

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HOUSING CONDITIONS
OF WINNIPEG'S NATIVE SINGLE-PARENT POPULATION**

BY

GABRIELA CRESCENTIA SPARLING

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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University of Manitoba/Winnipeg
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ABSTRACT

An examination of contemporary urban native conditions reveals that poverty and poor housing conditions do not affect all household types equally, but that in fact urban native single-parent families have become the poorest of the poor. Despite this reality, only marginal efforts are made to obtain a better understanding of the role, needs and conditions of native women in urban environments, and in light of this deficiency it is hoped that the thesis further contributes to the body of knowledge.

The purpose of this thesis is hence to examine the housing conditions of urban native single-parent families in Winnipeg with particular focus on household type as a determining factor. The analysis of housing conditions will be extended to include an assessment of the socio-economic conditions of Winnipeg's native population using 1986 census data.

Based on the findings of this study and in addition to insights provided by others, it could be concluded that although there is a significant relationship between household type and housing/socio-economic conditions, a number of individual and external determinants of poverty hold significant explanatory powers and therefore are part of the overall dynamic. The complexity of the issue at hand alludes to the fact that the poor housing conditions of urban native single-parent families are the result of a number of factors and all-encompassing solutions are therefore required to affect change.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of off-reserve migration not only raises fundamental jurisdictional issues with respect to governmental responsibility for urban natives, but also has the effect of making the non-native population cognizant of the poverty many native people experience. The existence of reserves has in the past physically contained native poverty, but this was to change with the event of urban migration. Throughout the early sixties and seventies Canadian urban centres witnessed an increasing inflow of native migrants who have left reserves and settlements in search of better living conditions and, most commonly, an opportunity for employment.

Socio-economic indicators illustrate, however, that even in urban areas natives are often unable to improve their living conditions and, as on reserves, continue to live in poverty. Data collected in the 1981 and 1986 censuses, as well as data compiled by the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg, show that great disparities between the general urban population and the urban native population exist with respect to income, employment, labour force participation, education and housing conditions.

The 1986 census data not only confirm the existence of this gap, but indicate that the gap between the two populations is in effect widening. This trend is particularly apparent in the City of Winnipeg. As in many other urban centres, the core is usually the most economically depressed area of a city. This holds true for Winnipeg as well, where the per capita representation of natives is twice that of the city as a whole.¹ In 1986, 40 percent of Winnipeg's native population was crowded in the inner city, where seven out of ten native households live below the poverty level.² Urban native poverty is, however, not confined to those living in the core. More than half of Winnipeg's entire native households lived below the poverty line in 1986, compared to one in five non-native households.³

The extremely high rate of poverty among urban native people has significant consequences with respect to housing consumption. Due to limited purchasing power, urban natives have become increasingly incapable of satisfying their housing needs and consequently are more likely to experience a multitude of housing problems. Stewart Clatworthy's extensive studies of urban native housing empirically support the assertion that the disparities in housing conditions

¹ Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Winnipeg Census Data. Insights & Trends (Winnipeg: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1989).

² Ibid.,

³ Ibid.,

between the two populations are not only large and growing, but are a function of their depressed socio-economic status.⁴ Data show that native households were 3.3 times more likely to experience shelter poverty, 2.2 times more likely to experience housing quality problems, and 2.8 times more likely to be overcrowded than general city households.⁵

A closer look at the available empirical research reveals, however, that poverty does not affect all native households equally, but that in fact native single-parent families have become the poorest of the poor. It is native single-parent families who experience the highest unemployment and welfare dependency rates, the lowest labour force participation rate, the lowest incomes, and the most severe housing conditions when compared to both the non-native population and the urban native community at large.

Compounding this already intolerable situation is the fact that the actual number of female led single-parent families has grown at a faster rate than any other household type. Unless governments pay immediate attention to these alarming conditions a generation of children will be born into a state of poverty, the consequences of which are profound and far-reaching for all involved.

⁴ Stewart Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions in Winnipeg (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1982).

⁵ Ibid., 88.

More resources must be allocated to address the plight of urban natives in general and native single-parents in particular. The magnitude of the problem warrants that social policy and program initiatives be structured in a way so as to assign priority to native single-parent families. For any policy initiative to be successful native single-parent families must be targeted as a special needs group.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the predicament of urban native female led single-parent families residing in Winnipeg, utilizing housing as the focus of analysis. In particular, the thesis will test the hypothesis as to whether there is a relationship between household type and housing conditions. To that end, an analysis of housing conditions will be structured over household type and ethnicity, wherever data permit.

Central to the analysis is the assumption that generally speaking, a person's ability to satisfy his/her housing needs is a function of socio-economic status. A clear understanding of socio-economic conditions is therefore imperative and must of necessity be the starting point if the nature and causes of the housing conditions are to be fully understood. In light of this conceptual relationship, particular attention will be afforded to the underlying dynamics of poverty affecting urban native single-parents so severely. Factors unique to native single-parent families will be identified and assessed in terms of demarcating their

unique conditions and potentially functioning as impediments in improving their living conditions.

A principle implication of the research results is that there is indeed a significant relationship between household type and housing conditions. Empirical analysis provides evidence that single-parent families experience the highest rate of poverty and consequently show the highest incidence of problems of housing affordability and adequacy when compared to other household types.

Significant differences persist, however, between native and non-native single-parent families and both individual and external determinants of poverty are drawn upon to account for this variance. Based on the findings of available studies, combined with an examination of the 1986 census data, it was found that aside from household type and its unique demographic characteristics, ethnicity, gender and ultimately one's position in the class structure are important determinants of poverty.

The thesis is to a great degree exploratory in nature in the sense that it strives towards a greater understanding of how ethnicity and household type contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and the extent to which family violence may be drawn upon to explain the disproportionately large share of female led single-parent families within the native community. To that end, Evelyn Peters' work, which provides some answers regarding the large numbers of native

single-parent families, will be critically analyzed.⁶ Her research provides the context within which the hypothesis that the high incidence of native single-parent families is, in part, due to the high rates of family violence will be advanced.

Based on research findings, the thesis concludes that complex policy responses are required to address the housing problems experienced by urban native single-parent families. Unless the departmentalization of socio-economic and political issues gives way to an all-encompassing and well integrated approach, current programs and services will continue to bypass most native single-parent families. By virtue of the severity of the problems they encounter and the long lasting impact on their children if improvements in their living standards do not occur, housing and other social programs must make it their priority to assist this client group.

