exclusionary alternative school, participants in *Wayfinders*

continued to attend their community high school, together with their peers and members of their

communities, while also accessing tutoring in a neighbourhood storefront centre during the

evenings and on the weekends. During the 2015-2016 school year there was approximately 250

students (grades 9 through 12) participating in the program, 20% of the local high school

population.

Staffing included 12 student/parent support workers each of whom supported 25 students,

and whose job, according to Brian, was to "do whatever it takes to get them [the students]

through high school." The job includes mentoring, tutoring, course programing, and being their

[the students] advocate at their home school. As well, the program maintained approximately

50–70 volunteers who provided supports to students not only through the work week but also on

Friday nights and Sunday afternoons, with a schedule that typically results in each volunteer

serving one weekend a month. Brian said that, in order for disadvantaged students to be

successful in school, they need to "work longer and harder," and that *Wayfinders* is effectively

"school on top of school." After seven years, approximately 200 participants have graduated

high school, and of those, two thirds are attending a post-secondary institution. In addition to the

mentoring and tutoring they receive, each of the participants has $1,000 deposited into a

scholarship fund for them annually. After four years in the program, a graduating student can go

to a post-secondary institution with a four-thousand-dollar scholarship. In addition, each student

receives a $600 Talent Development stipend annually that is to be used to help engage them in

their learning. In the past the stipend has been used by one student to buy a sewing machine, by

another extremely shy student to take a martial arts course, and by another to pay for summer

school courses. The program is expensive, a fact which attests to the commitment of the

superintendent and the SOSD Board to serve these students. To generate funding for the

program, Brian created a model in which 40% of the funding came from the division, 50% from

the province, and the remainder from fundraising efforts ($150,000 during 2016).

According to Brian, data are used to determine the effectiveness of the program from

multiple sources: "we use provincial assessments, report card data, attendance data, graduation

rates, the number of kids achieving more than required credits, and the number of kids going on

to postsecondary." Data from February 2016 for the 2015-2016 school year indicate: (a) 269

students are taking advantage of the *Wayfinders* program; (b) of those, 131 self-identify as

Indigenous and 105 are newcomer Canadians; (c) in semester one, the percentage of participants

attaining three credits ranged from 65% (grade nine) to 80% (grade twelve); (d) 39% of

participants participated in at least four hours of tutoring a month; (e) 41% of participants

engaged in at least three hours of homework support each month;(f) 42% of grade eleven and

grade twelve participants provided at least 30 hours of community volunteering support; and, (g) 80% of grade twelve students are on track to graduate (Seven Oaks School Division, 2016).

The Role of the Superintendent in the Development of *Wayfinders*

In considering the significance of the superintendent in the establishment and sustaining of this program designed to improve school outcomes for students living in poverty, three aspects of this development seem particularly informative: (a) initiating change that is critically informed, effective, and monitored; (b) continuing to learn about complex poverty and strategies to mediate effects on children and the ability to adapt programming as it unfolds in the specific context; and, (c) working strategically and effectively with others to gain political and financial support, and also generate community capacity.

Initiating change. The superintendent placed issues of poverty and the disadvantages that Indigenous and newcomer communities face in school onto the meeting agendas of the board of trustees and the staff (as I will discuss later in this chapter) on a regular basis. Informed by his perspectives and priorities, the superintendent initiated the development of *Wayfinders* in Seven Oaks School Division. After gaining information about similar initiatives such as the *Pathways* program in Toronto and the *Harlem Children's Zone* in New York City, he continued with a number of specific actions over time to launch the program. He shared what he had learned about similar initiatives with members of his board, his leadership team and the school administrators of the division. He secured funds from the school board for the initial first steps of the program. He searched for and obtained an offsite location to house the program, and then he hired the initial staff to begin the program, and then sought out other potential partners including the Winnipeg Foundation and the Government of Manitoba to support the program financially. After initiating the program, the superintendent pushed for the further development of the

program including a move to a new site in 2015 and the use of data to monitor and evaluate the

effectiveness of the program (Seven Oaks School Division, 2016).

Reiterating the importance of action, when I asked him what new superintendents need to

know about improving the educational experiences of children and youth living in poverty, he

emphasized the need for both vision and action stating, "you've got to dare to dream. But move

on it. Don't just dream, but what are you going to do?" Acknowledging that schools systems on

their own will not eradicate poverty he commented (as already stated early in the thesis on p.

191):

> But what's our piece of this? What's our responsibility? Are we making it better or are we
> making it worse? I don't think it's within the capacity of the school system to end
> poverty or to eliminate all the effects of poverty, but we can do something. Let's focus on
> what is the something we should do.

A superintendent can go beyond learning from others to initiating action.

Learning. Being caring about disadvantaged young people, and then launching into

action, without understanding/wisdom is not likely to be effective. Prior to, and during the

evolution of *Wayfinders*, the superintendent was actively seeking to learn more about complex

poverty and schooling, what could be done to mediate its effects, and how to do it within his

particular political context. His learning continued through his career well beyond academic

credentialing. As mentioned in Chapter Five, he continued to reflect upon his experiences as a

teacher in an alternative program and while he thought he made a difference, he came to realize

that the very nature of the program discriminated against racialized and mostly Indigenous youth.

He read and was influenced by the teachings of Silver (2000, 2006, 2014, 2016) and Levin

(1995, 2010). He participated in the MASS Ethical Leadership Cohort that included sessions

with Robert Starratt, and visited and learned about the *Pathways* program in Toronto and the

Harlem Children's Zone in New York City. Through the implementation of the programme,

Brian continued to learn, as demonstrated by his comments on a shift in the program from a

focus on tutoring to mentoring in order to engage disengaged youth.

Building support. While superintendents can initiate progressively informed programs

and can learn from other progressively informed initiatives, they can rarely bring them to fruition

on their own. In this case, the superintendent met with key provincial government ministers. He

then asked them to bring together other public officials who were like-minded, and could make

decisions. The superintendent also reached out to a private funding agency, the Winnipeg

Foundation (Winnipeg Foundation, 2016) for additional financial support. As stated previously,

the superintendent also continuously brought information forward to the board of trustees and the

staff of Seven Oaks School Division (SOSD) about the disadvantages that Indigenous and

newcomer communities face. This resulted in gaining the support of the board and staff to begin

and maintain the program. Again, as Brian said, superintendents can mediate the impact of

poverty on young people in a variety of ways:

> We can boost grad rates hugely and boost postsecondary entrance rates hugely with
> the kind of focused, targeted interventions that is working harder, working longer.
> If you want poor kids to achieve, they've got to work harder. They've got to work
> longer. They've got to have quality teaching and high expectations. Feeding them
> breakfast is not enough. Feeding them breakfast is necessary, but it is not sufficient.
> Putting them in special education makes their problems worse even if you feed
> them breakfast.

With the example of *Wayfinders*, the influence was through initiating a program.

That said, there are other ways that superintendents can be influential to address issues of

poverty. Brian demonstrated that he understands complex poverty. That's why he could

say that providing breakfast programs is not enough and placing students in special

education programs makes things worse. As I will share in the following examples,

superintendents can also be critically influential in other ways by: (a) providing

organizational and political support to programs that they have not even initiated: (b)

continuing to learn deeply about Indigenous and racialized communities, and: (c)

initiating and supporting critically informed learning by others in their organizations.

Illustration #2: Indigenous Focused Schools in Winnipeg School Division

Ever since the beginning of the 1970s, with the publication of the Manitoba Indian

Brotherhood's 1971 policy paper *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood,

1971) and the National Indian Brotherhood's 1972 document *Indian Control of Indian Education*

(National Indian Brotherhood, 1972), the twin pillars of First Nations control of their children's

education and of culturally relevant curricula and school practices have been central to efforts to

improve school outcomes for Indigenous students in both First Nations schools and in

provincially run schools. Over the last three decades, Winnipeg School Division has undertaken

a broad range of curriculum development, community outreach, and staffing initiatives in

support of Indigenous education. Significant among those initiatives was the establishment

within the division of two Aboriginal culturally focused schools, *Children of the Earth High

School,* which opened in 1991, and *Niji Mahkwa Elementary School* that opened in 1992

(Gaskell & Levin, 2012; Kelly, 2014). Unlike the *Wayfinders* initiative described above, these

were initiatives driven by community pressures rather than being created by the School Board or

developed in the superintendent's office. That said, Pauline stated that "my mindset at the time

was to change dramatically, I appreciated the task force [Winnipeg School Division Task Force

on Race Relations] because their findings fit with my way of thinking." Going further, she said,

"when the first meetings began, they didn't need to convince me that we needed to do something.

I needed to learn about what we needed to learn that would work." Political and logistical

complexities of attempting to implement, and then sustain culturally-focused schools with

meaningful community involvement in governance matters by the superintendent, point to a

different, but equally important form of influence and leadership.

Children of the Earth High School and Niji Mahkwa Elementary School

During the 1980s there had been a long, highly public debate around Aboriginal

education within the WSD that eventually led to the creation of *Children of the Earth High*

School (Gaskell & Levin, 2013) and *Niji Mahkwa Elementary School*. Pauline, who in the role of

Superintendent of Inner City Education served on WSD's *Task Force on Race Relations*,

(Winnipeg School Division, 1989) shared that the initial conversations that eventually led to the

creation of these schools came out of the WSD *Task Force on Race Relations* in the 1980s.

While official multiculturalism was in place in Canada, and WSD had put in place community

workers, enrichment programs, and other supports in schools with high levels of poverty, Pauline

said, "the feeling was that not enough was being done." Put more forcefully by an urban

Aboriginal activist,

> there was a strong sense that schools were not providing the kind of education that our
> kids needed, that oftentimes they were very racist environments, that the content that was
> being taught in schools was very biased and very white mainstream Euro-Canadian
> information (cited in Silver 2016, p. 189).

While the WSD Task Force on Race Relations had suggested exploring the creation of

an "Aboriginal survival school" (Gaskell & Levin, 2012, p. 64), an alternative model for

Aboriginal-focused schools was proposed by a new urban Aboriginal organization *The Thunder*

Eagle Society, that envisioned schools that would in addition to providing a culturally relevant

curriculum, be governed and run by the Indigenous community rather than the school board.

This question of governance and structure was a central issue in the ongoing discussions. A

member of the *Thunder Eagle Society* stated,

> Because they [the school board] had their own agenda, they [the WSD] didn't want to see
> the kind of significant changes that we were suggesting because it would mean changes to
> their curriculum and changes to their administration and really those changes being
> untested. And mainstream systems have a hard time dealing with unknowns and they have
> a hard time dealing with untested kinds of theories or ideas about how things ought to be
> done (Silver, 2016, p. 190).

From a different perspective, long-time school board member Anita Neville said, "The

Thunder Eagle Society wanted to be the governing or controlling body of the school. There were

prolonged negotiations in developing a governing model for it" (Gaskell & Levin, 2012, p. 65).

These quotations serve to illustrate something of the political and administrative differences that

had to be addressed. In essence, while there was a growing awareness that things needed to

change, there was little consensus on what changes were needed or how increased community

input into the education of Indigenous children in Winnipeg could and should proceed. Some

members of the Indigenous community wanted to gain the overall governance of the school,

select staff, while being provided funding for the school. Leaders in the WSD felt they needed to

follow the provincial *Public Schools Act* and maintain the governance and the funds of all

schools in their jurisdiction, including any Indigenous centered school.

It was a very public and controversial process through which the opening of *Children of

the Earth High School* in 1991 and *Niji Mahkwa Elementary School*, a year later became

realized. While both schools operate within the existing governance structures of the Division,

both have for more than two decades provided enriched academic programming with a strong

focus on Indigenous languages (Ojibway and Cree) and culture. The Niji Mahkwa vision

statement affirms the belief that all children have an inherent right to the highest quality of

holistic education. The belief was that the integration of traditional, cultural teachings in a supportive learning environment would provide students with strengths and skills to meet the challenges of life. Some of the goals and objectives of Niji Mahkwa are as follows:

a. To promote, develop and empower family, extended family, spiritual guides and teachers and community members as equal partners with rights and responsibilities who will become pro-active participants in the education of our children.

b. To nurture respect for spiritual guides and teachers.

c. To ensure the preservation, appreciation, and utilization of traditional languages by offering Cree and Ojibwe language instruction as compulsory subjects.

d. To promote a balanced lifestyle by incorporating cultural teachings to meet the students spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental needs. These teachings will be based on the *Seven Teachings* as adopted by Niji Mahkwa parents, community, staff, and students: knowledge/wisdom; love/peace, honesty/bravery; honour/respect; courage/integrity, and; humility and interdependence. (Niji Mahkwa Elementary School, 2016)

The Role of the Superintendent in Creating and Developing Indigenous Focused Schools

As noted earlier, notwithstanding the significance of the WSD *Task Force on Race Relations,* the development of Aboriginal-focused schools as a strategy for improving the school experiences of Aboriginal students in one of the city's lowest income neighbourhoods was not reform that was initiated by the WSD School Board nor led by the superintendent. That said, leaders did know change was needed, in chapter five I noted Pauline's experiences as a teacher and then a principal in the inner city and the poverty she witnessed. When a decision was made to explore the creation of an Indigenous based school, the Chief Superintendent of the WSD at the time, Jack Smyth, appointed District Superintendent Pauline to be the lead representative of the division during the process. Pauline said "Jack trusted me to get things done, didn't tell me how to do it but he trusted me…. and so yes, I took the lead [on behalf of the WSD]." During the

development these Indigenous focused schools, the role of the superintendent was critical in ensuring that: (a) the community aspirations for an Indigenous-centric school were heard, and (b) the two schools become a reality and were then supported and nurtured. To accomplish these outcomes, key elements of influence that the superintendent needed to fulfill were to have supported critical community conversations, developed trust, and mobilized support and the necessary resources for the schools to be successful once they had been established.

Facilitating dialogue. In her role, Pauline was a member of the WSD Task Force on Race Relations. She also served as the Chair of its School/Community Relations and Support Services Sub-Committee and then participated in numerous community focus groups and consultations on behalf of the WSD leading up to the opening of *Children of the Earth High School*. Pauline said even though she had worked in inner city schools and facilitated many of the conversations in the WSD Task Force on Race Relations, during the process for the development of the schools, she was to represent the division, but she was also there to listen and help everyone come to place where there could be agreement on a direction the division would take. When I asked her how she saw herself as being influential during this period and she indicated that she was well aware that she did not have all the answers and was not in a position to dictate, rather, "working with the people . . . ideas and thoughts were generated that I was able to bring forward to the attention of my colleagues in the superintendent's department, committees of the board, and communities." Looking back, she said, "I can think of some things, the whole area of Aboriginal education—I think the history of that would show that a lot of the work that was done in the area of Aboriginal education starting 30 years ago—somewhere in there, you'll find that I was responsible for that area in one way or another."

Developing trust. A challenge to participating in meetings that included educators and administrators from the division, and members of the Indigenous community, was the fact that Indigenous voices and perspectives were largely unheard (Task Force on Race Relations, 1989), and it was only in the early 1990s that Indigenous people became members of the WSD School Board when Bill Sanderson and Kathy Mallett were elected - but even then, neither served a second term. Pauline commented, "we had been trying to have the Indigenous community speak out more, so at times they were critical of us, and probably with every right." As they began to have meetings she recalled that as a White person in a position of power, she was often perceived as the oppressor rather than an enabler:

> For somebody like me with my accent, that hasn't always been easy. Truthfully, I've been in some meetings … very aware of how I would sound and what my own history was in some discussions. I actually put that on the table sometimes. It doesn't change me inside, but it's how people see me. How do we move forward in a way that supports the families, gets the education?

Pauline also stated that while members of the Aboriginal community were pushing for change, she and other representatives of the WSD recognized the need for change as well and she and others needed to demonstrate that thinking, "the community [Indigenous] put pressure on us and it moved us … but it [development of Indigenous focuses schools] didn't come as a blank slate, "I was already converted that we needed to do more." Going further, she said, "I really appreciated the work of the task force [the WSD Race Relations Task Force]," and "we recognized that we needed more Aboriginal students to graduate." Speaking further about those meetings she said,

> I knew what I was walking into, I knew that every meeting would be difficult with lots of frustration… you say to yourself, I need to be open, when they said 'we need money,' I would say 'here is what we can do if it [the school] is part of the WSD.

As an influential superintendent in this regard, her role was not one of initiating the change but rather that of as the official representative of a school system, participating in and supporting the dialogue with the urban Aboriginal community leadership to gain their trust while the parties had differing ideas on significant matters like the governance of the schools. She said she needed to be open to negotiating what was do-able/possible based upon: the aspirations of members of the Indigenous community; operating within the existing parameters of the Manitoba *Public Schools Act*, and; being bound by what the WSD school board was willing to entertain.

The creation of *Children of the Earth* and *Niji Mahkwa* schools was not directed by Pauline but from her position she was able to help them come into reality. In hindsight, Pauline said what was important was "taking time, listening, trying to understand what was behind the words and then thinking how to shift the system and accommodate," and speaking further to the issue of trust, Pauline said that from her position, "once the decision was made [to open the schools], it "was important to move quickly to gain the trust of the community." Critically informed work is not only within systems, it is also about engaging individuals and communities beyond the local school district in a matter that is usually highly nuanced, collaborative, and contextualized in the larger community.