However, it should also be acknowledged that while targeting native single-parent families through policy and programs is a step in the right direction and provides, albeit short-term but immediate relief, it will not and cannot initiate fundamental socio-economic and political change. The recognition of aboriginal rights, including the inherent right to self-government, the settlement of claims,

⁶ Evelyn Peters, Native Households in Winnipeg: Strategies of Co-Residence and Financial Support (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1984).

the honouring of treaty obligations and the empowerment of native people to assume control over their lives are necessary preconditions if the quality of life of aboriginal peoples is to significantly improve. First Nations must have their inherent right to self-government recognized and must be provided with the means to realize these rights, if the impacts of colonialism are to be reversed.

Methodological Issues

Although the thrust of the thesis is a study of the housing conditions of urban native single-parent families in Winnipeg, the analysis is placed in the larger context of the socio-economic environment which shapes the living conditions of this population, an approach adopted directly from Clatworthy and Stevens.⁷ The rationale for extending the analytical framework to include an assessment of the household's income, education, and labour force characteristics is driven by a recognition that these factors directly influence the household's ability to satisfy its housing needs.

Clatworthy's research provides ample empirical evidence which illustrates that housing problems encountered by native households can be attributed directly to problems experienced in the labour market which, in turn, result in high levels of

⁷ Stewart Clatworthy and Harvey Stevens, An Overview of the Housing Conditions of Registered Indians in Canada (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1987), 34.

welfare dependency and low levels of income.⁸ Drawing from these findings, the analysis of the housing conditions of urban native single-parent families in Winnipeg will be integrated with an assessment of their socio-economic status and the factors determining the latter. In this context, causal factors of poverty will be identified and organized into individual and external determinants of poverty.

By virtue of the fact that problems experienced in the housing market are inextricably linked to problems experienced as a result of one's socio-economic status, any policy scheme addressing this dynamic cannot be myopic in its approach if it is to be successful in improving the current substandard housing conditions experienced by urban native single-parent families.

Definitions

Housing conditions and problems will be defined and measured by utilizing the three dimensions of housing need, recognized in Canada's stated housing objectives and in policies and programs.⁹ These include affordability, adequacy and suitability. 'Housing affordability' refers to the relationship between the cost of housing services (rental or homeownership) and the household's ability to pay for those

⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁹ Stewart Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions In Winnipeg (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1982), 48.

services (which in the majority of households is determined by the current household income)'.¹⁰ This relationship is measured in terms of income ratios to shelter cost on the basis of a predetermined contribution rate standard. Up until 1986, the contribution rate was set at 25 percent of gross household income. This means that if a household spent more than 25 percent of its income on shelter, it is said to experience an affordability problem or what is often referred to as shelter poverty. The contribution rate standard was changed in 1986 to 30 percent. Since the 1986 census calculated affordability based on the 25 percent contribution rate standard, data presented in this thesis are not adjusted to the present rate of 30 percent.

Housing adequacy 'refers to the physical condition of the housing unit, including such elements as structural soundness, state of repair, amenities present, etc.'¹¹ Construction and rehabilitation standards are established by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, whereas the provinces are responsible to set standards ensuring a minimum standard of safety and health through such legislation as public health acts.

Housing suitability refers most commonly to the level of crowding which is determined on the basis of the household's space requirements in relation to the nature and amount of

¹⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹¹ Ibid., 49.

space available.¹²

On the basis of the three indicators, a household is said to be in **core need** if it experiences at least one of the three housing problems.

The concept of multiple housing problems will also be utilized in the assessment of housing conditions and must therefore be briefly explained. A household is said to be experiencing multiple housing problems when 'a low income household is forced to trade off housing quality and/or housing space in order to acquire housing which it can afford.'¹³

The concept of poverty will be extensively used in this thesis, and for purposes of measurement will refer to 'the relationship of the household's income to a theoretical minimum level of income required to purchase basic goods and services. Households with incomes at or below the minimum level required to purchase basic goods and services are deemed to be experiencing poverty.'¹⁴ In order to determine the minimum level of income required, Statistics Canada's low income cut-off levels, which adjust to the size of the household and the geographical location, will be employed.

The author recognizes the narrow nature of using the

¹² Ibid., 50.

¹³ Ibid., 72.

¹⁴ Stewart Clatworthy and Harvey Stevens, Overview of the Housing Conditions, 18.

above definition and measurement of poverty, which is undoubtable an inadequate measure of economic deprivation and the inability to control one's life seeing that it addresses only one dimension of poverty, and that is income. Due to the lack of and access to available data, however, income will be utilized as the measure of poverty.

In this study, household type refers to the effective unit of housing consumption for housing services, describing a group of people who occupy a dwelling. According to Statistics Canada, there are five major household types: husband and wife (or common-law) without children, husband and wife with children, single-parent families, multiple families, and non-families. Based on this definition, a female-led single-parent family is defined as a household where the mother is the primary household maintainer and solely responsible for child rearing.

The term 'urban adjustment' will be used frequently in this study, signifying the active and genuine participation of urban native people in the decision-making process and the urban labour market.

The thesis refrains from adopting the artificially and externally imposed division of native people into separate categories of status, non-status and Metis. The term native is therefore defined as all-inclusive, including status and non-status, and Metis. Clatworthy's study of urban native

housing conditions¹⁵, and the 1986 census data, both of which adopt the all-inclusive definition of native, are consequently most heavily drawn upon.

The scope of the analysis is restricted to the urban native population residing in Winnipeg. The City of Winnipeg was chosen as the area of study for two reasons. Unlike other Manitoba urban centres, Winnipeg is the largest catchment area for urban native migrants and, as such, lends itself well to the study. Secondly, Winnipeg is also the most accessible to the author. However, the policy implications and conclusions are not confined to Winnipeg alone in light of the fact that Clatworthy and Gunn, in their study of urban native conditions in select western canadian cities, found that both employment and labour market experiences are quite similar.¹⁶

¹⁵ Stewart Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions in Winnipeg, (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1982).

¹⁶ Stewart Clatworthy and J. Gunn, Economic Circumstances of Native People in Selected Metropolitan Centres in Western Canada (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1982).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the premise that housing conditions and consumption are a function largely of the household's socio-economic status, it is imperative to review both the body of literature on urban native housing as well as the literature examining the roots of urban native poverty. Upon analysis of the pertinent literature, one fundamental observation can be made which pertains to the vast majority of research dealing with urban housing conditions in general and native poverty in particular. With the exception of a few studies, the role, needs, and conditions of native women in the urban environment are generally ignored. Most academics have either failed altogether to distinguish between women and men in their examination of migration patterns and urban adjustment, or have merely noted gender-based dissimilarities in terms of migration patterns, yet fallen short of developing such findings further.¹⁹ Even fewer scholars have devoted any

¹⁹ Joan Ryan, for example, took note of the fact that single mothers migrated to urban areas at a greater rate than any other household type, and that this phenomenon is largely a result of the low priority single mothers are given on the reserve with respect to housing and other services, but did not expound on these findings further.

attention to the fact that female led single-parent families are not only disproportionately represented in urban areas, but also have become the most severely economically deprived segment of the urban population. Consequently, the role of native women in urban areas is little understood to date and requires significantly more attention.