Providing resources and mobilizing support. As mentioned earlier in this illustration, the two Indigenous-focused schools *Children of the Earth High School* and *Niji Mahkwa Elementary School*, opened in in 1991 and 1992 respectively. Many in the Indigenous community wanted the creation of schools in which Indigenous perspectives would be central to every component of the school cultures. While the *Thunder Eagle Society* wanted to see community based governance, the school division was able to maintain their governance role in all schools in WSD and to determine the selection of staff would take place. As the only Indigenous-centered schools in the

city, it was important that the school became resourced and supported not only as new schools but also in ways that took into consideration that: (a) they were new schools that needed to be staffed by Indigenous administrators, predominantly Indigenous staff, including those who could teach Indigenous languages; (b) as Indigenous-focused schools, new curricula and materials needed to be secured and as a high percentage of the Indigenous community were living in poverty, additional resources and practices to support the learning needs of these students had to be considered; (c) in light of the desire of some community members to govern the schools, it would be necessary to develop strategies that could provide for strong community voice; and (d) because the schools were new and unique, provision and generation of positive supports in the local community, the education community, and the broader community had to be nurtured.

After the board's approval of the opening of each school, Pauline, in her role as the Superintendent of the Inner City School District, needed to ensure that the schools received the resources they required and that they were supported in the local community and beyond. She needed to ensure that: strong, Indigenous school administrators were placed at the schools; that appropriate resources were provided to make sure that the schools become Indigenous focused and could meet the needs of students living in complex Indigenous poverty; that WSD was making sure that the Indigenous parents and other members of the community had voice in the schools, and that the division worked with the media to develop a strong reputation of the two schools.

Staffing. One of the recommendations from the Race Relations Task Force was to diversify the professional staff of the division, especially increasing the number of Indigenous and racialized people. As the Superintendent of the Inner City School District, the area of the city with the most ethnic diversity and complex poverty, Pauline supported the the *Community Based*

Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP) program in which Indigenous adults work as educational assistants while completing their teaching degrees and then join the WSD as teachers. This program has dramatically increased the number of Indigenous educators. Pauline ensured that from their inception, both schools had school administrators who are Indigenous, a majority of staff who are Indigenous, and teachers who teach Indigenous language programs.

Addressing complex Indigenous poverty. While there might have been disagreements between the WSD School Board and their senior administration team and local Indigenous groups like the *Thunder Eagle Society* about what kind of Indigenous focused schools might look like and who should govern them, there was agreement that many Indigenous children were not doing well and strategies and practices needed to change. Again in chapter five, it was identified that Pauline had direct experiences as a teacher and a school administrator with young people and their families living in complex poverty. Pauline said that as they were starting *Children of the Earth High School*, the first of its kind Indigenous focused school in Manitoba, located in an area of high complex Indigenous poverty, members of the division expected to receive additional funding from the provincial government. It did not. Pauline stated that all WSD schools are staffed on a divisional ratio of staff to students, however, in recognition of the additional needs at *Children and the Earth* and then a year later at *Niji Mahkwa,* Pauline said "we needed to provide a better staff– student ratio [more teachers per students] and we did." Pauline also arranged for full-day kindergarten [in Manitoba, the provincial government funds half-day kindergarten] and an infant laboratory at *Niji Mahkwa.* To address summer learning loss Pauline also provided *in kind* support (use of a school for no cost) in a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club for their Community School Investigators (Community School Investigators, 2016) program through which on average forty young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods participated in a five

week program of literacy, numeracy, athletics, daily meals, and a weekly fieldtrips during the

summer. Since 2012, *Niji Mahkwa* has been one of the schools that has hosted the program at no

cost to the students. As well, Pauline argued that support of the Indigenous focused schools in

particular, and all WSD schools in general, required the division to establish what it called

Divisional Aboriginal Coordinators positions, people who could work to support teachers at

Children of the Earth and *Niji Mahkwa*, as well as all schools in the division. Finally, Pauline as

referred to in chapter five, worked hard to establish an *Inner City Principal's Council* consisting

of school administrators from the district who created a solid professional learning group focused

on improving learning outcomes for all children, but especially interested in the unique needs of

the inner city, "kids are talking about the importance of learning their language and the schools

have created some momentum in the community."

Parent and community voice. As a result of her experiences as a school principal and

district superintendent, and especially due to her experiences facilitating meetings during the

WSD Race Relations Task Force and in the lead up meetings to plan the creation of what would

become *Children of the Earth* and *Niji Mahkwa* schools, Pauline was well positioned to advise

school administrators of the importance of creating opportunities for parental and community

voice – especially Indigenous voice. Pauline said "learning from the community was important,"

and that what she learned from the task force and school development consultations was that

"taking time, listening, trying to understand what was behind the words and then thinking how to

shift the system and accommodate was of paramount importance."

As indicated earlier, some members of the local Indigenous community, like the *Thunder*

Eagle Society advocated strongly for community-based governance of the schools rather than the

WSD School Board. Given the strong desires expressed by community members, it was clear

that the involvement of parents and community members would be strong, and potentially contentious. In the early years of the *Children of the Earth*, the compromise solution was a school based parent council. From Pauline's perspective, attendance at these meetings was very uneven and a challenge that emerged is one that is similar to what can occur in other schools, which is that "eventually, a small group of parents purported that they represented the entire community, which they didn't." Pauline encouraged a change to how to include community voice and as a result, they identified a number of community members and created an *Indigenous Advisory Committee* made up of "numerous influential members of the Indigenous community," to advise school administration and the district superintendent.

Creating a positive reputation. Pauline made it clear that the creation of *Children of the Earth* school was controversial. She said the *Thunder Eagle Society* wanted to have full governance of the school. Others in the Indigenous community did not want to have a separate school for Indigenous students due to a fear that it would not be as good as the mainstream high schools. Pauline said "people were not all for the school [*Children of the Earth*] for a variety of reasons… too soft-no academics, too divisive… let's not divide!... why should they get more money?"

As the school was being created, Pauline thought that it was important that she pay special attention to *Children of the Earth* and to communicate that not only was the idea of an Indigenous-focused school positive, but also that as a school, it was going to be successful. Pauline initiated a strategy to promote the school from the very beginning. As soon as the school opened, Pauline thought it wise to hire a private company to complete an assessment of the school recognizing that to look at results would take time: "we knew it would take three years to settle, then we could go back to the community and say 'things are working.''' To further

support the school, Pauline advocated with the senior administration team and the Board of the

WSD on an annual basis to maintain additional staffing that was initially put in place at both

schools.

Illustration #3: Building Capacity: Professional Learning and Diversifying the Seven Oaks

Teacher Force

One of the key dimensions of educational leadership at the divisional level highlighted in

Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom's (2004) synthesis of research is the

importance of capacity building – developing people and strengthening what they refer to as the

"technical core" of schooling (p. 24). Similarly, with specific reference to urban education in

Winnipeg and Toronto, it is Gaskell and Levin's (2012) argument that "a central and sustained

focus on improving teaching and learning" (p. 193) in these school systems was a critical

requirement for improved student experiences and outcomes. As indicated elsewhere in the

thesis, Kelly and Ron were both cognizant of the need to address certain aspects of poverty in

schools while operating in locally contextualized cultures that did not necessarily push them to

support, or to be open to, critically informed change. In the WSD and the SOSD, there has been a

greater impetus, due to demographics and organizational history, for Pauline and Brian to push in

the areas of professional learning and to develop critically informed learning environments for

organizational influentials. Both talked about a variety of different strategies in which they were

involved for recruiting, developing, and retaining knowledgeable, skilled and committed teachers

and putting in place structures that would provide them ongoing support and direction. Two of

those initiatives discussed here are the development of focused administrator professional

learning in the Inner City District Principal's Council within the WSD, and efforts in the SOSD

to purposefully educate their professional staff and increase the diversity of the division's

teaching force.

Professional learning and the WSD inner city Principals' Council. Kelly's (2015)

recent study entitled, *Leading schools impacted by poverty: Case studies from three Winnipeg*

schools, focused on the work and impact of three critically informed school principals in

Winnipeg School Division. In the study, each principal spoke of the strong leadership culture and

confidence that evolved in the district with Pauline's direction and ongoing support.

Early in the 1990s, then WSD Chief Superintendent Jack Smyth, recognized a need to

improve inner city schools and, as mentioned earlier, appointed Pauline to implement changes

that might lead to improved achievement levels. This led to the reorganization of school zones

and the creation of a separate school district called *Inner City* of which Pauline became

superintendent. The reorganization brought together school administrators and teachers who

worked in schools with similar demographics, each in communities with high percentages of

people living with complex Indigenous and racialized poverty. From 1998 through 2008, Pauline

was the district superintendent of the Inner City and together with the instructional staff they

built a strong reputation as a team that worked to improve instruction and student learning in an

area with high percentages of people living with complex Indigenous and racialized poverty.

I asked Pauline if she had specific goals for the newly developed Inner City District and

she was quick say "yes, why can't we find a way and have all of these children be successful?"

From the beginning, Pauline created a new team called the Inner City District Council that

consisted of all of the school administrators of Inner City District schools, the Aboriginal

Education Coordinator, and the Director of the Children's Guidance Center (CGC), who

coordinated targeted supports from social workers, speech and language specialists, and other

clinicians. From the beginning, a focused question that Pauline asked of council members was

"What can we do? Let's talk to each other in our tough schools about what we might do? What

does it take to help kids become successful learners?" When asked if she needed to convince

members of the council to take her questions seriously, she said that it was interesting, "the

visions of everybody [the majority of the administrators] coincided, how all the kids can be

successful, no excuses, all 12 [school administration(s)] were on board." Reflecting further about

the school administrators of the Inner City, she said, "people who led in Inner City schools had

the commitment to go beyond, they had a willingness to tailor their instruction to the needs of the

kids." Pauline also coordinated professional learning for the council in the area of organizational

design with a focus on putting in place processes for council meetings that would facilitate

improved team learning and collaboration. Pauline identified a series of books focused on

instructional design (Wiggins, 2005) Assessment (Sutton, 1995), instructional practice (Hattie,

2012), and the moral purpose of education (Fullan, 2003) to help nurture a common language

and shared principles within the district. As a group, the Inner City District Council established a

number of committees with an overall goal of improved learning for disadvantaged students. The

technology committee developed at the very beginning with an intention to place technology into

the hands of students who otherwise would not have access, and with goals of increased student

engagement and improved literacy. Two other strong committees were Aboriginal education and

student assessment. The Aboriginal committee focused on embedding Aboriginal culture into all

curricular areas and how to go beyond teaching students to supporting families (that resulted in

the creation of the position of community workers). The assessment committee was driven by

Pauline's questions "where the children are at," and then "what is it that we expect of these

kids." The group poured through provincial curricula to distill what eventually became the

Principles of Learning document (WSD, 2016), that identified key learning outcomes from the

provincial curriculum on which the committee then asked Inner City teachers to focus. The

actual work conducted to develop the document was also a strong example of the creation of a

collaborative learning environment for staff, "It is expected that all school administrators,

support personnel and district councils create on-going opportunities for dialogue. These

opportunities will support learners in developing a common language and understanding of the

Principles" (WSD, 2016b). The committee also developed a significant *Assessment for Learning*

initiative that Pauline said was informed by her personal learning, the learnings of others in

WSD, and by partnering with researchers such as Dr. Ruth Sutton with whom she wrote the book

Creating independent student learners: A practical guide to assessment for learning (2005).

Members in these committees often met at lunch hour in each other's schools, or immediately

after school, Pauline said 'they self-arranged and just focused on getting the work done."

Pauline shared that from the beginning, the council created a feeling of, "a sense that this

is organic, we are not being told what to do and we can create…. we [the Inner City

superintendent and school administrators] talked about collectively building successful learning."

From 12 schools, the Inner City School District grew to 22 schools and Pauline stated, "we

created such an enthusiasm that other school leaders [outside of the Inner City] wanted to

become part of us." Pauline pushed the development of a council that was focused on

professional learning in key areas such are assessment. She also helped to nurture a council

culture in which collaboration, high expectations, initiative, and dialogue became central. School

administrators were then expected to foster these ideas, practices, and principles and Pauline said

she "began to see it [ideas above] rippling throughout the schools."

As the WSD Inner City District Superintendent, Pauline's primary response to addressing the complex poverty she had witnessed throughout her career in Winnipeg was to focus on the development of systemic changes to ensure the district, principals, and teachers were focused on improving teaching, learning, and assessment in the disadvantaged communities that made up much of their community. Levin (2007), Fullan (2003), Elmore (2000) and others have argued that the most important factor in improving success for all students but specifically for students living in poverty is high quality instruction. It was through this lens that Pauline arranged for 80 teachers in the Inner City District to work collectively to develop their skills in assessing students between 2000 and 2003.

Building a staff that reflect the community. The critical perspective of this thesis and the Indigenous and racialized dimensions of complex poverty suggests that capacity building within the teaching profession is not solely a technical matter of improving pedagogic and curriculum skills but that it also has a recruitment and representation dimension. As Canada changes, "the diversity of the general population has increased, so has the student population, particularly in the metropolitan areas (Harvey & Houle, 2006)." In response to our changing demographics and acknowledging that many are living in challenging circumstances, Grogan stated, new skills and aptitudes are required as "the social, political, and economic dramas of the community unfold" (Grogan, 2000, p. 125). Despite the increasing diversity of Canada's and Winnipeg's population, this same level of diversity is not yet reflected within the teaching profession, and the overwhelming majority of teachers in Canadian schools are White. Having more teachers of colour is certainly not a panacea because as individuals, they may not automatically provide a better educational environment for White and racialized students (Villegas & Davis, 2007). There cannot be any doubt that White teachers contribute much to

students of colour, however, "white teachers - no matter how dedicated and skilled - can take their talents only so far … nor will most be in a position to understand, communicate, or identify with students of colour in the way educators of colour are able to do" (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009, p. 595). Other research indicates there has been a lack of preparedness of White teacher candidates for working with racialized populations (Solomon & Daniel, 2015; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell, 2005).

At one level, this is an employment equity issue - people of color should have equitable access to jobs for which they are qualified. At another level, the issue is about the needs of students and members of the larger community. It is not only important that students are 'seeing themselves among the staff' and realize that people who look like them can be in positions of positional power and influence, it is also about how students and their parents can benefit in schools when there are people who speak their language, are attuned to their cultural nuances around food, humor, cultural sensitivity, can assist with communication with parents, and as indicated by Klassen and Carr (1996), Solomon (1997) and Villegas and Lucus (2004) help students better navigate a world of White privilege (cited by Ryan et al,. 2009, p. 595).

Brian indicated for the past five years, SOSD has been very purposeful in recruiting teachers of Indo-Canadian, Black-Canadian, and Filipino-Canadian heritage. Ryan argued that the percentage of teachers of color who are Canadian born has been low for two reasons, "inequitable schooling practices that limit the number of students willing and able to enter the teaching force, and discriminatory licensing and hiring practices that exclude those who have already completed their teacher education programs" (Ryan, et al., 2009, p 609).

Under Brian's leadership, Seven Oaks has sought to diversify their professional staff in a variety of ways. They have been working with an association of educators of colour called the

Educators of Colour Network (EOCN). The EOCN brings together experienced educators of colour who share their knowledge and experience with younger educators and/or those who are new to Canada. The learning experiences span from learning about the expectations of Canadian parents and classroom management, to resume writing and interview skills. Under Brian's leadership, special interview sessions have been held for members of the EOCN. In 2012, Brian invited several educators who were new to Canada, to speak to all SOSD school administrators about their teaching experiences in their country of origin and they also shared their challenges with getting interviews with Winnipeg school divisions. Internationally educated professionals face significant hurdles once they have managed to acquire their licenses to teach in Manitoba. After that, they have to convince potential employers that as educators from other countries, they can do the jobs for which they have been trained and, in many cases, successfully practiced in other countries (Ryan et al., 2009).

As well, during the annual job fairs - teacher interviews held at the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba respectively, SOSD interview teams were directed to be especially mindful of educators of color.

These initiatives have been met with some resistance as some educators and members of the greater community have been concerned that such hiring disadvantages White educators. Others have expressed concerns that the students and parents will not be able to understand accents. One principal in Seven Oaks remarked:

> I was encouraged to hire a teacher who had recently come from the Philippines which I thought would be a big problem with parents and students due to his accent … if the choice was completely mine initially, I would not have hired him. Three years later, parents ask for their children to be in his class and he might be one of the most popular teachers on

staff. Wow, if I wasn't pushed, he would not be on staff and we [staff, parents and students] would not have learned. (C. Gaudet, personal communication, April 13, 2016)

Changing the cultural diversity of the professional staff allows students of colour to see staff from their backgrounds, brings a greater diversity of experiences and culture to staff, and provides personal interactions with influential People of Colour with White students, staff, and parents as well, in ways that may be contrary to stereotypes. The greater diversity, in Brian's opinion, starts to change the very culture of the school division. He noted, "we're in a position where we've been able to hire lots of people ... we kind of hire more diverse staff, it kind of entrenches some of those values."

Along with Winnipeg School Division, SOSD has also supported the Community Based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (*CATEP*) housed at the University of Winnipeg in which Indigenous people are hired as Educational Assistants (EAs) and provided with financial supports as they complete their teaching degrees over a six-year period of study and work in schools. Now into its second decade of operation, numerous Indigenous teachers have gone through the program and have been hired, over thirty in Seven Oaks alone. Another benefit was made obvious to Brian when he attended a graduation ceremony for the CATEP program. He said "I think sometimes for ourselves and others, we need to grasp the importance of what we are doing and that there might be larger consequences and this was certainly the case with me." Explaining he said:

> it didn't hit me until I came into the room the first grad we had for CATEP. You're having a grad that's at the big banquet room at the Canad Inn Garden City, and I think that year we're graduating maybe nine people between the two divisions [SOSD and WSD]. And the room's filled and there were three tables for every grad. And what hit me was what an immense achievement it was - not just for them - but for parents, for nieces, for nephews, for kids. And so that when we're struggling with the really messy kid to keep them on a path that's still is going to have positive life possibilities for them, it's not just this kid in

grade eight. It's their family, it's them as a parent, it's them as a community member. And to do that, when you look in the larger frame sometimes, you're going to end up rethinking stuff like suspensions.