A similar void can be detected with respect to a comprehensive analysis of the housing conditions of the urban native community. The literature frequently glosses over the housing conditions of urban natives and fails to focus on the root causes of the inability to satisfy their housing needs. Even in the research dealing specifically with urban native conditions, it is evident that in most cases the subject of housing represents merely one of many themes around which the material under study is organized, but which is usually purely descriptive in character and seldom provides any empirical data or indepth analysis of the possible causes of substandard housing. Aside from the work of Clatworthy and Stevens, empirical research focusing on native housing conditions, and/or an examination of housing consumption patterns structured over household type, is restricted to on-reserve housing. As in the case of native women, research on off-reserve housing conditions is extremely sparse and generally peripheral in nature and substantial efforts are required to

See: Joan Ryan, Wall of Words. The Betrayal of the Urban Indian (Toronto: Peter Martin Press, 1978).

improve this research deficiency.

Aside from these common weaknesses, most studies concur that there is indeed what has commonly been referred to an 'urban native problem' in many Canadian cities. Little disagreement exists that high unemployment rates, low income levels, a high degree of welfare dependency, the disintegration of the nuclear family and substandard housing conditions characterize the lives of many native persons. The difference, however, lies in what is identified as causal factors and, flowing from that, the recommended course of action.

Drawing on both Osberg's and Wien's review of pertinent research on poverty in general, and native poverty in particular, it is possible to define the relevant body of literature on the basis of their underlying assumptions, the types of factors drawn upon to explain the phenomenon under study and the specific strategies proposed, all of which form the theoretical framework of analysis.²⁰ Lars Osberg's contribution to the assessment of the various methodological approaches owes primarily to the fact that the research scope and the type of information presented in support of one's thesis is a direct function of the author's theoretical

²⁰ Fred Wien, Rebuilding the Economic Base of Indian Communities: The Micmac in Nova Scotia (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1986), 79.

perspective.²¹

The subsequent literature review uses both Wien and Osberg's frameworks as points of reference, facilitating the extrapolation of several broad theoretical perspectives from the vast body of literature on urban native poverty. Although the theoretical perspective is usually easily identifiable, in some instances the lines distinguishing the various schools of thought are blurred. In some cases it is, therefore, more useful to envision a continuum of the different perspectives in an effort to avoid potentially inappropriate categorization.

By far the most prevailing view in the body of literature is the **orthodox perspective**, which identifies as causal factors of poverty those which are largely controllable by the individual. Although different conceptual models are employed, ranging from the culture of poverty model to modernization and human capital theories, the common premise in all is that there are no inherent inequities or barriers in the market system which would prevent native people from improving their socio-economic conditions if they so chose. On the contrary, the assumption is that there is a perfect correlation between income and educational attainment, personal motivation to adjust to modern urban life and the degree of assimilation. The root cause of poverty, it is

²¹ Lars Osberg, Economic Inequality in Canada (Toronto: Butterworth & Co (Canada)LTD., 1981), 3.

argued, therefore lies with the individual who creates his/her own obstacles and/or opportunities. By virtue of the fact that most current government programs targeting urban native poverty subscribe to this theoretical perspective, it is worth studying its roots in some detail.

Scholars such as Nagler, Denton, Kerri, and Shackleton study the phenomenon of urban migration and urban native poverty from the perspective of the individual and his/her potential to adjust successfully to the modern world. The scope of the research rarely goes beyond an assessment of the socio-cultural characteristics of native individuals and the manner in which these factors inhibit or foster successful urban adjustment. Success and failure are measured in terms of the degree to which urban natives have assimilated into urban mainstream society. This process is one of acculturation and is argued to be largely dependent upon the willingness of the individual to assimilate, their motivations, and/or the extent to which the individual has been prepared for urban lifestyles in terms of job skills and social habits. With the passing of time, the provision of training programs to acquire the necessary job skills, the willingness to adjust and the implementation of programs geared to familiarize native persons with urban culture, successful adjustment is inevitable.

Nagler adopts this modernization perspective and has gone to great length to identify those native traits said to impede

'progress' and thereby urban adjustment. In fact, he carries this assumption to the extreme and states that it is indeed 'the Indians' "Indianness" which tends to separate them from the mainstream of the urban population', which, he argues, lies at the root cause of native poverty.²² Indian culture is seen to be at odds with mainstream culture which has the effect of acting as a barrier in terms of improving the quality of life. The following quote best illustrates his perspective:

Indians thus experience difficulty in adjusting to a new environment because their conceptions of living do not involve punctuality, responsibility, hurry, impersonality, frugality, and the other social practices which are a part of the urban environment. ... "their degree of Indianness" affects the various patterns of adjustments the Indians make to the urban scene.²³

A common reaction to the cultural clash is what has often been referred to as the development of a 'culture of poverty', characterized by the intense feeling of hopelessness which in turn fosters disobedient and destructive behaviour amongst the urban poor. Of particular importance in this context is the argument that once the culture of poverty has manifested itself, it becomes an impediment to improving one's socio-economic conditions. Nagler utilizes the culture of poverty thesis in support of the argument "that much of their

²² Ibid., 19.

²³ Mark Nagler, Indians in the City (Ottawa: Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology, 1970), 25.

traditional way of life has been destroyed and has been replaced by a culture of poverty, characterized by family instability, superficial interpersonal relationships among Indian families, feelings of hopelessness, dependence, and inferiority, and a lack of social organization".²⁴

Kerri's work takes a similar approach as Nagler's, stressing the individual's skills and level of education as the primary determinants of the degree of economic adjustment, defined as the 'ability to pay for one's needs and have an economic self-sufficiency in these respects'.²⁵ Theodore Graves' economic adjustment model is adopted in principle, which asserts that the migrant's economic adjustment potential 'depends largely on his capacity to display saleable productive skills. This in turn is a function of his premigration training and experience, his education (especially vocational training), and his contact with whites.'²⁶

Kerri utilizes this model in his assessment of urban native conditions, expanding its scope to include such factors as the availability of jobs, the extent to which the individual has established contacts with job opportunities,

²⁴ Fred Wien, Rebuilding the Economic Base of Indian Communities: The Micmac in Nova Scotia (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1986), 88.