An investment in people, many of whom were affected by complex Indigenous and racialized poverty, not only has educational and economic benefits but it also enhances the self-esteem of people, strengthens families and in fact, whole communities.

The Role of the Superintendent

Working with divisional administrators and staff, and building capacity is one of the more important areas of superintendent influence. Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) identified a number of characteristics of effective district leadership which included the belief that: (a) school system influentials can achieve high standards for all learners and high levels of teaching and leadership in a school system; (b) academically successful school systems establish a clear focus on success for students; (c) the development of district-wide curricula and approaches to instruction and alignment with assessment standards was paramount; and, (d) investment in instructional leadership at the school and district levels is important (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In addition, and from a critical perspective, Grogan (2000) added that superintendents must also focus on the needs of people who live in poverty and find ways to specifically create improved educational outcomes for students living in those conditions. In her role as superintendent, Pauline has demonstrated several of these characteristics.

Brian's work in Seven Oaks with diversifying the staff may seem to be more about equity than poverty, however, as discussed in chapters two and three, the impact of poverty concerns much more than a lack of income. If young people and the adults in the communities that they live within cannot gain a sense of hope and support from diverse professionals from all

backgrounds, including those who may have backgrounds similar to their own, the cycle of

complex Indigenous and racialized poverty will become easier to perpetuate. Two of the many

particular areas of the work of critically informed superintendents that Brian seemed to excel in

were in setting direction and reframing/restructuring organizations.

Building trust and a sense of efficacy. The creation of the Inner City School District

was new. New structures needed to be developed and relationships developed. Pauline was clear

that she believed that students needed to be successful and that they could be. By creating the

Inner City Principals Council, she also helped to influence the development of an environment in

which professional educators wanted to learn, learn together, and learn from each other.

As mentioned previously, the route through which Pauline believed disadvantaged youth

could benefit was through improved teaching and learning strategies. The Inner City District

made this a significant focus of their endeavors. This focus was largely supported by the

investment of time and resources to support the professional learning that took place.

A focus on instruction, learning, and assessment. Instrumental in the creation of the

Inner City School District, Pauline seized upon the opportunity to develop a new culture. School

administrators with similar challenges now had a superintendent who was not only supportive of

addressing equity but also with administrative influence to allow them to meet, discuss, and learn

in ways that could make a difference. The structure of Inner City Principals' Council and her

ongoing involvement enabled school administrators to develop as a strong team and a

professional community with a sense of direction and efficacy. These actions were in line with

Leithwood's (2004) assertion that,

> effective superintendents convey a strong belief in the capacity of school system personnel
>
> to achieve high standards of learning for all students and high standards of teaching and

leadership from all instructional and support personnel. This is marked by a willingness to identify poor performance (student, teacher, school) and other obstacles to success, to accept responsibility and to seek solutions. (p. 41)

Setting direction. Under the direction of the board and Brian, the Seven Oaks School Division continued to place a high priority on matters related to complex Indigenous and racialized poverty. As Brian indicated earlier in this chapter "you've got to dare to dream. But move on it. Don't just dream, but what are you going to do?" Grogan (2000), stated that superintendents cannot be effective on their own because of the enabling and inhibiting influences that are upon them, including reporting to a board and working with staff and others in the community who may not share their values or agree with their ideas, which can make setting direction challenging indeed. That said, with a supportive board and community behind him, Brian made it clear that becoming more focused on matters related to complex Indigenous and racialized poverty were not optional. Brian talked about the purposeful placement of his talented school administrators into the most challenging schools. Reading and learning about the treatment of Indigenous people was mandatory, and school administrators had to interview people who represented the community and they had to hire to make their staffs more representative. As Ryan stated, "if Canada is to have a more racially diverse workforce, then those working towards this end will need to acknowledge the systematic nature of the problems associated with this shortage and incorporate this knowledge into any solution (Ryan, et al., 2009, p. 209).

Reframing conversations and restructuring the organization. Brian has been very purposeful in arranging that all school administrators in the SOSD read and then discuss books related to complex Indigenous and racialized poverty such as *Indians Wear Red* (Cormack et al.,

2013) and *The Comeback* (2014). He made it clear that this is an area of focus for all school administrators, and that they in turn were expected to create school learning environments in which Indigenous cultures and a continued emphasis on empathy, understanding, and equity are visible through art, curricula, the professional learning of staff, and school activities. During the past five years, leadership retreats for all school administrators and board office leaders have focused on cultural identity, Indigenous studies, and poverty. Kevin Lamoureux, a professor at the University of Winnipeg, has been hosted by a number of Winnipeg school divisions to talk about Indigenous history, identity, and cultural proficiency. In the fall of 2015, the entire staff of SOSD attended a lecture by John Ralston Saul, the author of *The Comeback (2014).* Exposure to learning in these areas has not been optional; they have become systemic expectations of the job of educational leaders in SOSD.

Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to address the question, *What actions have the participants undertaken to address issues of racialized poverty?* Based upon an understanding that effective superintendents use their influence to alleviate conditions of poverty affecting the students and communities that they serve, the analysis used in this chapter was grounded in three main arguments introduced in the previous two chapters: (a) superintendents must develop a deep, critically informed understanding of poverty and its interactions with the structures and practices of schools; (b) effective superintendents must develop sophisticated political skills; and, (c) superintendents also need to be willing to act while recognizing that in certain circumstances, their actions may involve greater individual career risks than inaction. The illustrations used in this chapter were not meant to be seen as exemplars and the work of the participants in this study were carried out in highly contextualized environments – the illustrations are not meant to be the

beginnings of a recipe book for action. The illustrations do provide several insights into the potential work of being a critically informed superintendent who influences the creation of school environments that become centers of critique in which a narrative of behaviorally and community based poverty is challenged by projects that address the structural and historical foundations of complex Indigenous and racialized poverty. Whether or not the participants had deep understandings of poverty, were politically savvy, or had the desire to act upon critically informed inclinations, the experiences of the participants demonstrate that their influence is still limited and highly contextualized. Each of them operated within a larger meritocratic narrative that, while challenged and contested in some circumstances, still provided for each of them barriers to their own reframing of reasons for poverty, and any work against the effects of poverty upon the communities and students that they served. Critically informed and effective superintendents need to be learners, politically astute, and committed to action. To further remark upon the difference of *leadership* from *influence*, the projects of critically informed superintendents must be about creating environments in which others are learning, are expressing their ideas, and taking collective ownership for progressive changes. To borrow from the work of Gaskell and Levin (2012), superintendents can't do everything but this does not mean that they can do nothing.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As a Manitoba superintendent I have attempted to be grounded in notions of an action-orientated concern about inequality (West, 2000) while continuing in administrative roles within what I consider to be relatively conservative contexts. I have been drawn to a praxis of educational administration that is grounded in critical social theory with a hope that education systems in general, and those who work as superintendents in particular, can advance the cause for social justice.

Having completed this study, I have had my beliefs stated above confirmed but not without a much greater appreciation of the complexity of this agenda and the challenges of shifting this from a risky individual agenda to a systemic requirement. In this chapter I provide a brief summary of this study. I then provide some conclusions that are aligned with each of the three findings chapters. Specifically, I provide conclusions drawn from: (a) the participants' understandings of complex poverty and its impact on schooling, and some influences that contributed to their understandings; (b) how the participants understood their ability to influence school division policies and practice; and (c) viewed through a critical lens, the work of these superintendents that has made a difference. Following these

sections, I provide some thoughts regarding implications for practice and implications for further research. Finally, this chapter will conclude with an epilogue to balance the prologue that I provided at the beginning of this study.

Summary

The genesis of this study was born of the influences of 500 years of experiences with oppressive colonialism by my family. During my lifetime, the influences of my parents and their

family history, my experiences growing up in Canada, and my journey as an educator have led to

my questions, my doubts, and my hopes concerning issues of equity. I believe that the

motivations for this study have been informed by my cultural and familial stories, as well as both

deliberate and tacit decisions that have influenced my thinking, my beliefs, my inclinations, my

obsessions and now my focus upon improving, in a critically informed manner, the

superintendency.

As Gaskell and Levin (2012) and Silver (2016) point out, high poverty levels in

racialized communities are increasing in Canada, and due to multigenerational complex poverty,

impoverished children are more likely to have health problems, to live more transient lives, to

experience violence, and to drop out of school. Poverty means much more than a lack of income

(Silver, 2016). As Gaskell and Levin (2012) note, a considerable body of research across

jurisdictions has shown socio-economic status to be the single most powerful factor correlated

with educational success and other life outcomes.

After 18 years of divisional level administrative experience, I have been interested in how

we can advance our knowledge and our individual and collective abilities to ensure that

superintendents contribute to the creation of educational environments in which people challenge

the limitations of existing meritocratic narratives and where all people can gain the personal and

interpersonal, intellectual, social, and emotional capabilities that can provide access to the

opportunities and freedoms enjoyed by others in society (Sen, 1999).

My interests led to the development of research design that involved extensive interviews with

four experienced urban Manitoba superintendents and four research questions at the foundation of

this study that were addressed in the three findings chapters.

1. Chapter five addressed *how the participating superintendents articulated their understanding of poverty and its impact on students' school experiences, and how the following experiences informed these understandings: (a) early life experiences; (b) initial teaching positions; and (c) academic background and professional learning.* This question was informed by Silver's (2013) discussion of "complex and racialized poverty," its impact on school experiences/success (Gaskell & Levin, 2012), and critical perspectives on schooling and the superintendency in light of the notion of dominant narratives of poverty and of schooling (Foster, 2004; Larson and Murthada, 2002; Grogan, 2000). It assumes that knowledge is socially constructed on an ongoing basis. Finally, it also draws upon the work of Leithwood (2005, 2013), which suggests that educational leadership consists of the development of organizational vision, and of Grogan (2000), who suggests that both a well-developed understanding of poverty by the superintendent and an activist commitment to engage with the dominant narratives of poverty and of schooling is a necessary aspect of divisional leadership.

2. Chapter six addressed *how these superintendents described the socio-political and organizational environments that inform and influence their work as senior administrators.* The chapter also addressed *how the participants described their roles as senior administrators within these environments in relation to being able to influence systems.* The analysis in this chapter attempted to develop two main arguments: What superintendents can do to differing degrees, depending upon their abilities and the context within which they operate, is to be *influential* and inform vision, policy, and practices within an organization (Grogan, 2000; Leithwood, 2013; Rottman, 2007). Further, the work of critical educators in general and critical educational leadership in particular, within the context of specific organizational environments, should be "to raise ambitions, desires, and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issue of educational struggle and social justice" (Giroux, 1988, p. 177).

3. Chapter seven addressed; *what actions have they undertaken to address issues of racialized poverty?* The analysis in that chapter attempted to develop three main arguments: Critically informed people in positions of organizational leadership/influence, must have a heart for people who are oppressed (Gaskell & Levin, 2012; Silver, 2013); care and concern for the disadvantaged is not enough, it must be followed by thoughtful and purposeful action, and; influential superintendents can contribute to critically informed work and they can make a difference.

Findings

As stated a number of times throughout this study, my purpose has not been to profile or in some manner evaluate the individual participants in this study. Rather, my intention was to draw on their personal and professional experiences and insights and to explore some of the dimensions of understanding and action that might be associated with a superintendent's ability to influence in a positive manner the school experiences of children living in poverty. To do so is to develop a counter-narrative of critical theory/pedagogy that critiques the 'dominant narrative' of a meritocratic society and school system and instead views schools as sites of struggle for liberation and against oppression. In-light of the pervasiveness of the meritocratic narrative (while conceding that the narrative is not followed by all), it is unrealistic to assume that superintendents will, by way of their training and selection, be prepared to work towards improving the school experiences of students living in poverty. The thesis argues that this requires substantial amounts of work on the superintendent's behalf to acquire and continually refine and act upon this understanding.

Understanding Complex Indigenous and Racialized Poverty

If superintendents are to be critical in their practice this thesis argues that they must have a 'vision' that includes a significant understanding of poverty and its interactions with schooling, and they must see addressing the effects of poverty as a significant component of their work. I was curious about how the participants understood poverty and how, if at all, their understandings were connected to Indigenous and racialized Canadian experiences and identities/identifications.

Poverty is complex. Silver (2014) argues that poverty can be viewed on a continuum from a shortage of income to a more complex phenomenon that is intergenerational and produces much greater damage than a lack of income. Further, in contrast to a dominant narrative that suggests that complex poverty is rooted in the personal and pathological failings of those who are impoverished, he also suggests that complex poverty is a result of structural and political realities that impact Indigenous and racialized populations in a post-colonial world. The participants were aware of poverty, they saw its effects in their schools and in the greater community. Several of them spoke of living in homes with a lack of finances earlier in their lives. Like so many others in our society, each of the participants played to some of the personal and pathological failings as reasons for poverty in ways that minimize the role of race or colonialism in the perpetuation of poverty. Indeed, Brian reflected that even while working with disadvantaged Indigenous students in an alternative program and wanting the very best for his students, it took time and learning for him to realize that keeping marginalized students in alternative classrooms did not help them to become successful and it reinforced the message that the problem resides with the students and their families. Through his experiences and learning, Brian came to terms with a *false consciousness* (Fay, 1987) in which personalized supports and hard work is all that is required to help disadvantaged youth become successful. He now recognizes an alternative narrative in which the residue of colonialism and contemporary neo-liberalism reinforce structural barriers to improved opportunities for disadvantaged students. Each of the participants gave signs that they are on their own journeys to questioning traditional understandings of race.

Poverty and schooling. Poverty has a negative impact on how kids do in school, and poor outcomes in school often increase the chances of living in poverty. Poverty and schooling

can create a vicious cycle in which poor schooling reinforces poverty and poverty reinforces not only poor educational outcomes but also a pervasive sense that the meritocratic narrative may have some currency. In Canadian society there is a pervasive ethos that if people work hard in their lives in general, and in school specifically, all can achieve. Without attention to the social and structural barriers that are in many ways reinforced in many schools, many will conclude that racialized newcomers and Indigenous people are not taking advantage of all that a meritocratic society has to offer. In such an environment, schools reproduce beliefs in a meritocratic narrative and attempts to challenge such a narrative are difficult. The challenges created by complex poverty require recognition and genuine understanding, additional resources and/or different thinking and approaches.

Schools as sites of struggle. The meritocracy narrative lives globally, nationally, provincially and locally. While it helps to reinforce the continuation of inequitable conditions, a societal adherence to the narrative is also always partial, contested and articulated locally. Several of the participants lamented that while individual schools are doing a good job to address the daily impacts of poverty on their students, school systems in general and themselves as influential superintendents could be doing much more to alleviate the impact of complex poverty. While schools cannot be responsible for eliminating poverty, influentials need to address what they could be doing more of as well as what they should be doing less of. That is to say, influentials need to revisit the philosophies and practices that they hold, and those that are rooted in the structures and cultures of their school systems that are tacitly reinforcing the perpetuation of inequity. School systems can either continue to reinforce the cycle of complex poverty, or they can be locations in which individuals and communities can interrogate contemporary thinking and develop more critically informed practices.

How understandings of poverty develop. I was interested in how the participants' perspectives developed and evolved (or not) during their early life experiences, their academic preparation, their professional roles and their professional learning. What I found was that developing a significant understanding of complex poverty needs to be personally and actively pursued. This is because it was the experience of the participants that such knowledge was not generally gained through their early life experiences, through their teacher preparation programs or through their chosen graduate programs. A deep and sophisticated understanding of complex Indigenous and racialized poverty cannot be assumed of current superintendents, nor is it easily attainable. Where the participants did indicate not only an interest, but also demonstrated a commitment to action to address the impact of complex poverty, it was largely due to purposeful and sustained personal interest, and study through dialogue with knowledgeable people, reading and other forms of professional learning. A conscious effort has to be put into challenging the dominant narrative about poverty and to develop a deeper, critically informed counter-narrative.

Upbringings. In Manitoba, division-level administrative leaders are overwhelmingly White Canadians. The early life experiences of the participants, each of them currently in their 50s or 60s, were situated in contexts that were much less diverse, did not present many opportunities to be aware of people living in complex poverty, and provided a stereotypical narrative of society and so-called minority communities. Participants spoke of learning in school the progressiveness of the British Empire, and sanitized perspectives of "Native Indian" life in western Canada. They also spoke of being raised to believe in the paramount importance of hard work and individual responsibility – the narrative of the meritocracy *writ large.*

Early teaching experiences. Within the small group of influentials who participated in this study, several of them had early teaching experiences in impoverished communities. From

this small group, generalizations cannot be made but several observations are informative.

Having close contact with young people and communities experiencing poverty can lead to

increased empathy for those living in hardship. However, the experiences do not necessarily

result in deeper understandings of complex poverty. This is because living in a larger society

informed by a meritocratic narrative can result in a perspective that poverty is about personal

failings (or family and community) and inadequacies, and is not necessarily connected to historic

colonization and inter-generational racism, and it can lead to the opinion that educators simply

need to work harder to address the individual needs of poor kids. Brian, for example, talked

about his hard work for years with impoverished and racialized kids in alternative classrooms

before realizing that the very reality of marginalizing students in alternative classrooms was a

significant component of the system that reinforced the continuation of racism and poverty.

Experiences and exposure to people living in poverty can reinforce the belief that the roots of

poverty are within the failings of individuals and communities living in poverty.

     Academic and professional learning. If influential superintendents are to nurture the

development of divisional educational visions informed by critical perspectives, they must

become deeply knowledgeable about the contemporary realities of and historic development of

complex poverty. Each of the participants has been university educated, credentialed to teach in

Manitoba, and has taken advantage of further professional learning opportunities. Their

interviews suggest that university programs did not prepare them to have any sophisticated

insights into complex poverty. Even if courses related to complex poverty existed when they

attended university, the range of program choices that were available were so broad that students

did not need to take courses related to poverty as opposed to other specific areas of interest

including curriculum, special education, assessment, or a myriad of other important areas of

study. Where participants did develop growing knowledge about complex Indigenous and racialized poverty, it was due largely to working directly with specific communities, followed with a personal choice to learn more through (a) personal relationships and learning with those who experienced, or were knowledgeable of complex poverty, (b) deep and extensive reading in the area, and (c) significant professional development such as participation in programs such as the multi-year Ethical Leadership Professional Learning Project (Bryant, 2015) provided by the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS).

How the Participants Described the Socio-Political Environments

They Worked Within and Their Ability to Influence Those Environments

Chapter six addressed how the participants described the socio-political environments that they worked within and how they have been influential within those environments. The analysis used in the chapter attempted to develop two main arguments: (a) what superintendents can do is to be *influential* (as opposed to leading) and inform vision, policy, and practices within an organization (Leithwood, 2013); and (b) beyond these important components, critically informed influentials also need to address matters of social justice (Grogan, 2000; Rottman, 2007). In chapter six I attempted to address my second and third research questions: *How do these superintendents describe the socio-political and organizational environments that inform and influence their work as senior educational administrators, and how do they describe their ability to influence systems?*

How the Participants Described the Socio-Political Terrain

Each of the participants was hired by and responsible to a school board consisting of nine elected trustees. As well, each of the participants took direction from the Department of Education and Advanced Learning, were informed by their professional association (MASS),

managed operations in at least 20 different schools, and were subject to the influence of labour

unions and other societal influences beyond their direct control. Grogan (2000) argues that

superintendents operate within environments that contain a mélange of enabling and inhibiting

factors. The participants concurred that they cannot be *command and control leaders* as so many

other people and organizations exert influence and leverage upon them. The term *influential*

more accurately describes the roles that superintendents play in bringing about any changes that

might occur within their environments.

How can superintendents be influential? While the participants were clear that they

personally could not lead by command, there was evidence that they could influence the

development of policy and practice related to complex poverty by: (a) choosing to be critical and

influential; (b) purposefully building relationships with trustees, government officials, and other

influentials within and beyond their organizations; (c) gaining and maintaining the trust of these

other influentials; (d) using language skillfully to frame arguments and directions; and, (e)

extending their influence beyond their school divisions by creating partnerships and coalitions.

Critically informed superintendents need to focus on social justice. Typically,

superintendents in Manitoba have not been expected to pay special attention to poverty.

Individual superintendents also have personal interests and pay special attention to specific topic

areas including but not limited to special education, literacy, citizenship, student engagement,

organizational efficiency, and effective management. If a superintendent is to address issues of

poverty, he/she needs to become educated about what it is, its causes, and potential remedies.

Such an education is not a requirement that is placed upon them and accordingly, at least at this

present moment, gaining this awareness needs to be a personal initiative.

Critically informed superintendents create time to discuss societal issues with their respective school boards and create critically informed learning opportunities with their divisional leadership teams and school administrators, and then all staff and the greater community.

A growing literature indicates that influentials need to develop the attitudes and aptitudes to forge new advocacy skills and develop new social and political networks with community groups and players in other branches of government to become "critical organic catalysts" (West, 1993, p. 22). Critically informed influentials are people who can negotiate the interactions and culture of the organizational and cultural mainstream, while being grounded in the foundations of critique and hopefulness.

What Has Been Done and What Can Be Done: Critical Perspectives

From what I learned from the participants, superintendents can mitigate the impact of complex poverty upon students and communities by acting upon the ethics of care, critique, and justice (Starratt, 1997), and in so doing, attending to an educational and political agenda committed to addressing issues of poverty and schooling.

Acting Upon the Ethics of Care, Critique, and Justice

Schools, like so many societal institutions, replicate existing societal mores, patterns and structures. School systems exist within a larger socio-political setting, the Canadian society. As indicated by the participants, in Canada, a dominant story that we tell ourselves, informed by a colonial past, rational technicism, and by neo-liberalism, is that the playing field is flat, and everyone has opportunities to succeed if they work hard.

Care. Superintendents need to be people who care for people. Kelly stated ``my ethics and values are based on compassion, fairness, honesty, responsibility and respect." He also said

that this level of care is not enough and articulated that there is so much more he can do in his capacity as superintendent to make meaningful change for students and communities that are disadvantaged. Care is usually complicated as superintendents and school systems need to juggle between multiple goods. These issues become dilemmas as influentials try to support multiple agendas that often conflict with one another. Brian talked about his experiences with many impoverished kids who were violent and disrespectful of authority within systems that needed to maintain order and safety in schools. An easy solution is to suspend students from school who do not conform. When that occurs, often the young person spends time not being supervised or cared for, certainly not learning, and the antecedents to the behavior are not being addressed. More challenging, but caring solutions are to find ways for that student to not be suspended, to address the reasons for the behavior that have systemic origins, and to help the student make better decisions. Ron shared his frustration with trying to help the relocation of members of the Lake St. Martin First Nations community who had their school burn down in 2013. While expressing care for their condition, Ron's honest perspective also reminds me that very different perspectives exist with dilemmas related to historic and racialized dilemmas. These are real dilemmas with which education system influentials need to grapple regularly. Simple expressions of care are not enough.

Learning. Brian was one of the participants who had extensive experience teaching in schools with impoverished students. He reflected that while he also cared deeply about these students, it took a while before he realized that his work as a teacher in an alternative classroom was reinforcing complex poverty rather than changing it. Pauline talked about the push back she received as a White superintendent with a British accent while engaged in conversations about racism in Inner City Winnipeg, but also about how much she learned from Indigenous colleagues

about the realities of complex poverty. Brian talked about the deep learning he has done in the last few years about Indigenous history, racism, neoliberalism, and poverty. Kelly and Ron shared about how much the sessions of dialogue through the development of this thesis helped to push their thinking about complex poverty. Superintendents as influentials are not compelled to be critically informed about poverty and racism. They have to choose to be critically informed. For that to happen, they need to read, they need to engage with people who are knowledgeable and they need to engage with the disadvantaged communities that they serve.

Making a difference. The participants provided a range of examples of work of how they influenced other influential, including trustees and senior administrators, and helped them to bring into effect critically informed changes at a systems level. A conclusion that can be made however, is that superintendents are limited in what they can achieve because of the complex organizational structures within which they work, and because of the dominant values and beliefs of the broader community. They can however, *be influential*. Ron and Kelly talked about placing onto the agenda of board meetings, data about demographic changes in their communities that shed light upon the fact many students living in poverty have not been doing as well as more affluent young people. Pauline talked about meeting with individual trustees to educate them about important issues, while Brian talked about setting aside time with the SOSD board to learn about Indigenous people, colonialism and poverty. He also provided a number of examples of the importance of framing issues and the ensuing discussions so that together, people could become aware of the existence of alternative narratives to the psychological and cultural arguments about why some communities are not doing so well. A number of other programs and initiatives were described by the participants that may help to address the effects of poverty and go beyond the funding provided, and the expectations of government including the provision of full-day

kindergarten programs in low SES communities, nutrition programs, and summer learning

programs. As Brian said however, "feeding them breakfast is not enough." More substantive

work that has been done included (a) helping influentials to access counter narratives though

professional learning, (b) working with the community, often through challenging conversations,

to create in the case of WSD, Indigenous focused environments that can better assist students to

learn about their heritage and gain a better respect for themselves and their culture, and (c) with

the example of the Wayfinders Program, to provide strong mentoring and tutoring support,

additional challenging intellectual engagement, using data to track and then reinforce growth,

and to then support students financially for a post-secondary education.

Implications for Practice

As stated several times in this dissertation, I have been interested in how we can advance

our knowledge and our individual and collective abilities to ensure that superintendents

contribute to the creation of educational environments in which people challenge, develop, and,

in the words of Foster (1986), "liberate human souls" (p. 18). It has been my hope that several

insights can be taken away from this dissertation that can inform the work of critically curious

superintendents and those who influence superintendents. I believe there are a number of

promising practices that emerged through the development of this dissertation. Three of the most

promising ideas include: first, that superintendents must choose to make a conscious effort to

learn about the history of colonialism and the impact not only on Indigenous and racialized

communities, but also on the national psyche in an manner that challenges the narrative of a

societal meritocracy and deepens their understanding of complex poverty and its impact on

educational outcomes, and, second; they must recognize the importance of, and develop their

abilities related to, building relationships, framing arguments, and advocating for critically

informed practices; and, finally, they must actually expend organizational, social, economic, and political capital to influence people and systems to act upon critically informed changes.

Learning about Complex Poverty

It was clear that the early life experiences of the participants did not prepare them to establish an understanding of contemporary complex Indigenous and racialized poverty as it exists in Winnipeg. It was also made clear in their examples that in their professional preparation they were not required to take courses that would expose them to the traditional, never mind alternative, explorations of colonialism and racism, or Indigenous cultures. In preparation for work in Manitoba schools, all education students at both the Bachelors and Masters levels should have to take mandatory course(s) that explore these subjects and that develop an understanding of complex poverty and its impact on educational outcomes. Whether this would result in all students beginning to doubt the reality of a meritocratic narrative is perhaps too ambitious. However, the participants in this study indicated that their thinking shifted as a result of dialogue on these subjects, during the course of this study. Coursework in this area for all educators and administrators it is essential if educational systems are to improve the ways in which they counter the impact of complex poverty. We cannot wait for people to become superintendents and then hope that they become *self-enlightened* about complex poverty. What is required is a systems level challenge for the province, faculties of education, and school divisions to ensure that during all stages of their preparation and professional learning, educators are exposed to critically informed narratives and taught how to work and act within political contexts. The University of Winnipeg recently mandated that all students will take a compulsory course "focused on the rights, traditions, history, governance or other facets of Indigenous culture" ("UWinnipeg Approves," 2015) and the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba has

created a new Diversity Policy that aims to have upwards of 45% of their student population made up of Indigenous, racialized, LGBTQ, and other marginalized peoples (Janzen, 2016).

Framing and influencing. In Manitoba, all district level directors, assistant superintendents and superintendents who are certified as teachers are members of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS). In the last five years MASS has demonstrated a strong focus on poverty and equity through annual conferences and its annual goals. It has also maintained a voluntary Ethical Leadership cohort of more than 20 participants (roughly 15% of the MASS membership) over four years that demonstrates their willingness to learn. The Ethical Leadership cohort could develop more focused attention on complex poverty, Indigenous history and culture, and racism.

In 2015, MASS also developed a superintendent's certification program to support professional learning for directors, assistant superintendents and superintendents new to their position. The concept is that annually a range of modules such as *Labour Relations* and *Budgeting* would be made available. Several new modules that could be developed to support critically informed work related to complex poverty include framing, that is, the ability to formulate arguments, effectively advocate for new ideas, and to inquire into the ideas of others, and a specific focus on the realities of, the creation of strategies to address the impact of complex poverty on schooling.

Influencing the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA). School board members of each of the 34 boards in Manitoba are likely representative of the general public with regards to their understandings of complex poverty. At the same time, it is school boards who are responsible for establishing policies and hiring superintendents and keeping them accountable. This means that a critically informed superintendent needs to, in politically astute ways, find

ways to help the board to whom they report to question the meritocratic narrative and become

aware for the socio-economic realities in their communities as well as the historical and

structural factors that have helped to create complex poverty. The MSBA holds annual

conferences through which they seek to further educate school trustees and they are always

looking for new presenters and presentations. Critically informed influentials have opportunities

to engage with to the members of the MSBA on the causes and consequences of complex

poverty and strategies to address the impact of complex poverty on schooling. As well, work

with the executive of the MSBA could result in the forwarding of, and the acceptance of a

resolution that school boards should be seeking critically informed superintendents and that

language indicating this be included in all executive search advertisements.

Critically informed leadership. Superintendents do have considerable leverage over the

allocation of a division's internal funds. Critically informed or critically curious superintendents

can create a sustained focus on the issues of complex poverty, Indigenous realities and racism

through speakers such as John Ralston Saul for all staff, targeted book and article readings, and

the formulation of divisional direction that makes a similar focus on learning about complex

poverty an expectation at all schools. It is also important that superintendents use their influence

to provide disaggregated data about how students are doing. Boards, staff and the community

need to know that a divisional graduation rate of 82% hides the fact that 50% of Indigenous kids

do not make it to grade twelve (Brownell et al., (2010). Superintendents also need to use skills in

such a way as framing discussions in such a way as to create environments in which people are

open to interrogating the data that is provided.

The right people in the right places. If school boards are to address complex poverty

they need to put in place critically informed, skillful and willing superintendents. Critically

informed or critically curious superintendents need to do the same in the placement of divisional staff. Many influentials who make a difference for people living with the ramifications of complex poverty have a heart for the people, are learning about the causes of poverty, want to get to know people in the community, and want to and do act skillfully to mitigate the effects of complex poverty. Influentials who are placed in low socio economic status community schools need to have these attributes and *they need to want to be there.* This also means that students need to see themselves reflected in the divisional staff, and not only as custodians and educational assistants as important as those jobs are. Indigenous and racialized students need to see Brown and Black faces in the ranks of teachers, school administrators and superintendents. White students also need to see this to help break down stereotypes that the larger society might have placed upon them.

Short step interventions. Pauline talked about the Race Relations Task Force being brought to life in Winnipeg School Division in spite of a number of existing programs to support children in poverty. There were a range of additional initiatives that provided supports and services to many students, including those who are victims of poverty, however, they were not necessarily systemic initiatives that changed the minds and subsequent actions of teachers, administrators, and trustees - changes that are essential to long term, critically informed systemic changes as opposed to 'quick fix' supports that are helpful, but do not necessarily challenge the cycle of complex poverty and poor school outcomes. Examples of initiatives that can be started by, or supported by, superintendents in this area include the following.

Full day kindergarten. SJSD and WSD all provide full time kindergarten classes targeted in disadvantaged communities. Full day kindergarten provides an extra two and a half hours of

learning a day while relieving parents of paying for daycare costs. Full day kindergarten provides additional opportunities for relationship building and learning for disadvantaged children.

Nutrition programs. All participants also spoke about the growing number of students who are coming to school hungry and how all of them have schools in low income neighborhoods providing breakfast or nutrition programs at no cost. Ron articulated that "every student has an equal opportunity as they come through the door." That may look different for different communities. As I commented on earlier, as good as nutrition programs can be, they are not enough to address the challenges created by complex poverty. A caring response informed by the dominant social narrative can result in well-meaning forms of charity such as nutrition programs that are simply not enough.

School supplies. SOSD arranged for the centralized provision of school supplies. For a comparatively low cost of $43, each student arrives at school in September with school supplies on their desks, rather than having poor and near poor parents paying upwards of $70 for similar supplies.

Summer learning programs. Several of the participants talked about their summer learning programs. Typically, they are full day programs five weeks in duration through which they provide literacy and numeracy support. These programs also provide access to museums, rural life, and to universities in ways similar to those experienced by young people in more affluent communities.

Implications for Research

This study illuminated a number of additional areas of potential study. As stated several times in this dissertation, I have been interested in how we can advance our knowledge and our individual and collective abilities to ensure that superintendents contribute to the creation of

educational environments in which more people and communities, including those experiencing

complex poverty, can thrive. I believe that our work sheds light on a range of another potential

areas of research.

Study an Individual Who Has Been Identified as Doing Critically Informed Work

Additional lessons could be learned by conducting research and developing case studies

based upon the achievements of individual Canadian superintendents identified as doing

critically informed work. This is not to say that it would result in a template of how critically

informed leadership works because it is so locally contextualized. That said, a study that trains a

lens upon a particular experience, and gains information about their influence from others that

work with them would be informative both of the individual skills and dispositions of the

superintendent and the specific provincial and local forces that supported or inhibited critical

work.

The Experiences of Canadian Children Living in Complex Poverty

Silver's (2014) work to shed light upon complex poverty is not as well-known as it

should be in light of the pervasiveness of poverty in Canada in general and in Winnipeg in

particular. His work not only as a researcher but also as a community worker has allowed him to

gain significant insights into the impact of complex poverty while not personally experiencing

complex poverty (Silver, 2014, 2016). For those who are immersed in a narrative of meritocracy,

as most educators and especially those in positions of influence are, and for those many who do

not have close contact with the impoverished, it is difficult to empathize or to be aware of the

challenges faced by those effected by complex poverty. I am reminded of my drive from middle

class south Winnipeg through downtown Winnipeg to the board offices in Seven Oaks School

Division that I made for four years. Every day I drove by people, mostly Indigenous, living on

the streets, ravaged by the effects of substance abuse, violence and the lack of food and shelter. It was easy to just drive through these neighbourhoods. Substantive counter-narratives about the lives of those living in those conditions could shed light upon the conditions of people who are living within minutes of many living middle or upper middle class lives. It might be helpful for influentials to read about the lives of the students who come to their schools - or often do not come to school every day because of the challenges they face. In every school division in Winnipeg, inner city and suburban, there is also a growing population of racialized newcomers. These too are families and communities that we need to know better.