²⁵ James N. Kerri, "The Economic Adjustment of Indians in Winnipeg, Canada," Urban Anthropology 5(4), (1976): 352.

²⁶ Ibid., 351.

and his/her motivational traits. Although discrimination in the labour market is identified as an inhibiting factor, it is limited to personal as opposed to structural discrimination.

A conceptual distinction between structural and personal discrimination is warranted at this point, and Hull's definition of discrimination will be adopted. He identifies personal discrimination as one type of racism, distinct from structural racism, and best described as the racist and discriminatory attitudes held by a select few people, such as landlords. Structural racism, on the other hand, is basically taken in its broadest sense and 'attempts to describe a problem in the socio-economic relations of our society, without laying the blame for the problem on any particular group or individual. In this sense, structural racism is the lack of opportunity systematically experienced by a racially defined group within our society.'²⁷

By adopting this distinction it is evident that most of the discussion of racism and discrimination in orthodox theory does not go beyond the interpersonal and, hence, behavioral sort of discrimination. Shackleton, for example, acknowledges the existence of discrimination of landlords against natives in the Winnipeg housing market and laments the absence of human rights legislation applying to housing, but

²⁷ Jeremy Hull, Natives in a Class Society (Saskatoon: One Sky Publisher, 1982), 2.

her analysis of discrimination does not extend beyond one of personal discrimination.²⁸

Although Kerri does make an attempt to extend the scope of his research to draw upon external forces, such as discrimination in the labour market and lack of jobs, his analysis falls short of going beyond the individual. While labour market dynamics are drawn upon as impacting on the degree of economic adjustment, in keeping with orthodox theory, a strong preference to weigh the individual's motivation heaviest prevails. The following quote attests to this bias:

Because, regardless of the migrant's potentials for economic and other social adjustment in his new setting and the availability of resources and conditions in the new community for development of his potentials, what the migrant does or does not do depends to a great extent on what he intends to do or is interested in doing.²⁹

Owing to the fact that most researchers acknowledge that only a minority of native people appear to adjust successfully to the modern economy, explanations as to why native people migrate to the city in the first place are sought. Most commonly, the lack of economic opportunities on reserves is cited as the most frequent reason for migration. It is,

²⁸ Doris Shackleton, "The Indian as Newcomer," Canadian Welfare 45(4) (1969): 7-17.

²⁹ James N. Kerri, "Push and Pull Factors : Reasons for Migration as a Factor in Amerindian Urban Adjustment," Human Organization 35(2) (Summer 1976): 216.

however, recognized that the driving force behind migration is not always purely economical but rather multidimensional, although as research has indicated, in most cases push as opposed to pull factors predominate the person's decision to leave the reserve community. "Push" factors being those which 'originate from the migrant's original community, which cause him to move, and "pull" factors being identified as those which originate from the city, attracting the migrant and motivating him to move.'³⁰

Contributing to the discussion on the dynamics of push and pull factors is Denton's work, who unlike Nagler and Kerri stresses individual preference as one of the important motivating factors. He agrees with Kerri and Nagler, that the search for employment attracts natives to the city, but argues that natives are not motivated solely by a lack of employment opportunities on the reserves. Lifecycle pressures and social control mechanisms operative in the reserve communities are instead pushing people to cities.³¹ In particular, social and cultural conditions are identified as pushing young natives off reserves in an effort to become self-reliant and independent from their families. 'Strong village norms and social control mechanisms ...encourage work,

³⁰ James N. Kerri, Unwilling Urbanites: The Life Experience of Canadian Indians in a Prairie City (Washington: University Press of America, 1978), 28.

³¹ Trevor Denton, "Migration from a Canadian Indian Reserve," Journal of Canadian Studies VII(2) (May 1972): 54-62.

independence and earning one's own money', and it is these lifecycle and cultural pressures which induce migration of predominantly young natives, between the ages 16 and 25.³²

Denton's analysis of push and pull factors shapes his explanation as to why urban migrants appear to experience adjustment difficulties. Based on his own research, albeit mostly derived from personal experience, he concludes that with the exception of some migrants, natives do not adjust because they have no intention of settling permanently in the city and consequently do not choose to adapt to urban lifestyles. Since migration to urban areas is temporary and motivated by lifecycle pressures, natives simply consider their stay in the city as short-term, in most cases, intending to eventually return to the reserves. Despite the different explanation as to why a great number of native migrants experience adjustment difficulties, Denton concurs with other orthodox theorists that the root cause of native poverty ultimately lies with the individual who is at odds with dominant culture.

In retrospect, it can be concluded that despite various differences with respect to the individual themes the material is organized around, the basic premise is that answers to the urban native problem lie primarily with the individual native person and his/her potential and personal motivation to assimilate into the urban mainstream. Fundamental changes in

³² Ibid., 55.

the social, political and economic fabric of society are not considered a necessary precondition to social change, because they are not identified as being linked to the high incidence of poverty among urban natives. Hence, no significant effort is made to broaden the narrow scope and extend the conceptual framework to include a thorough examination of those environmental factors which inhibit native persons from significantly improving their socio-economic conditions. The failure to extend the analytical parameters to include a thorough examination of the external context is primarily driven by the assumption of generally perfect labour market conditions. Although authors such as Nagler and Kerri acknowledge that the labour market is not entirely free of discrimination, little weight is assigned to discrimination as a powerful deterrent to equal opportunity.

Owing to the fact that external factors are not drawn upon to account for urban poverty, the data utilized in most orthodox theories are restricted to educational indicators and an assessment of how cultural traits inhibit progress. Research is often purely descriptive and impressionistic and relies heavily on personal observations and experiences.

Aside from the general lack of thorough empirical analysis of factors other than educational indicators, orthodox theories have a strong tendency to blame the victim. It is the individual who is the sole focus of analysis and ultimately it is the individual who is blamed for not being

able to break out of the cycle of poverty. In fact, it is potentially racist because stereotypes such as the inability of natives to 'punch the clock' along with other native cultural characteristics are drawn upon to account for the cultural clash between the native and non-native community, and serve to explain why so many natives experience difficulties in the labour market.

As alluded to earlier, the solutions sought are directly linked to the type of theoretical model employed. In the case of orthodox theories it is evident that, although the recommended degree of assimilation varies from total assimilation to active participation in urban social, political and economic spheres, assimilation into the dominant culture is key to enhancing economic equality. Policies and programs geared to addressing the urban native problem must, therefore, have as their focus the enhancement of the ability of native persons to adjust to the urban mainstream culture, coupled with the individual's own initiatives. Of central importance is the improvement of the educational level of the native population to provide them with the necessary skills to compete effectively in the urban labour market. Owing to the fact that discrimination is acknowledged as a possible barrier to equal opportunity, as ill-defined and narrow in scope as it may be, programs are also proposed to address this inequality, a prominent example being affirmative action programs.

The argument is advanced that with the initiation of these government programs and, above all, in due course, successful integration into the dominant culture is not only desirable but indeed inevitable. Little respect is paid to the fact that native peoples may not wish to surrender their own distinct, traditional cultures as the prize for equality. Aside from the ethical implications of promoting assimilation, the fact that attempts over the last decades to assimilate native people have failed attests to the ill conceived assumption that assimilation is of pivotal importance in addressing native poverty.

No comments can be made with respect to the assessment of urban native housing conditions, because the subject of housing is not an area of study in any of the above works. Housing conditions are mentioned only peripherally in terms of motivating many natives to leave their reserve communities and move to the city. Shackleton speaks to the issue of discriminating landlords who make it difficult for newcomers to obtain adequate housing, but does not explore urban native housing further. Nagler merely comments on the fact that although urban natives appear to be living in the slum areas of town, there are no native ethnic neighbourhoods as in the case of Italians, Chinese or other ethnic groups.³³ This is explained by the fact that there does not appear to be any

³³ Mark Nagler, Natives without a Home (Don Mills: Longman Canada Limited, 1975), 55.

cohesion within the native community or a common heritage which would draw urban natives together. Nagler in fact links the absence of cohesion amongst urban natives to their lack of common heritage. It can be argued, however, that although it is true that native peoples come from various cultural backgrounds, the lack of cohesion may be more a result of divisive forces such as class and gender as opposed to the lack of common heritage.

An area of research which in some instances complements the orthodox perspective in terms of its assumption that assimilation is a desirable policy objective, is the research conducted in the area of **institutional development**. The unit of analysis is commonly service institutions and their role in facilitating or inhibiting urban adjustment is studied. While the focus of analysis is institutions, the theoretical perspectives employed vary considerably. Caution must therefore be exercised in not subsuming the various studies under one theoretical perspective. Owing to the often significantly distinctive underlying assumptions, it will be necessary to draw on both differences and commonalities of the institution-oriented research.

The strand of literature dealing with institutional development is most notably represented by such authors as Price, Reeves and Frideres, Bostrom, Fulham, Brody and McCaskill. Although their work speaks to different aspects of institutional development, their research scope goes beyond

the individual and, as such, expands the analytical parameters. A conceptual link between the extent to which urban native institutions have developed and the impact their progress has had on urban adjustment is established. The basic premise is that urban native institutions can inhibit or foster integration of native migrants, depending on the types of services they provide to their clientele, which in turn is a function of their level of institutional development.

Instead of drawing exclusively on the social and cultural characteristics of the individual in order to identify the causes of urban native poverty, the various levels of institutional completeness are measured and correlated with varying degrees of urban adjustment.

John Price best represents the above perspective. His research is premised on the assumption that successful economic and social adjustment of the urban native population has failed to occur in many Canadian cities because native institutions have been slow to develop to their full potential. As a result, they have been unsuccessful in assisting the urban native population with the necessary services, such as employment services which, in turn, are seen as providing enhanced access to the urban labour market.

To account for the various levels of economic and social adjustment of North American urban natives, he identifies four stages of urban adjustment, each corresponding to a particular

stage of institutional development.³⁴ The initial stage of urban native institutionalization is the bar culture, which provides for the dominant setting of native institutions.³⁵ With the passage of time, however, and the realization that the bar culture fosters dysfunctional behaviour, preventing successful urban adjustment, second stage institutions are eventually established, such as, friendship and kinship centres which 'operate without the social dysfunctions of bar culture.'³⁶ The third stage of institutional development is marked by the appearance of native institutions which cover such organizations as Indian Christian churches, political organizations and athletic leagues. The fourth and last stage not yet achieved is the development of native-run institutions which provide professional, academic, and entrepreneurial services to urban natives.

Price argues that with the passage of time urban natives will develop increasingly advanced ethnic institutions, which reflect the extent to which acculturation has taken place, and are a necessary precondition to successful adaptation, because they are the means by which integration is facilitated. The level of acculturation can thereby be

³⁴ John Price, "U.S. and Canadian Indian Urban Ethnic Institutions," Urban Anthropology 4(1) (1975): 35-53.

³⁵ For a further study on the 'skid row' or bar culture see, Hugh Brody, Indians on Skid Row (Ottawa: D.I.A.N.D., 1971).

³⁶ Ibid., 42.

measured by the presence or absence of later stage ethnic institutions. The link to orthodox theory is in the assumption that assimilation is considered a means to improving the socio-economic conditions.

In a similar vein is the research of McCaskill, who accepts orthodox theory that low education and a lack of marketable skills are the primary obstacle to successful economic adjustment. However, he extends the analytical framework by including the lack of participation of urban natives into mainstream institutions as a further explanation of their inability to integrate. He states:

An important aspect of the adjustment process for most ethnic groups is the extension of an individual's field of participation beyond his primary group into the institutions of the larger society, and a corresponding identification with the values of that society. This usually entails the development of mutual identification and some sense of solidarity with members of the larger society. In case of migrating Indians such identification and solidarity are incomplete.³⁷

In effect, McCaskill argues that institutional participation in the social and political spheres of the city, such as political parties, is a prerequisite to successful integration and therefore economic adjustment, because such participation beyond the primary group indicates an identification with the values of dominant society and facilitates assimilation.

³⁷ Don McCaskill, "The Urbanization of Indians in Winnipeg, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver: A Comparative Analysis," Culture 1(1) (1981): 86.

Compounding the problem, he argues, is the fact that urban natives are not participating in the development of their own ethnic institutions either, which is seen to be crucial in terms of fostering ethnic identity and ultimately providing the basis for any kind of collective action. The result of the exceptionally low rate of participation in both native and mainstream organizations, is the preservation of their 'minority status', which means 'that they are treated according to a categorical status which is negatively evaluated in the larger society. This, in turn, implies a disadvantaged position with regard to acquiring the values of the larger society or developing a functioning set of ethnic institutions.'³⁸ Consistent with orthodox theory is once again the assumption that assimilation is the key to economic adjustment.

Although Frideres and Reeves, in their study of service institutions in Alberta, concur that 'the types of organizations and their policy have played an important role in determining the rate of transition from rural to urban (and) also determine the degree to which natives can achieve a successful adaptation to the urban centre'³⁹, their theoretical perspective is not an orthodox one. Assimilation is not promoted as a precondition to improving the standard of

³⁸ Ibid., 89.