Intersectoral Collaboration

Several of the participants demonstrated the importance of working with other influentials beyond their school divisions. Brian and others shared that there is much that school systems can do to mediate the impact of poverty, but they cannot do it all. Collaboration with other branches of government including justice, immigration, Indian Affairs, and finance would be helpful. Research that illuminates successful collaborative practices elsewhere, as well as exploring how more collaboration might work would be helpful. Jean-Vianney AuClair, as of June 2016, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Manitoba Education and Training, is also completing a PhD dissertation titled *An Analysis of a Horizontal Public Policy Approach Involving Education: A Case Study of the Healthy Child Manitoba Strategy (AuClair, 2016).* His work explores how different government departments and agencies can and should work to address systemic issues including poverty.

School Boards

While superintendents are in positions of influence, they report to elected trustees who serve on school boards. In Manitoba, school boards have the ability to make budgetary decisions

that determine tax rates for the public. As is the case with the general population, trustees cannot always be expected to be knowledgeable about complex poverty. It can be expected that they believe that society is a meritocracy. That said, it may not be true. Given their positions of organizational influence, it would be interesting to research the perspectives of members of a school board in a similar manner to this study of selected school superintendents. Of value might be to identify a school division that is doing critically informed work, and to spend time with the elected trustees to gain a sense of why they are inclined to critically informed perspectives.

Influentials in the Manitoba Department of Education and Advanced Learning

For sixteen years, until the spring of 2016, the New Democratic Party (NDP) governed the province of Manitoba. During this time a number of initiatives were created to address poverty through the Department of Education and Advanced Learning, including the creation of a wide range of resources to support Indigenous education, the creation of the Aboriginal Education Directorate, the Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant (AAA), the creation of *Bridging Two Worlds: Aboriginal Education and Employment Action Plan 2008-2011* (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2008), and the releasing of Indigenous student achievement data from the 2014-2015 school year. In the *Improving Educational Outcomes for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Students* report (Office of the Auditor General, 2016), it was stated that while the Department had done an admirable job in initiating progressive initiatives, it did not follow through with school divisions to demonstrate successful results. Interesting insights could be gained through a study that includes discussions with the individuals involved in these processes.

Let's Get it Done

From my own perspective the work of the superintendent is particularly complex and extremely political, and there can never be a recipe book from which to advance the cause of greater equity for all our students. That said, I believe we can learn from the stories of those who have made a difference, no matter how small or contextualized. I am interested in how we can advance our knowledge and our individual and collective abilities to ensure that superintendents contribute to the creation of educational environments in which people challenge, develop, and, in the words of Foster (1986), "liberate human souls" (p. 18). How can the work of school superintendents become that of responding to complex Indigenous and racialized poverty in ways that we have not necessarily or consistently done in the past? We live in relatively prosperous times, yet significant fault lines are deepening between those who are fiscally stable, and a growing number who are living in increasingly financial, economic, social and psychological peril. More often than not, these fault lines parallel White/Brown-Black and colonialized/colonizer social demarcations within contemporary North American societies, and speak to the realities of a poverty and social exclusion that is highly racialized and complex.

As a group, the participants believe that although they can be influential given their positional authority, they are also limited by the organizational and cultural structures and narratives of the larger system and society. While there were expressions of a desire to do more with regards to issues of equity, there were also expressions that in light of the limitations of what individuals and school systems can do, what is currently being accomplished is quite exemplary. Several commented that in spite of their positions, it is often difficult to prioritize opportunities to explore issues of equity with their peers as occurred through the conversations held during this study. Johnson (1996) and Grogan (2000) suggested that the discourse of the

superintendency is often about being removed from the community and even the day-to-day relationships with those in schools. They are often expected to be, and many assume it is their responsibility to be aloof, rational and neutral. This prevents superintendents as influentials to gain awareness of how things really are in the communities where their students are living in ways that can shake an ill placed confidence in what they know. Critically informed superintendents should be questioning their own perspectives on complex Indigenous and racialized poverty. None of the participants indicated that they are in a significant way connected with the local communities in general, and those impacted by complex Indigenous and racialized poverty in particular. Given the knowledge and relational power that superintendents have, we can be engaged with the communities that we serve. If we are ethically inclined, we have a responsibility to push the agenda for equity as superintendents as well as citizens.

Superintendents cannot simply command others and expect change to occur especially when it comes to impacting the day-to-day lives of students. Superintendents interact daily with individuals in the provincial government, trustees, union leaders and members of their leadership teams who have or do not have similar philosophies. A critically informed superintendent will choose to be courageous in her/his daily opportunities to be influential. This requires a degree of risk taking for proposing and supporting policy directions and actions that is beyond managerial Again, and to the purpose of this research, borrowing from the work of Gaskell and Levin (2012), superintendents can't do everything but this does not mean that they can do nothing.

Epilogue

As I have stated in the prologue of this thesis, my deep interest in the subject of this project has resided in the back of my mind for many years, fed by a familial and cultural legacy of 500 years of colonialism, slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and subtle Canadian discrimination. In the prologue I shared that my parents, through their words and their actions, taught me the importance of hard work and perseverance in a society that I would find discriminates against racialized people. They never talked about *institutional racism* or *neocolonialism,* for those words would have been foreign to them, rather, they talked about the unfairness of the world in a fatalistic manner that suggested *this is the way things are, so Duane, you just have to deal with it and be better to be equal.*

While doing research for this thesis, I have continued to explore the thinking and the feelings that went into my prologue. My years as a young person were conflicted. I was aware of a racist past and a discriminatory present. At the same time, my family and I did well in Canada; I attended good schools, took great trips, played Canada's game at a high level – hockey, and received a university education. I also benefitted from the odd, and growing acceptance of some components of African-North American culture within the mainstream (I wore an Afro, could dance, and play basketball), *I was fitting in and being accepted.* While I watched the flagrant racism in the USA and South Africa on television and did have some experiences of racism in my own life, the dual messages from my parents were (a) this is the way things are, and (b) do not wait for structural changes occur, if my personal conditions were to improve, it would be by my own hand. Whether a meritocracy existed or not, my thinking was that if I wanted good things for myself, I needed to make them happen on my own, I could not wait for systems level changes to occur. This has allowed me, after all these years, to be open to the narrative of a

meritocracy and to be guided by it whether consciously or subconsciously. In so many ways, I

have been an example of a Person of Color attaining success in a meritocratic society, if one

works hard, one can achieve in the Canadian mainstream so why cannot the rest of people of

colour do the same?

This dichotomy has been present throughout my career in education. While I have

recognized for many years that institutional racism exists, after being coached by my parents *to*

get over it and accept the importance of personal agency, through the process of writing this

thesis, I have come to reflect that I did default to becoming a hero leader during my early work

as a teacher and a coach and it took a number of years before I made a conscious decision to

become a teacher and a coach much more focused on inclusion and diversity rather than order. If

I have struggled so much in this area, how can I expect other influentials, who are not racialized,

to have any understanding of complex Indigenous and racialized poverty? I cannot. That said,

this simply means we have to find ways to educate influentials of alternative narratives.

At the end of the day, I have become experienced with many of the social, economic and

political challenges of organizational leadership, and I have learned so much from working on

this thesis. I continue to believe in a praxis of educational administration that is grounded in

critical social theory and aimed at social justice in the sense that hopeful yet critical perspectives,

together with a dedication to political action, can be required of educational leaders (Bates, 1980,

2006; Foster, 2004; Lindle, 2004), while also believing that individuals can make a difference

and change the trajectories of their lives and those of others.

While holding particular theoretical perspectives as a social scientist (Carspecken &

Apple, 1992), I believe I have been open to new ideas related to the superintendency and my

work as a superintendent. I believe that many educational administrators have had restricted

visions of the possibilities (and responsibilities) of our work in challenging inequity. As I have in my journey, influentials need to be open to, and to learn about alternative narratives to the meritocracy. This is not easy or obvious work as my own story demonstrates. Frankly, I am the exception. So many Indigenous and racialized people living in Canada are living lives that have been impacted by multi-generational complex poverty in ways that make their hopes for progress incredibly difficult in ways that I and many people reading this cannot fathom.

If we are to improve our society so that more people can live lives in which they can develop their human capabilities to their full extent, we need influentials to suspend their assumptions, look at our histories with new eyes, and become open to new possibilities. A critical social theory, focused on the fundamental question of the relationships that exist between structures of knowledge and structures of control does provide the groundwork for insightful comprehensive analysis. From a critical perspective, Foster (1989, 2004) argues that school systems leaders, such as divisional superintendents, must learn to think and act critically, tranformatively, educatively and ethically to help create environments in which critically informed action can occur.

I continue to believe in this.

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canada%E2%80%94what-can-be-done#sthash.rPpHimCI.dpuf

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Appendix A: Income Quintiles for Winnipeg
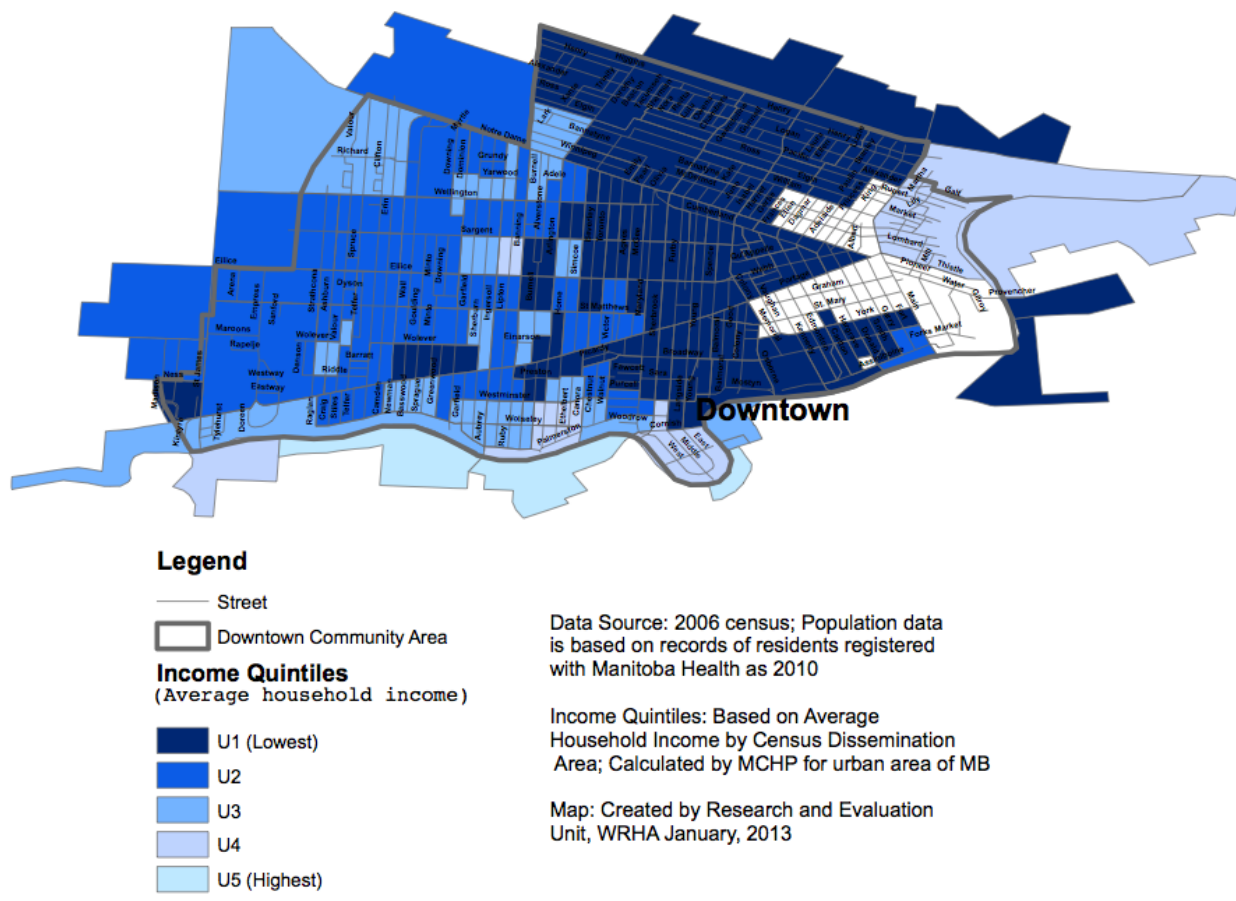
Distribution of Income Quintiles for Downtown Winnipeg (Winnipeg School Division). This map indicates a region of the city characterized by poverty. The map also indicates a broad central core community heavily characterized by poverty. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2013) http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html

Legend

— Street

☐ River Heights Community Area

Income Quintiles
(Average household income)

■ U1 (Lowest)

■ U2

■ U3

■ U4

■ U5 (Highest)

Data Source: 2006 census; Population data is based on records of residents registered with Manitoba Health as 2010

Income Quintiles: Based on Average Household Income by Census Dissemination Area; Calculated by MCHP for urban area of MB

Map: Created by Research and Evaluation Unit, WRHA January, 2013

 Distribution of Income Quintiles for South Central Winnipeg (Winnipeg School Division). This map shows an area that is traditionally one of the most affluent in Winnipeg. This figure demonstrates the poverty that exists in the Osborne Village and North River Heights areas. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2013) http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html

St. James Assiniboia

Legend

— Street

☐ St. James Assiniboia Community Area

Income Quintiles
(Average household income)

■ U1 (Lowest)

■ U2

■ U3

■ U4

■ U5 (Highest)

Data Source: 2006 census; Population data is based on records of residents registered with Manitoba Health as 2010

Income Quintiles: Based on Average Household Income by Census Dissemination Area; Calculated by MCHP for urban area of MB