³⁹ W. Reeves and J. Frideres, "Government Policy and Indian Urbanization: The Alberta Case," Canadian Public Policy 7(4) (1981): 587.

living of urban natives and, unlike Price and McCaskill, the focus is on the impact of public service organizations and their inability to meet the needs of their urban native clientele. The scope of analysis is extended to seek answers outside the native community, a clear departure from orthodox theory.

Frideres and Reeves found that public service organizations have failed to meet the needs of urban natives, because the programs and services they offer are predominantly remedial in nature and largely a reflection of middle-class, anglo-saxon values which are entirely alien to the predominantly native clientele. At the same time, native-run, urban based organizations have also been unsuccessful in providing the necessary services to their membership, largely because of insufficient funding, lack of experience of their staff, and the predominantly temporary and crisis and issue oriented character of their work. Consequently, the inability of both native and non-native service institutions to meet the social, economic, and cultural needs of the urban native community have contributed to maintaining the cycle of poverty urban natives appear to be trapped in.

The generally myopic view taken by social policies, including housing policy, and the departmentalization of complex problems through separate and distinct service institutions has not only failed to meet the needs of urban natives, but, as Bostrom argues, has contributed to the

dependency upon government.⁴⁰ Bostrom, in his analysis of government programs for Manitoba's urban natives criticizes 'planners (who) take a somewhat myopic view of Native problems, concentrating on one or a few secondary aspects of those problems while ignoring their causes, the extent of the handicaps they produce, and the interrelationships of the factors common in a milieu of deprivation.'⁴¹ Unless these complex and interrelated problems are being addressed at the root, requiring complex and well integrated solutions, Bostrom anticipates the persistence of poverty through successive generations.

Stan Fulham has also focused on the impact of government agencies and programs on urban adjustment. Based on his own personal experiences, he echoes Frideres' and Reeves' conclusion of the inability of agencies to initiate and sustain urban native participation in the economic sphere of the city, but his criticism reflects a different ideological perspective.⁴² Judging from the economic strategy suggested by Fulham, the failure of urban native organizations lies not in their inability to provide a vehicle for mobilizing and

⁴⁰ Harvey Bostrom, "Government Policies and Programs Relating to People of Indian Ancestry in Manitoba," in Raymond Breton and Gail Grant (eds), The Dynamics of Government Programs For Urban Indians In The Prairie Provinces (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1984).

⁴¹ *ibid*; 192.

⁴² Stanley Fulham, In Search of a Future (Winnipeg: Kinew, 1981).

politicizing the native population. On the contrary, Fulham perceives the problem to be one of failing to foster the development and establishment of privately owned, native run businesses. How the urban native community at large is to benefit from development of a native business community, aside from perhaps the creation of a select few jobs, remains however unclear.

To sum up, the distinguishing feature of the second current of thought is their focus on institutions and their ability or inability to meet the social, economic and political needs of urban natives. As such, the scope of research has expanded beyond the individual and in that sense has contributed valuable insights. There is little doubt that native institutions are important as a basis for organizing urban natives and lending a political voice to their interests, as divergent as they may be. Furthermore, there is also a distinct advantage to providing badly needed services in a more culturally appropriate way to those in need. Regarding non-native institutions, it also cannot be disputed that many governmental agencies do little to lessen the dependency of urban natives, evidenced by the fact that most clients remain passive recipients of the services offered. In retrospect, it can therefore be concluded that while institutionally oriented research has made an important contribution to the body of knowledge, many questions remain unanswered.

A school of thought distinct from orthodox theory is the body of knowledge premised on **segmentation theory**. Although segmentation theory is most notably utilized as a tool to explain gender based discrimination in the workplace, Clatworthy, Hull, Gunn, Peters, Falconer, and Dosman have applied the theory to the study of urban native poverty. Unlike orthodox theory which depicts the labour market as homogenous and consistent, segmentation theory points to its inconsistencies and barriers within, to explain the persistence of poverty among urban natives. Although there are several strands delineating segmentation research, there is the common perception that answers to urban native poverty must be sought outside the realm and control of the individual. Specifically, the reciprocal relationship between human potential and success in the labour market is challenged.

Instead of envisioning the labour market as homogenous, segmentation theory describes it as being divided into primary and secondary segments, which differ in terms of pay level, working conditions, opportunities for advancement, job security, and required skill levels. Of significance within this context is that for the first time it is recognized that the labour market experiences of women, minorities and single-parents differ from those of white males. Based on the empirical research conducted, it is evident that women, minorities and single-parent families are overrepresented in

the secondary segment, which is characterized by low pay, poor working conditions, little job security and few opportunities for advancement.

In addition to the inherent inequities such a divided labour market generates, the fact that there appears to be a lack of mobility between segments compounds the problem for those trapped in the secondary segment. It is argued that barriers which are beyond the control of the individual, have the effect of preventing some groups, particularly women and natives from moving out of the primary into the secondary labour market.

The research of Clatworthy, Gunn and Hull, in particular, has made a tremendous contribution to the study of urban native poverty in a multitude of ways. Not only have they collected an enormously rich data bank describing the conditions of urban natives, but they have also explored the area of urban native housing conditions, the depth of which has not been matched to date. Furthermore, the recognition that not all urban natives endure the same hardships, but that gender and household type are important factors in determining the extent to which urban natives can become economically self-sufficient, marks a breakthrough in this area of research. The plight of native women and native single-parents has for the first time received attention and a thorough examination of their demographic characteristics has been conducted. Although there are weaknesses inherent in

segmentation theory and consequently in its application to the study of urban native conditions, the fact that factors other than cultural traits and individual characteristics are drawn upon to explain urban native poverty has enriched the understanding of urban native conditions greatly.

The challenge to orthodox theory, in particular Nagler's prediction that with the passage of time and the implementation of acclimatization programs urban natives will have acquired the necessary skills to succeed in the labour market, has been led by Clatworthy. Contrary to Nagler's thesis, empirical evidence shows that the length of urban residency has no impact on native employment patterns, which 'clearly raises questions about the utility of the acculturation thesis in terms of explaining native adaptation to urban life and the urban labour market.'⁴³

Clatworthy found that differential rates of labour force participation among Winnipeg's native population are attributable to factors other than length of urban residency. Aside from education, which is recognized as having a positive effect on labour market success, gender and ethnicity are also identified as having an impact. Research reveals that even among better educated native peoples, unemployment rates remain substantially higher than those of the general population, which is argued to be attributable to

⁴³ Stewart Clatworthy, The Effects of Length of Urban Residency on Native Labour Market Behaviour (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1982), 42.

labour market segmentation.⁴⁴

Upon close analysis of the data, however, Clatworthy found that although native males experience great difficulties in the urban labour market as well, the problems for native women are even more acute. Although the reasons are several, labour market segmentation which has the effect of discriminating on the basis of gender and ethnicity, is drawn upon to account for this phenomenon. Low levels of education, few opportunities for occupational training, family responsibilities as well as other demographic constraints are also cited as barriers native women experience.⁴⁵ Although most of these constraints tend to impact negatively on women in general, Clatworthy argues that their effects tend to be magnified among native women, particularly native single-parents. Demographic characteristics, such as large families, young age structure and low levels of education are mentioned as enhancing the disadvantaged position of native single-parent families.

Jeremy Hull elaborates on the particular circumstances of native women and concludes that aside from comparatively low levels of education, the high incidence of single-parent families, and the relatively young age structure of native women, labour market segmentation theory provides further

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 25.

⁴⁵ Stewart Clatworthy, The Demographic Composition and Economic Circumstances of Winnipeg's Native Population (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1980).

explanations as to why native women are crowded into low paying occupations.⁴⁶ Since 'education alone does not explain the wide discrepancies in occupational structure between natives and others, or between women and men', the argument is advanced that a segmented labour market has the effect of crowding native women in low paying occupations such as sales, service and clerical.⁴⁷

Compounding these impediments, is a recognition by many native people of the limited employment opportunities available to them, which are usually confined to low paying jobs in the secondary labour market.

In agreement with much of the observations of segmentation theory, and focusing in particular on the socio-economic conditions of native single-parents, is Falconer's research which complements much of the findings made by Hull, Gunn and Clatworthy. Drawing from their research findings and based on his analysis of the 1981 census data, Falconer clearly identifies household type as a primary mechanism through which native disadvantage is perpetuated in urban areas. While he accepts the fact that the urban labour market presents structural barriers for native women, he expands the analysis by adding an important variable, namely the general lack of political power of native women, which

⁴⁶ Jeremy Hull, Native Women and Work (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1983).

⁴⁷ *ibid*; 32.

enhances their disadvantaged position. He argues that the high incidence of poverty amongst urban native single-parent families can, at least in part, be explained by the predominance of largely male dominated native organizations which often do not prioritize the concerns of native women.⁴⁸

Aside from the emphasis on the imperfections of the labour market, housing problems and needs, as experienced by the urban native population, are for the first time exposed to rigorous analysis, extending beyond the merely descriptive. Clatworthy and Stevens have generated a wealth of empirical information describing the housing conditions of urban natives, paralleled only by scholars such as Stanbury.⁴⁹ In the most detailed account of the housing conditions of Winnipeg's urban native people to date, Clatworthy provides an indepth analysis of the extent of housing need as measured by affordability, adequacy, and suitability.⁵⁰ The assessment of housing is intimately integrated with a socio-economic analysis of the urban native population, and is structured

⁴⁸ Patrick Falconer, The Overlooked of the Neglected: Native Single-Mothers in Major Cities on the Prairies (Winnipeg, 1986, unpublished paper)

⁴⁹ Stanbury, W., Success and Failure: Indians in Urban Society (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1975).

⁵⁰ Stewart Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions In Winnipeg (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1982).

Stewart Clatworthy and Harvey Stevens, An Overview Of The Housing Conditions Of Registered Indians In Canada (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1987).

over household type. Taking this approach revealed that housing need is directly tied to socio-economic status which in turn is influenced by household type. In light of the fact that there are tremendous socio-economic disparities between the native and non-native population, it comes as no surprise that there are also grave disparities in housing conditions between the two populations. Along the same logic, native single-parent families are found to experience the most severe housing problems because they are the poorest of the poor.

In retrospect, it can be concluded that segmentation theory has contributed to an understanding of urban native poverty, revealing phenomena which were previously undetected. The extremely high proportion of single-parent families within the urban native community and the high incidence of poverty associated with this household type are for the first time recognized and explored. A conceptual link is established between gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status and, in addition, efforts are undertaken to shed some light on the power structure of the native community in order to account for the severe economic deprivation of urban native women.

Focus has shifted away from cultural and individual characteristics of the urban native population, to an examination of gender, household type and the presence of a segmented labour market, in order to explain the significant disparities between native and non-native populations, and

native men and women.

In that sense segmentation theory has unquestionably expanded the body of knowledge regarding urban native conditions. However, as Osberg notes in his criticism of segmentation theory, many questions remain unanswered. Firstly, there does not appear to be any consistency as to what distinguishes the segments aside from such descriptive attributes as 'good' and 'bad' jobs.⁵¹ For example, job security is one of the characteristics of the primary sector, however, in an era of massive capital restructuring it is doubtful whether the entire concept of job security is still applicable, even in the primary sector of the labour market. Furthermore, the classification of jobs into primary and secondary segments is highly subjective, depending on the criteria used. In response, Osberg rightly remarks that it is more appropriate to speak in terms of a continuum, instead of the static model which divides the labour market into two distinct segments.

Secondly, the explanation offered as to how mobility between segments is constrained remains blurred. Although there is little doubt that women and natives are significantly overrepresented in low paying and unattractive occupations, little insight is offered as to how discrimination denies access to some, in their efforts to break into the primary sector. Surely, ethnicity and gender are not the exclusive

⁵¹ Lars Osberg, op.cit. 134.

barriers which relegate women, natives and visible minorities into the secondary labour market. If that was the case, there would be no white males trapped in dead end jobs, which of course is not the case in a capitalist economy. Hence, although there is little disagreement that native women carry a double burden in terms of their experience in the labour market, it is questionable whether that is a function solely of their gender and ethnicity, or whether it is because they are members of the working class which shapes their socio-economic conditions.

The utilization of class analysis to explain urban native poverty will follow a review of the literature which introduces concepts such as **colonialism and dependency theory** in an effort to explain native poverty.

The fundamental departure from previously reviewed theoretical approaches lies in the assertion that an understanding of the contemporary conditions of native people, on and off-reserve, can only be fully understood if the historical forces, which are said to have shaped present conditions, are analyzed. Consequently, the scope of analysis is significantly broadened, including an historical account from the time of initial European contact. Various approaches are taken to describe how historical forces have systematically created underdevelopment and, according to Wien, can be grouped into internal colonialism and staple

theory.⁵² Both approaches draw heavily on dependency theory using the metropolis/periphery paradigm to explain both regional and ethnic inequalities.