Map: Created by Research and Evaluation Unit, WRHA January, 2013

Distribution of Income Quintiles for St. James (St. James School Division). St. James has traditionally known as a high-income community. As seen in this figure, pockets of poverty are emerging throughout the community. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2013) http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html
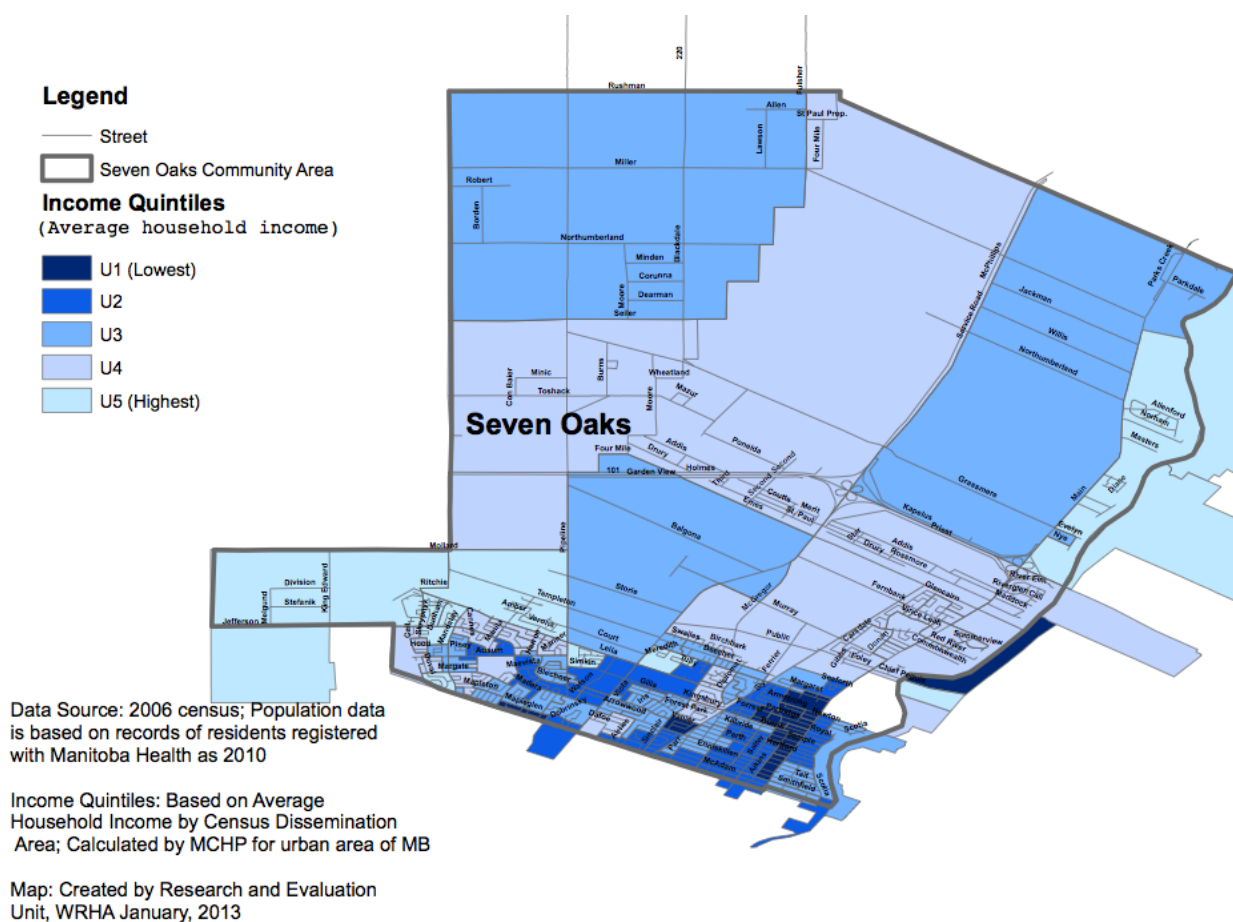
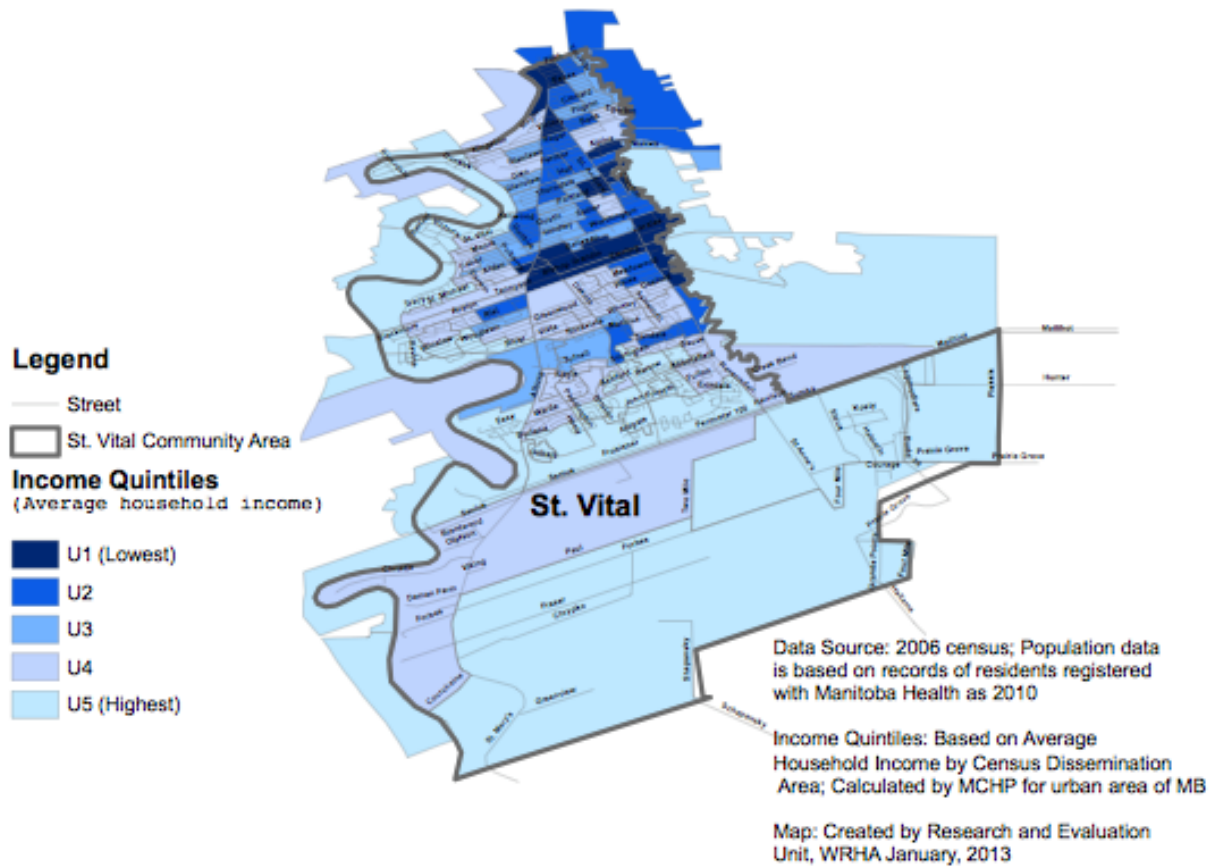Distribution of Income Quintiles for Seven Oaks (Seven Oaks School Division). Seven Oaks borders Winnipeg's north end, traditionally the area of the city with the most poverty. This map indicates heavier amounts of poverty just north of Inkster Boulevard, the traditional north boundary of the north end. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2013) http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html
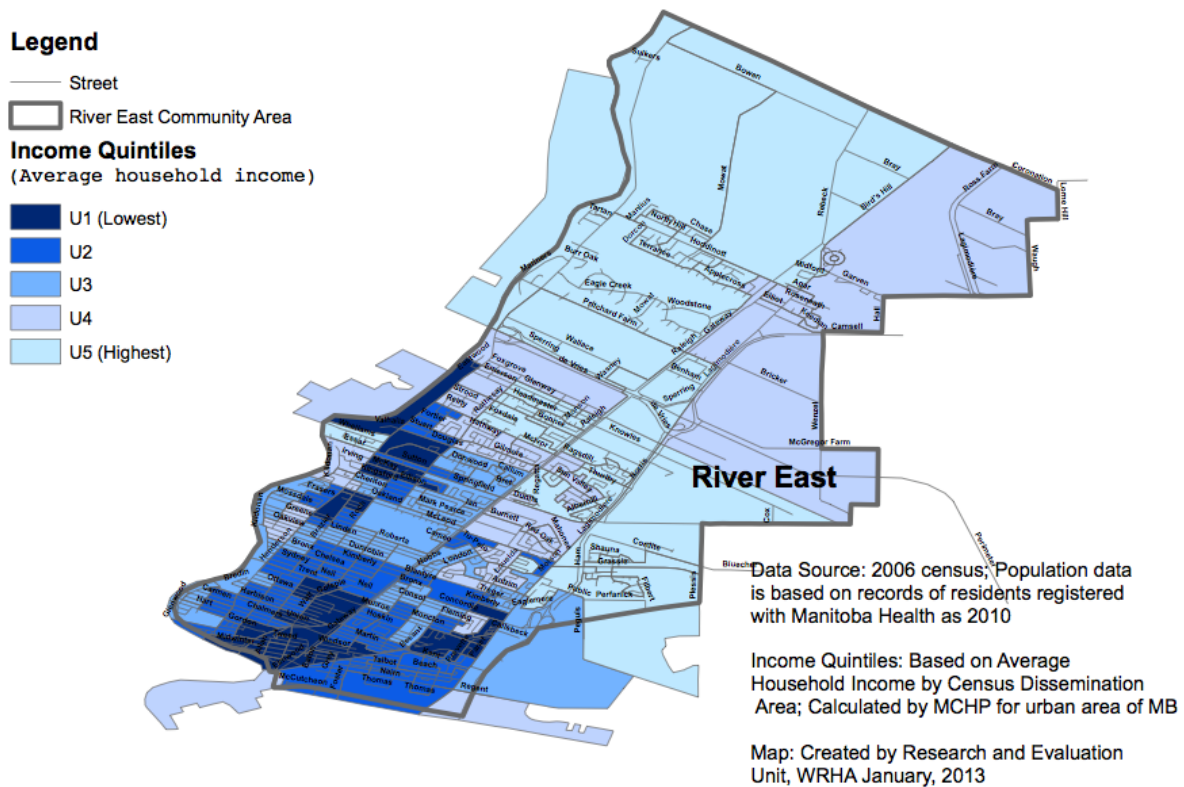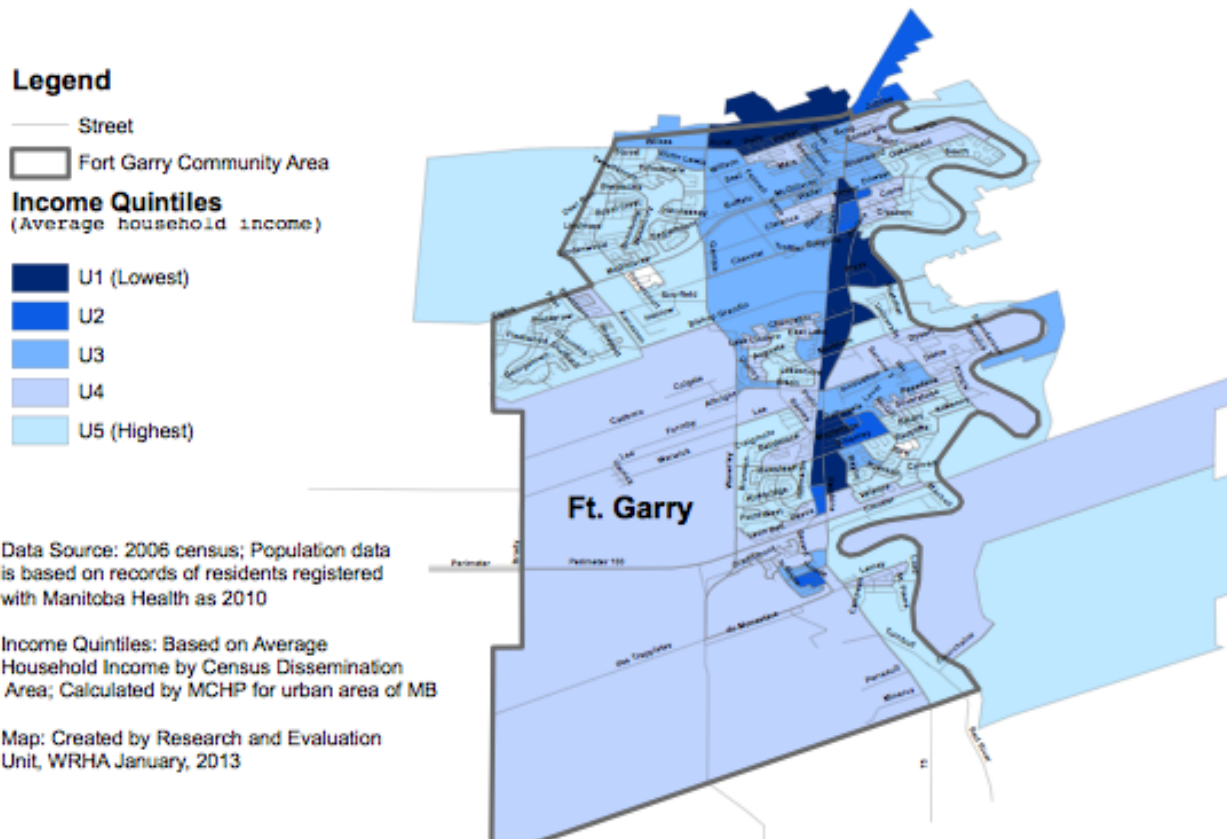
Distribution of Income Quintiles for the River East (River East Transcona School Division). River East Transcona has a high concentration of poverty located in the southern section of division, which is in close proximity to Winnipeg's Inner City, and the Winnipeg School division. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2013) http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html
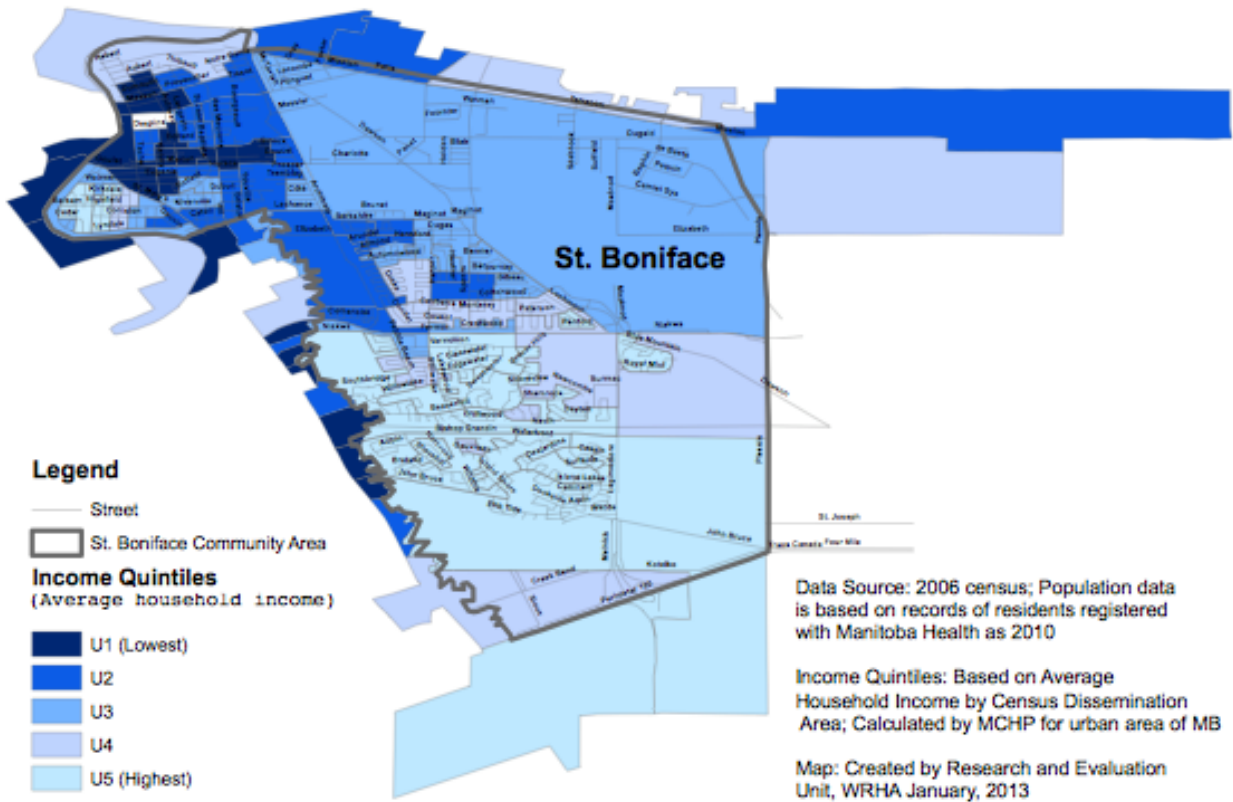
Distribution of Income Quintiles for St. Boniface (Louis Riel School Division). The map indicates a concentration of poverty close to the downtown core of the city. It also indicates the existence of areas of poverty into southeastern Winnipeg. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2013) http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html

Distribution of Income Quintiles for St. Vital (Louis Riel School Division). The figure indicates neighborhoods afflicted with poverty in suburban Winnipeg. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2013) http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html

Legend

— Street

☐ Fort Garry Community Area

Income Quintiles
(Average household income)

■ U1 (Lowest)

■ U2

■ U3

■ U4

■ U5 (Highest)

Data Source: 2006 census; Population data is based on records of residents registered with Manitoba Health as 2010

Income Quintiles: Based on Average Household Income by Census Dissemination Area; Calculated by MCHP for urban area of MB

Map: Created by Research and Evaluation Unit, WRHA January, 2013

Ft. Garry

Distribution of Income Quintiles for Fort Garry (Pembina Trails School Division). The figure indicates neighborhoods afflicted with poverty in suburban Winnipeg. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2013) http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html
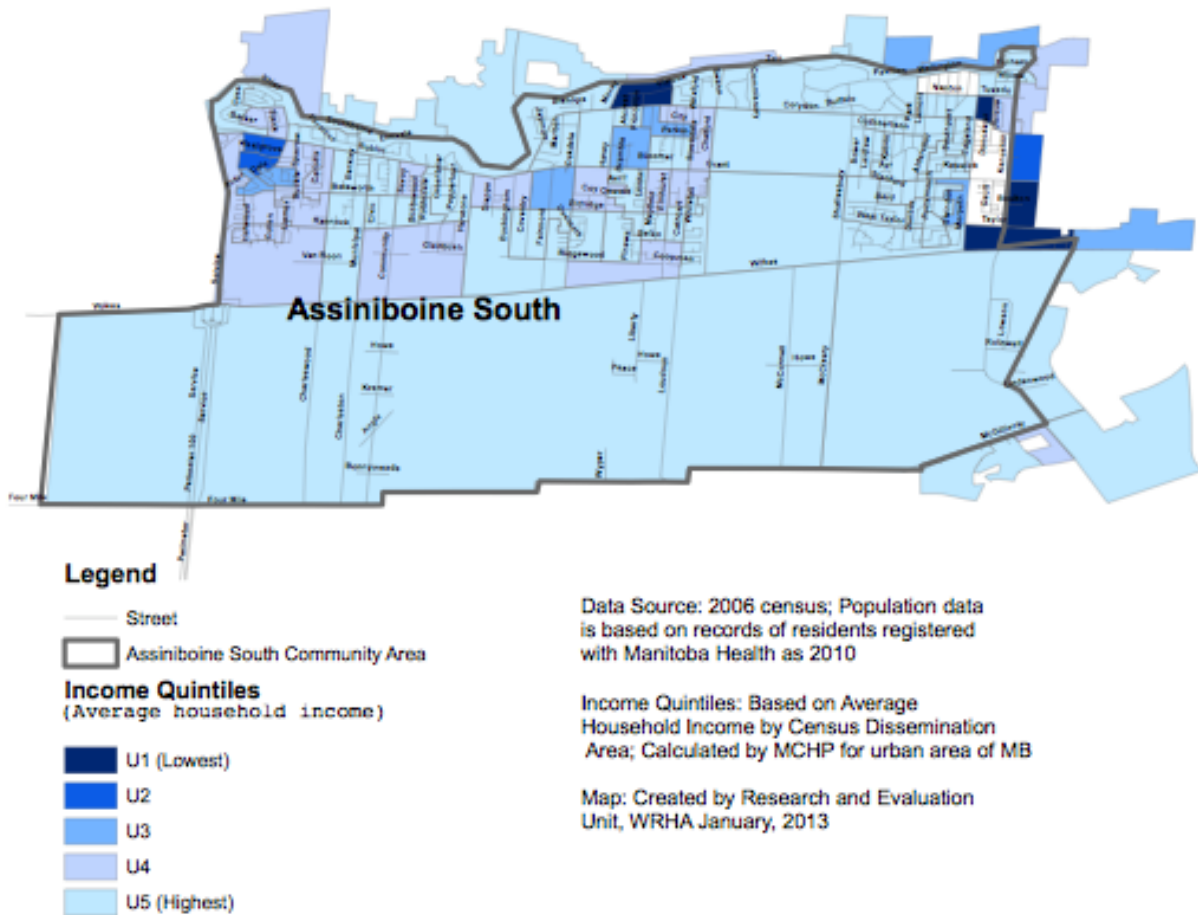
Distribution of Income Quintiles for Assiniboine South (Pembina Trails School Division). The figure indicates neighborhoods afflicted with poverty in the far south western section of suburban Winnipeg. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2013) http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html

Appendix B: School Division Documents

Document Analysis

For each of the four school divisions, a brief overview of key official documents including mission statements, policies related to poverty and diversity, and planning reports may be informative. With regards to poverty and diversity, these documents can provide insights into the values of each organization, directions that they set for staff related to poverty and diversity, and the evidence of success that they provide to their communities. It is common across Canada for school systems to provide official documents that are characterized by high minded ideals about education that are accessible to the public, and share a positive message concerning education in the organization.

Related to poverty and diversity, it is also informative to view these documents through a critical lens as well. Through a critical lens, questions about what is being prioritized and what is being ignored can be raised. From a critical perspective, Foster (1986) said organizations should reflect an intentionality to bring substantive change to an organization and that critically informed leadership reflects a dissatisfaction with the status quo (Hoffman & Burrello, 2004). Each of the participants have had, to varying degrees, opportunities to influence the content of these documents. That said, there is no intention to criticize the participants from a critical perspective for several reasons. First, mission and vision statements are typically high level and capture an overall view of what is to be done for all students, not just a specific demographic. Second, communications from schools districts such as annual reports, typically emphasize positive stories about the organization. Third, a significant narrative in education is that our society is a meritocracy and as such, we should establish policies that address the needs of all children without

any targeting and thus, it has been a norm in divisional level leadership positions to speak about the potential of all children, and to not break out particular communities. Fourth, the superintendents in this study did not write the documents, these are statements owned by the respective publicly elected school boards. The usefulness of a critical analysis of each of their documents is to reflect upon the intentionality of the organizations. In-light of larger and contextual realities, what is it that these organizations intend to accomplish and why? Reflection from a critical perspective can have the ability to motivate the writer, participants, and other practitioners to actually do something about the identified problem, what Lather calls "catalytic validity" (cited in Robinson, p. 61).

Table 4

Key Documents of Mission, Purpose, and Planning

All of the divisions covered in this study are governed by boards consisting of nine trustees who are elected to four year terms. The superintendents for each of the school divisions and the student population as of September 2014 are in Table Four.

School Divisions, Their Superintendents, and Student Population

School Division	Superintendent	Student Population
St. James (SJSD)	Ron Weston	7,913
Seven Oaks (SOSD)	Brian O'Leary	10,270
River East Transcona (RETSD)	Kelly Barkman	15,565
Winnipeg School Division (WSD)	Pauline Clarke	29,801

Note. The student population is taken from the Frame Report and are the actual numbers submitted for September 20, 2014. Frame Report 2014- 2015, p.8.

Statements of Vision and Mission

The lead statements of vision or mission for each of the school divisions are similar as identified in Table five.

Table Five

Lead Statements for Each of the School Divisions

SJSD	The Mission of the SJSD is provide a meaningful, safe and caring educational environment so that all students are prepared to be responsible citizens in a democratic society" (SJSD Strategic Plan).
SOSD	The Seven Oaks School Division is a Community of Learners, every one of whom shares the responsibility to assist children in acquiring an education which will enable them to lead fulfilling lives within the world as moral people and contributing members of society. (SOSD Mission Statement)
RETSD	The Statement of Purpose of the RETSD is "to educate students to be inspired, skilled, responsible citizens." (RETSD Purpose)
WSD	The Mission of the WSD is "to provide a learning environment that promotes and fosters the growth of each student's potential and provides an opportunity for the individual student to develop the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for meaningful participation in a global and pluralistic society" (WSD Mission Statement)

Note. Different terms are used in different systems for their leading statement; some use *vision*, others *mission*, and still others *purpose*.

Similar to many guiding statements in Canadian school districts, each of these refer to student learning, the development of citizens, and the responsibilities that systems have for creating the environments in which these goals can be attained. The intended audiences are internal staff as well as the greater community and they communicate the overarching goals of public education. There are many questions for influentials in any school system to ask when they review such statements. Do all of the students really have equal opportunities? When references are made about reaching potential, are high expectations held for all? To be a citizen, what do students need to know about the life circumstances and socio-economics in their communities? Do different students and different communities have similar needs? Foucault (1972), identified several *technologies of thought*, "the application of a systemic procedure towards a particular end" (Foster, 2004, p. 177), which exert powerful influences over our collective thinking and actions and are fostered through leadership that supports existing narratives. It is easy to assume that vision and mission statements are created by people who really want educators to make them come true. It is easy to assume that it should be easy to do so. It is easy to think that there are no obstacles to achieving success aside from hard work. Critical reflection upon these documents can assist us to raise new questions about the purpose of the organizations, the priorities, and who is to be served. However, assumptions have to be examined by first asking what is means to be successful?

Statements of Vision and Mission

SJSD maintains a strategic planning process through which the school board established a five year plan that is revised annually to reflect the needs of the community. The current plan was written in 2009 and the document states:

the environment in which the Division is operating has changed and will continue to change. Changing demographics and significant differences in student backgrounds, capabilities, needs and desires have increased diversity of expectations of the school system and will require new approaches to programming and services. (SJSD Strategic Plan)

To this end, in its 2014 document *Report to the Community*, Ron Weston stated on behalf of the division that because the community is changing rapidly, "It is within this context that the St. James-Assiniboia School Division Board of Trustees will embark upon a new planning process … to update the Strategic Plan" (SJSD *Report to the Community*, 2014). As SJSD has a growingly diverse population, it will be interesting to see if its updated strategic plan addresses this reality. The current strategic plan articulates a number of statements of beliefs which include respect for all in the community, consultation to understand factual information and changes in the community, and excellence, and high expectations for all. Of the values that the board articulates in the plan, trustees identified the ideal that every child can learn, and "decisions that are evidence based," (SJSD Strategic Plan 2009 – 2014) are important to them.

Finally, trustees also identified a number of *Strategic Outcomes* that they deem to be important. Those that seem to be aligned to issues of complex Aboriginal and racialized poverty include:

- Students will value the concept of social justice and recognize its importance for the betterment of an ever-changing world.

- Students are active learners able to demonstrate a high level of academic, intellectual and social engagement.

- Schools will nurture and promote a positive relationship with families and the local community.

- The Division will have exceptional staff. (SJSD Strategic Plan 2009 – 2014)

The Annual Report itself was a five page document that contains information on all four of the strategic outcomes together with a listing of activities that took place during the course of the year. The document contains much more textual than graphic information and of the eight pictures, two included People of Colour. There were not any specific mention of Aboriginal people, poverty, or race, however, much was said about the importance of social justice, social responsibility, and engagement in the community. From a critical perspective and in-light of plans to update the plan to meet the needs of a changing community, it will be interesting if future reports articulate the realities of those communities, their needs, responses, and successes.

SOSD is growing, is increasingly diverse, and members of the division are proud of this fact. In his position since 2000, Brian's leadership webpage shares that SOSD is located in north Winnipeg, and serves a diverse community of Canadians of Aboriginal, Indian, Filipino, Ukrainian, Jewish, Northern European and other backgrounds in 21 schools: "Winnipeg's historic 'North End' has always been an area of cultural and socio-economic diversity and progressive vision. Our community values education" (SOSD Greetings from the Superintendent). Upon my review of Manitoba websites, Brian is rare to hi-light and celebrate the demographic diversity of his division.

The SOSD 2014 – 2015 Divisional Plan was intended to be a living document that is updated and revised as required to meet the evolving needs of the community. The motto "Community Begins Here" permeates the document and attempts to communicate the centrality

of the schools to the division, and to "embrace the idea that our schools are at the very heart of our Seven Oaks community" (SOSD 2014 – 2015 Divisional Plan). An entire section of the report addresses equity. Among the areas of focus in the section on equity includes removing barriers to access to all schools, reducing or eliminating economic schools to parents (hot lunches, musical instruments), expanding the *Wayfinders* tutoring program to include access for all students in the care of CFS agencies. This section signals to staff and the community that poverty and inclusion are issues of importance.

Each of the reports where approximately 10 to 15 pages in length. The SOSD Annual Report was a glossy 11 page document built on the theme of "community begins here." Pictures of the diverse nature of the people make up 70% of the document. There was a reference to Aboriginal education programming and a page dedicated to lowering the cost of education for parents. The report was a high level sampling of the various initiatives, programs and culture of the division, but did not contain any qualitative or quantitative information about how students are performing academically. The pictures in the report make it clear that Seven Oaks is diverse. Given the attention SOSD gives to equity, it would interesting in the future if they provided information on how their programs are culturally relevant and are actually benefitting children and their communities.

Aligned to its purpose, RETSD envisions being "forward thinking, innovative, offering comprehensive programming to meet the emerging needs of our students and the community." To that end, its mission is to provide "relevant, progressive, educational programming and supportive services …" (RETSD Purpose)**.** The public sentiments also articulate a number of values that are important to the division, including integrity, respect, and responsibility. The Purpose also includes

innovation "that contributes to improved student learning;" reflection of what and how things are being done, together with the continuous evaluation of progress in the pursuit of excellence. Helpful questions informed by critical perspectives include; if members of the division are showing respect and responsibility to in the community, what does that look like? How can division members innovate to assist those in the system from Aboriginal and racialized communities to be able to achieve and contribute? What does the evaluation of progress in the pursuit of excellence look like? The *Strategic Directions* are common to those of many educational organizations: student learning, responsibilities of staff, and citizenship. The directions include:

- The development of inspired, skilled responsible citizens.

- Excellent programming and services that meet the needs of their students.

- Committed, knowledgeable, competent staff.

- Informed, engaged stakeholders and community.

The objectives connected to each of these directions are written in quite directed language with statements like "ensure all students engage in and contribute to the culture of the school and its community," and "all students will achieve or exceed expected program outcomes," as well as the "need to participate in-the wider divisional community." For all school divisions and influentials from a critical perspective, these statements need to be interrogated. Who is achieving and who is not? What patterns of achievement exist? Are all students to be assimilated and if so, what is the value of their heritage and culture? Are there barriers that some face in achieving expectations and if so, what is the responsibility of division members to address these?

The RETSD Annual Report was a professional looking, seven page document. Pictures of staff and students make up 50% of the content of the report, however, aside from pictures of two academic award winners (two of a potential nine) who were People of Colour, the other pictures were overwhelmingly of White people. The report is about the programs and culture of the division but does not contain any qualitative or quantitative information about how students are doing.

WSD has long been characterized by a highly diverse student population with only 55.8% of students living in homes in which only English is spoken. Fourty-four percent of the student population live in homes where other languages or English and other languages are spoken and of that population, 44% speak Tagalog. Approximately 6% of the student population speak an Aboriginal language at home, with Anishinaabe (including Ojibwe, Ojibwe/Saulteax and Saulteax), and Cree (including Ininiw and Oji-Cree) being the most common. Together with SOSD, the WSD is unique in identifying its demographic diversity. A question that needs to be considered however is, is this sharing to hi-light and celebrate diversity, or is it to also create an awareness that there is a lot of work to be done for all to have full opportunities.

Aligned with its mission, the guiding principles of WSD indicate that the governors of the division believe in the equality of all individuals. The division needs to ensure that its programs reflect the changing needs of society and the values, beliefs, and traditions of the local school community; and that students require appropriate care and support services (WSD 2013-2014 Annual Report).

The WSD Annual Report was a 20 page document that is approximately 75% text. About 80% 0f the pictures in the report feature People of Colour. There was a full page dedicated to Aboriginal education related to leadership, first languages, curriculum, and connecting to the community. Like the other reports, the WSD annual report is about the programs and culture of the division but does

not contain any qualitative or quantitative information about how students. There was included two charts that provided information about the percentage of students who speak only English at home (55.8%), and the variety of languages that are spoken in homes. This is really interesting information, however the question that arises is why is this included in the report? Why is it important? If it is important, perhaps in the future, space could be provided to explain the impact of diversity on the community and on learning, and what WSD is going to do about it.

Policies

It is a common practice in Manitoba that the mechanism through which school boards and superintendents direct staff in their work is through policies that inform them of the expectations of the board and divisional positional leadership. Under the *Public Schools Amendment Act* (Safe and Inclusive Schools) issued by the government of Manitoba (Manitoba Education, 2015), all school divisions were expected to have a policy in place regarding respect for human diversity by June 2014. All Manitoba school divisions have variations of that policy. Beyond that, the divisions show wide differences in how they have developed their policies related to poverty and diversity.

SJSD.

Policy AC – Respect for Human Diversity. In this policy, the leadership of SJSD acknowledges the diversity of its staff and student population, makes a commitment based upon the inherent dignity of all people that inclusive environments are necessary, and heterogeneous groups enrich the experiences of all. (SJSD Policy AC)

SOSD.

Policy AC / JB – Commitment to Equity. This policy indicates that for the division to achieve its stated mission, the board and staff must view their work "through the lens of equity" (SOSD

Policy AC/JB). The policy indicates that goals for students must extend beyond the provision of opportunities to equitable outcomes for all children. The equity lens also calls for an acknowledgment that poverty, racism, disability, sexism and homophobia present significant barriers to equitable outcomes for all children. The policy also includes a series of specific measures to support the goal of equity. These measures include the following:

- Recognizing that the division is on *Treaty One Land* and that the board and staff must provide an education that acknowledges and values First Nations heritage, culture, and people.

- Providing classrooms and schools that are caring and safe from all forms of racism, disability, sexism and homophobia.

- Eliminating most, if not all, cost barriers to full participation in schools.

- Expanding opportunities, services and supports to students with greater needs.

- Educating students to develop a sense of their place in a global context and of their responsibility as global citizens.

- Ensuring that children in our schools see themselves, their language and culture, reflected in their schools and in the staff who work there.

- The Board will review budget, programs and policies on an ongoing basis with a view to fully realizing its commitment to equity. (Policy AC/JB)

The creation of a policy related to human diversity was mandated by the province. SOSD however, extended beyond the expectations of the province to speak specifically about Aboriginal people and with this policy, the division sends a clear message to staff and the community that the division, the superintendent, and the board see Aboriginal issues as significant, even to the point of holding the board accountable for review and evidence of success.

Policy IDAAD – Aboriginal Education Policy. Created in 2013, this policy states the following:

Aboriginal peoples have been largely unacknowledged in our past education system which has contributed to failing academic success rates. By incorporating authentic learning of and with Aboriginal peoples we can forge a rich collective identity that honours Aboriginal peoples and all our relations. (SOSD Policy IDAAD)

The policy also states that Aboriginal education is for all students in WSD, provides a series of definitions including the terms *Aboriginal, Indigenous, and Aboriginal Community.* The policy also identifies the areas of curriculum; the professional development of all staff to develop "a healthy knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal history, culture, perspective and ways of teaching and learning;" a commitment to provide Aboriginal language programs; to engage Aboriginal parents and community members; and to develop initiatives for hiring Aboriginal peoples in SOSD.

This policy indicates that SOSD and the superintendent must look at the unique circumstances of Aboriginal people. It will be of future interest to see if the division considers a similar policy for other racialized communities.

RETSD.

Policy AC – Human Rights. This policy supports the principle of human rights as "Identified in the Manitoba Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (RETSD Policy AC).

Policy ACF – Respect for Human Diversity. This policy is informed by the Manitoba Human Rights Code and emphasizes the right to work in safe and inclusive environments. It also states the division will provide professional development to increase the capacity of staff to teach and support students in matters of diversity and inclusion (RETSD Policy ACF).

WSD.

Policy AC – Human Rights. This policy indicates an obligation to Human Rights as identified in the Manitoba Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Policy AC indicates the Board's commitment to the awareness of and respect for the rights and human dignity of others, respect and appreciation for diverse cultural differences, and a commitment to dealing with institutional discrimination.

In addition, there are a number of additional policies that can be related to complex Aboriginal and racialized poverty. WSD has created a policy to specifically address Aboriginal education.

The WSD also created a Policy specific to Aboriginal education.

IGABA – Aboriginal Education. This policy indicates an acknowledgement by the Board of the significant Aboriginal population within the Division and a desire to enhance the education of Aboriginal students. Through the policy, the Board indicates an acknowledgement that aboriginal people have an historical and unique relationship with Canada; the Aboriginal community values the integration of Aboriginal values, languages, histories, and traditional teachings into the core of education; that all professional development of staff and annual schools plans will reflect an awareness of Aboriginal histories and contemporary realities.

The WSD also created a policy on diversity.

Policy IGAB – Diversity and Equity Education. This policy indicates the Board's belief in the fundamental equality of people of all origins and abilities. The policy also indicates a desire to "prepare students with the knowledge and skills to function socially, emotionally, politically,

and economically in Canadian society" (WSD Policy IGAB). The policy also indicates the Board's commitment to providing curricula that is permeated by principles and practices of diversity and equity education, and provides division employees with learning opportunities and training to enhance their competencies and sensitivity in working effectively with students, parents, staff and community members of diverse backgrounds. Finally, through policy IGAB, the board directs the chief superintendent to be responsible for ensuring that all staff conduct their practices and conduct consistent with the general philosophy and goals of diversity and equity education. SOSD, SJSD, and WSD all have policies that place responsibility upon the superintendent to ensure growth in these policy areas.

The SJSD is unique in creating a policy specific to the Aboriginal tradition of smudging.

Policy IMDE – Smudging Practices. In response to a documents created by the province of Manitoba, SJSD created this policy to recognize that while First Nation, Metis, and Inuit people are diverse, there is an Aboriginal worldview that includes some common traditions, one of them being smudging. To be in adherence with this policy, all schools in SJSD are expected to identify specific places where smudging can take place. (SJSD Policy IMDE).

Appendix C: Letter of Consent to Participate in the Study

Free and Informed Consent Form

Project Title - Conceptualizations of Complex, Racialized Poverty, Social Exclusion and Education Systems: A Qualitative Inquiry Informed by Critical Theory of the Work of Three Canadian Superintendents

Researcher: Duane M. Brothers

PhD Advisory Committee: Dr. Jon Young   University of Manitoba

Dr. Dawn Wallin   University of Manitoba

Dr. Jim Silver   University of Winnipeg (External)

This project is a required thesis to complete a PhD: Educational Administration

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 details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This study is being conducted by a PhD. student from the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Duane Brothers. The purpose of this project is to examine how division level (superintendents / assistant superintendents) in a school division have enacted significant organizational or political change (practices or policy) to address what they believe to be existing institutional inequalities that are at odds with the progressive storyline of public education, specifically, they have explicitly or implicitly addressed issues of poverty. The questions that will be asked of participants include:

1. How do you make sense of racialized poverty and social exclusion in contemporary society and how have you come to these understandings?
2. How do you describe the socio-political environment, space, and the terrain in which you work?
3. What do you believe that school systems are obliged to do in the face of complex, racialized poverty and social exclusion?
4. What actions have you taken undertaken to attempt to address issues of racialized poverty and social exclusion?

5. What do you describe as the outcomes of these initiatives, and how do you explain the outcomes

You are asked to consent to three individual interviews of approximately 90 – 120 minutes and two group dialogues, each of approximately 90 – 120 minutes, together with the researcher and two other superintendents. The date and location of the interview will be determined by mutual convenience. The interviews will be digitally audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher verbatim and will explore how you make sense of issues related to poverty and human emancipation in general and complex, racialized poverty and social exclusion in particular; and how these understandings influenced your work in highly complex, political, and contextual work environments.

A copy of each of the interview transcripts will be returned to you so you can check the accuracy of my representation of what you have said which should take approximately two more hours of your time. I would like your permission to use the transcript for my dissertation and possibly for conference papers and articles. The digital recordings will then be destroyed no later than after I have successfully defended my PhD thesis – targeted for April 2015. There are no risks involved in this study. Benefits include the opportunity to receive feedback about the study results, and a greater understanding about your leadership orientations and praxis.

You have been selected to participate in this study because you have been identified as one who is making a positive difference in your work related to the purpose of this study. For this reason, I would like to use your name throughout the study. Please understand you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation in this study at any time without prejudice or consequence simply by indicating so via in person, email, or phone communication. If you choose to withdraw, all of your data will be immediately destroyed. All interview information received from you will be stored digitally on a computer to which only the researcher has access and is password protected. All data, including my notes written prior to, during, and after the interview, is only accessible to myself. The informed consent sheet containing your name will be stored in a locked drawer in the researcher's office, located in the researcher's home at ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where only he has access to it. You have the opportunity to request a copy of the summary of the study's results.

A paper will be written using the data and it will be shared with my thesis advisor, Dr. Jon Young. It is also my intention to use the data in future papers that will be submitted for publication in journals as well as in presentations to professional associations.

The study has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Review Board. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Duane Brothers at ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ ▇ by email at ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ You may also call the Human Ethics Secretariat at the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Review Board at (204) 474-7122).

If you are interested in participating in this study, please read the following statement and sign and date it. One copy is yours.

I _____ agree to participate in this study. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time by simply telling the researcher. I have read and understood the above description of the study. I understand that my privacy will be safeguarded as explained above. I understand that if I have questions or concerns, I may contact the researcher or the Human Ethics Secretariat Board at the numbers given above. Contact information for the researchers' advisor is as follows:

- Dr. Jon Young (Thesis advisor) ██████████████████ ███████

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 researcher, 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 in your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Review Board. If you have a concern or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at (204) 474-7122). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Signature of participant _____ Date _____

Signature of researcher _____ Date _____

I would like to receive a summary of the findings:

_____   _____
YES   NO

Please mail me a summary report of the findings at:

_____

_____

Appendix D: Initial Interview Questions

UNIVERSITY
of MANITOBA

1. Tell me about your people and your history.

2. How did you become aware of race and poverty and how did it inform your work?

3. Tell me more about your thoughts on poverty, race in Canada today?

4. Are things getting worse for people of Colour and aboriginal people and if so, why?

5. One of my professors you know well, would argue the core issue is about democracy ….
   How do you frame these issues?

6. What I'm really fascinated in is over the years how you have influenced thinking and
   decisions and agendas working with the board, working with unions, working with the
   province. Tell me about working with an elected Board, what is your work as a
   superintendent?

7. How do you influence your leadership team?

8. How do you influence, how are you influenced by unions? The Department of Education?

9. How do you influence the greater system?

10. Tell me about some of the things you are doing that you believe are making a difference?

11. What are some societal factors that might have positive or negative influences upon the
    creation of a more equitable society?

12. What evidence do you have that things are being improved?

13. What should superintendents and school divisions obliged to do?

Appendix E: Stage Two Interview Protocol

I am working towards submitting my dissertation to my committee for the 3rd week of July and it is coming together well!

In order to complete, I am requesting three things of each of you:

1. Complete answers to a set of common questions (see below).
2. Respond to the email that follows this one and is addressed only to you.
3. Provide date(s) to participate in a final group dialogue (see below).

As I think you know, the participants in this study are the four of you, Metro superintendents who have been in your positions for at least three years.

I was initially thinking of writing a separate chapter on each of you. As I have been pouring over the transcripts however, significant themes have emerged so that I have decided to write three chapters in which each of you will be represented. The three chapters are:

1. How do the four superintendents participating in this study make sense of race and poverty and how have you come to these understandings?

2. How do the four superintendents describe the socio-political and organizational environments within which they can influence?

3. What do these superintendents believe that school systems are obliged to do, are doing, and can do in the future to address complex Aboriginal and racialized poverty?

The answers to these questions are emerging from the thirteen questions I asked of each of you together with the dialogue that each of the conversations graduated into.

As I have been re-reading and analyzing the themes from the transcripts, I can assure you that your participation will contribute to the work of current and upcoming superintendents. The stories and quotations from each of you speaks to the progressiveness of your work and it will be a 'good news story' together with our collective musings of what can I/we do better. I am reminded of the work of William Foster,

*Foster (2004) asked us to question many of the actions of leaders influenced by dominant neo-liberal narratives. He proceeded to say that **more stories are needed to help us establish new narratives that can, "give us, as a profession, the confidence we need to raise questions of a critical nature that, despite their risks, may ultimately lead to the formation of a more proper educational organization"** (p. 195).*

I remind you that prior to this dissertation becoming public, you will have an opportunity to review and I will not include any statement or quotation from you that you do not wish to have in the final document.

Next Steps:

1. I have a number questions for all of you. I would ask that you provide your responses in one of the following ways:
   a) Respond in writing and then send to me via email.
   b) Tell me when I can call you and we can talk through the questions on the phone.
   c) In accordance with your schedule, I can meet you at your office or a location of your choice. I think that a call/meeting will not take any longer than a ½ hour.

Questions:

1. Each of you demonstrate progressive leanings to a certain extent, and yet as far as I know, none of us have a formal education in race / poverty / Aboriginal Studies. If you really have to think about it, why are you progressive?

2. In reflection, has your thinking of Aboriginal people and race changed over the years? If so, do you know why?

3. While each of you are optimistic of the future, each also said poverty and racism is ever-present and is becoming a bigger problem. What do you think is required to address this issue? Thinking about the people that you know and our greater society, what is required to change?

4. Multigenerational poverty is indigenous and racialized all around the world from Canada, the USA, New Zealand, Australia, and beyond. Why do you think this is? If you had to speculate, what do you think the influentials around you: trustees, leaders, parents think?

5. That's how you can exert your influence as opposed to just telling?

6. What are you most proud of in this area?

7. How do you get things done within the context of board and political dynamics?

8. How influential do you think you are? How do you know?

2. I have a few specific questions for each of you. I will send those in a separate email to each of you. I ask that you please choose to respond as per above.

3. To tie it all together, I would like to convene a group dialogue with all of you that looks towards the future. In essence;

   a. If we are to make progress against complex poverty, what is it, if anything, that school superintendents are uniquely positioned to do?
   b. If we were all coaches (which we are), knowing what we know, what should people in our positions be doing within and beyond our school divisions?
   c. Have our conversations surfaced any new revelations, new thinking, new focus on your part?

I know I have asked much of you and how busy things are. Your contributions I know are going to make a difference so please find a little bit more time for me.

Potential group dialogue times are as follows:

Monday, June 1st	Anytime after 12:00 pm	LRSD Board Office, ██ ████████ suggestions
Tuesday, June 2nd	Anytime	LRSD Board Office, ██ ████████ suggestions
Wednesday, June 3rd	Anytime	LRSD Board Office, ██ ████████ suggestions
Friday, June 5th	Anytime up until 5:00 pm	LRSD Board Office, ██ ████████ suggestions

Appendix F: Stage Three Interview Protocol - Group Dialogue

Whole Group Dialogue

June 9, 2015

- Thanks again
- Thesis statement
- Positive story, complete editorial on your words
- What can we learn / teach from decades of experience
- Today is about chapter 7: what are you doing, is successful, what should we be doing?
- Please, you or I will say your name before you talk.

Chapter 5 Themes:

- Making Sense of Race and Equity Is A Struggle

- Race Matters

- Challenges Are Growing

- Hope for the Future

Chapter 6 Themes:

- A View From the Balcony: A Critical Perspective Of "The Work?"

- Defining Success: What Is The Unspoken Narrative?

- Front Lines: The Nuanced Work of Superintendents

- Critically Informed Superintendents: We Can Do More

Chapter 7:

> What do these superintendents believe that school systems
>
> are obliged to do, are doing, and can do in the future to
>
> address complex Aboriginal and racialized poverty

Provocations from the literature:

1. Foster (2004) asked us to question many of the actions of leaders influenced by dominant neo-liberal narratives. He proceeded to say that more stories are needed to help us establish new narratives that can, "give us, as a profession, the confidence we need to raise questions of a critical nature that, despite their risks, may ultimately lead to the formation of a more proper educational organization" (p. 195).

2. Any study of the superintendency and in fact, the work being done by superintendents, needs to always ask who is being best served by the policies and practices that are in place or as Hargreaves (1994) wrote, if superintendents "give voice to other versions (of reality) which are normally neglected or suppressed" (p. 39) their decisions will be better informed.

3. Foster (1986) argued that critical leaders need to identify the narrative to which they ascribe, whether it is dominant or an alternative. Leaders need to consider how they can respond to the imposing narrative in their local context as well as how their actions can challenge the dominating narrative. This requires a high degree of meta-cognition and reflection or as Fay (1987) argued, coming to see the false consciousness from which they view the world,

4. In reality however, many superintendents who are inclined towards progressive work play out their careers within socio-political contexts that are anything but progressive. Rottmann (2007) speaks of "advocate resisters" and "activist collectives" (p. 5).

5. I then asked Pauline if she thought there a moral imperative that superintendents have or is this issue of Aboriginal and racialized poverty simply too big for school systems. She was clear in her response when she said, "No, it shouldn't be too big. It goes back to why we're here. Why am I in this job? Or why was I in my previous jobs and working where I was

working?" She then provided more about what it is she believes we ought to be doing, What would you tell a new urban superintendent?

6. Critical research must find ways to motivate the actors to actually do something about the identified problem, what Lather calls "catalytic validity" (as cited in Fay, 1987, p. 61).

7. In essence, my guided empirical work needs to result in theory that possesses what Morgan calls "evocative power" (cited in Lather, 1991, p. 61) by helping people to connect larger societal issues to the lives they live on a daily basis. Has the journey reinforced, changed, or soured your thinking and doing?

8. Foster (1986) argued that educational administrators, immersed within administrative science theory and the classic bureaucratic paradigm of administering rather than leading, are oblivious to the reformative possibilities of the work.

9. In essence, whereas transformational leadership "focuses on what happens within an organization, transformative leadership starts with a recognition of some material realities of the broader social and political sphere, recognizing that the inequities and struggles experienced in the wider society affect one's ability both to perform and to succeed within an organizational context" (shields, 2010, p. 568). As opposed to leithwood's (2010) focus upon directions, developing people, redesigning, and managing instruction; shield's notions of truly transforming leadership are grounded in the "twin concepts of critique and possibility" (shields, 2010, p. 569).

10. Always guided by a focus on children and "a critical awareness of how they are being served" (Grogan, 2000, p. 133) will help superintendents to steer clear of the trap of paying heed to the loudest voice or only accepting easy solutions.

11. Again, in contrast to influentials aligned with rational technician or neo-liberalist traditions, advocates and activist collectives will believe that neutrality and objectivity are not options. Rather, in the forever-contested political terrain of education, they need to be continually aware of the local, the contextual, and of those who are not being served by the current manner of doing business regardless of how it's being framed.

12. From your perspective, if we are to make progress, what can influential superintendents do internally and externally?

Appendix G: Invitation Letter to Potential Participants

<u>**INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE**</u>

May, 2014

<u>Title of research study:</u>   Conceptualizations of Complex, Racialized Poverty, Social

Exclusion and Education Systems: A Qualitative Inquiry Informed

by Critical Theory of the Work of Three Canadian Superintendents

<u>Principal researcher:</u>   Duane Brothers

<u>Purpose of study:</u>

The purpose of this study is to explore the understandings and actions of three or four urban Manitoba school division superintendents, concerning complex Indigenous and racialized poverty.

Beyound a lack of income, Silver (2014, 2016) argued that complex poverty is characterized by a host of additional challenges that trap individuals and communities in cycles of often multigenerational poverty. These additional challenges often include poor health, joblessness, lack of educational achievement, gang activity, and high incarceration rates. Complex poverty is growing in many urban centers, is a product of neoliberalism, is increasingly racialized, and it exists in Winnipeg. Silver (2014, 2016) also argues that complex poverty impacts the Indigenous and racialized communities in a significant manner.

The purpose of the thesis is not to focus on profiling and in some manner evaluating individual participants in this study, nor will it provide the depth of information that would be needed for such an endeavor. Rather, the purpose of this thesis is to draw on the experiences, insights, and comments of the participants to begin to explore some of the dimensions of understanding and activism that might be associated with a superintendent's ability to influence in a positive manner the school experiences of children living in poverty.

As a qualitative inquiry informed by critical theory, this study will explore how superintendents, as *de facto* administrative leaders of large, complex, bureaucratic, and largely conservative organizations, (a) have come to terms with complex, racialized poverty and how their understandings have been influenced by their upbringings, early teaching experiences, and by professional learning throughout their careers, (b) to gain insights into how the participants see themselves positioned as leaders/influentials within the context of their school systems, and what they believe they can do to influence others, and (c) what actions have the participants taken to address poverty and how through their actions, were the effects of poverty mediated.

Procedures to be used:

At this time, Winnipeg is being served by six public school divisions. I want to work with superintendents who had been in their positions for at least three years, people who had established time to actually do the work of the superintendency. I am approached each of the superintendents working in Winnipeg with at least three years' experience (except for myself). I am approaching each of the potential participants via telephone and email, followed by a formal process of informed consent.

I would like you to be one of three to four participants in this study. Participants will be asked to participate in a minimum of three individual interviews of approximately 90 – 120 minutes, a group dialogue, of approximately 90 – 120 minutes, together with the researcher and two other superintendents, as well as follow-up conversations (phone, email, and in-person) based upon the previous conversations. The time and location of the interviews will be determined by mutual convenience. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim and will explore how you make sense of issues related to poverty and human emancipation in general and complex, racialized poverty and social exclusion in particular; and how these understandings influenced your work in highly complex, political, and contextual work environments.

A copy of each of the interview transcripts will be returned to you so you can check the accuracy of my representation of what you have said which should take approximately two more hours of your time. I would like your permission to use the transcript for my dissertation and possibly for conference papers and articles. The digital recordings will then be destroyed no later than after I have successfully defended my PhD thesis – targeted for April 2015. There are no risks involved in this study. Benefits include the opportunity to receive feedback about the study results, and a greater understanding about your leadership orientations and praxis.

Potential risk to participants:

There are no risks involved in this study. Direct benefits to the participants include the opportunity to receive feedback about the study's results, including greater understanding of one's leadership practice from a critical perspective.

Participation is voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality:

You have been selected to participate in this study because you have been identified as one who is making a positive difference in your work related to the purpose of this study. For this reason, I would like to use your name throughout the study. Please understand you are free to withdraw

your consent and discontinue your participation in this study at any time without prejudice or consequence simply by indicating so via in person, email, or phone communication. If you choose to withdraw, all of your data will be immediately destroyed. All interview information received from you will be stored digitally on a computer to which only the researcher has access and is password protected. All data, including my notes written prior to, during, and after the interview, is only accessible to myself. The informed consent sheet containing your name will be stored in a locked drawer in the researcher's office, located in the researcher's home at ▌▌▌▌▌▌▌▌▌, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where only I has access to it. You have the opportunity to request a copy of the summary of the study's results.

Included with this email, as an attachment, is a copy of the written consent form. This consent form is only part of the process of informed consent. It will provide you a background to 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 participate, I ask that you send an email to: ▌▌▌▌▌▌▌▌▌ with "YES, I CONSENT" in the subject line. I will then ask the participants to complete the "Free and Informed Consent Form" and then I will make contact to make interview arrangements.

If you have further questions or require further information, please contact me at: ▌▌▌▌▌
▌▌▌▌▌▌▌▌▌▌▌▌

Thank-you in advance for your consideration,

PhD. Candidate - Duane Brothers

▌▌▌▌▌▌

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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