Frideres has devoted much of his research to the study of contemporary native conditions, exploring how the colonial experience has created the present state of underdevelopment. To that end, he provides a model of colonialism which conceptualizes the reserve as an internal colony of a larger nation, which over time has been systematically exploited to serve the needs of the metropolis.⁵³

The process of colonialism is described to occur in seven broad stages, beginning with the forced entry by the colonizing group into a geographic region, the gradual destruction of the political, economic, social, and spiritual institutions of the colonized, the exertion of external political control and the development of economic peripheries and metropol, the provision of low quality social services to the colonized, the institutionalization of racism, and the weakening of resistance of colonized natives to the point at which they can be totally controlled.⁵⁴ Frideres applies this process to the Canadian experience, and argues that '(although) several reasons contribute to the low standing

⁵² Fred Wien, op.cit., 103.

⁵³ James Frideres, Native People in Canada. Contemporary Conflicts (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1988), 366.

⁵⁴ *ibid*; 367-373.

Natives hold in Canadian society, all seem to fall within and stem from the historical colonialism that has characterized our society.⁵⁵ According to Frideres, the root cause of today's native economic dependence on non-native society can be traced back to when traditional lands and resources were treated as geographical and social hinterlands for white exploitation, serving the interests of the metropolis and not those of native peoples who own both lands and resources. The result is not only that the development of native-owned businesses is pre-empted but since raw materials are being shipped to the metropolis for processing, few opportunities for skill development are created for native people. Due to the lack of skills, most native people today continue to be relegated to low skilled, seasonal type occupations in primary industries, while both skilled jobs and profits from their raw materials are being drained to urban industrial centres. Those jobs which are created on the reserve through resource extraction are usually only seasonal and low paying in nature, requiring few skills. Because no meaningful training opportunities for natives are provided on reserves, migration to urban centres is not a solution for most natives either, since very few qualify for the skilled jobs offered in the processing industry.

Taking this approach leads Frideres to distinguish between a subsistence and modern economy, the latter being

⁵⁵ *ibid*; 372.

characterized by advanced technology requiring a fairly high skilled labour force. In contrast, reserve economies are described as not having gone beyond the subsistence level, providing neither the basis for economic self-sufficiency nor the skills to enable participation in the modern economy. Of particular interest in this context is that although Frideres identifies colonialism as being at the root cause of native poverty, his analysis incorporates segmentation theory to account for the crowding of native people into the primary sector.

Mel Watkins, who is probably best known for being instrumental in the development of staple theory, has extended the approach and analyzed the colonial experience of the Dene in Northern Canada in the context of staple exports. Staple theory postulates that trade relations structure the pattern of economic development and that the history of Canada can be described as 'a succession of staple exports from successive geographic frontiers to serve the needs of more advanced industrial areas.'⁵⁶

As Frideres, Watkins identifies native poverty to be the outcome of colonialism, which systematically underdevelops native communities for the benefit of white business interests. According to Watkins, the problem with dependent economies is that their economic activities are centred around

⁵⁶ Mel Watkins, "From Underdevelopment to Development," in Dene Nation - The Colony Within (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 85.

the extraction and development of one staple, rendering them extremely vulnerable to the vagaries of distant markets. The problems associated with depending on the export of one staple as the engine of economic activity are not unique to native communities, however, but, as Watkins argues, 'all of staple trades have in common a bias towards serving the needs of more advanced metropolitan areas - once France, then Britain, and now the United States.⁵⁷

Concentrating on the history of the Dene, Watkins illustrates the enormous impact the production and trade of staples, such as minerals has had on Dene social, political and economic structures. The most illustrative example is perhaps the need of mining and oil companies to obtain uninhibited access to land and resources. Consequently it is imperative to extinguish aboriginal title to lands in the Mackenzie Delta and the Beaufort Sea, so as to pave the way for these companies to exploit non-renewable resources. From the perspective of the Dene, the effects are detrimental. Aside from land expropriation, the surplus generated through resource extraction is not reinvested in the local economy nor are linkages created at the local or regional level, which would diversify the economy, creating employment opportunities for local people. As a result, native people are forced into a marginalized position characterized by extreme levels of poverty and dependence upon government to

⁵⁷ *ibid*; 86.

meet their most basic needs. Their means of survival have been taken from them and all in all 'for native people what has resulted is properly characterized as underdevelopment', defined as the 'blockage of potential, sustained economic and social development geared to local human needs'.⁵⁸

Regarding solutions, Watkins rejects the argument that the transition from the traditional to the modern sector of the economy is a prerequisite to addressing native poverty. Instead, he proposes to control the development of the modern sector (non-renewable resource development) to prevent it from expanding at the expense of the traditional sector (renewable resource development). In concrete terms this means Dene ownership and control over the renewable resource sector and possibly non-native ownership of the non-renewable resource sector, provided it is subject to Dene control.

A critical look at early native/european contact provides ample evidence of the systematic oppression and destruction of native political, social, economic, and spiritual institutions by non-native colonizers. Although the colonial experience may vary from First Nation to First Nation, one would be hardpressed to deny that native peoples across Canada share many of the experiences other colonized peoples have had to endure and are suffering from to this date. Hence, Watkins and Frideres are correct in their assessment that contemporary conditions cannot be viewed in isolation of historical events

⁵⁸ ibid; 91.

and that improvements can only be brought about through fundamental structural change.

Past and present struggles of native people across the country attest to that, identifying the colonial experience as being at the root of today's dependence. The negotiations of land claims and the fight to have the inherent right to self-government acknowledged and constitutionally entrenched are seen as necessary preconditions to even begin solving contemporary problems. Only when First Nations have their authority recognized will they be in a position to lessen the dependence upon governments which, as dependency theorists argue, are in many ways powerful agents of neocolonialism.

Of fundamental importance in this context is, however, a recognition that not all native people have suffered the same hardships as a result of the colonization process. Scholars, such as Dosman, in fact provide useful information which illustrates that the native community both on and off reserve is highly stratified as a result of their colonial experience and cannot be treated, as is often the case, as a homogenous group with similar interests.⁵⁹ Dosman divides the native community into several classes ranging from leading families to the confirmed indigent and relates the development of these 'classes' to historical developments. Of critical importance is that first attempts are made to account for the fact that

⁵⁹ Edgar Dosman, Indians: The Urban Dilemma (Toronto: The Canadian Publishers, 1972).

some native people are better off than others and that not all are equally dispossessed. Furthermore, a concrete linkage is made between the colonial experience and the particular division of native peoples along class lines. For example, the affluent class, or as commonly labelled the comprador bourgeoisie, is seen to act as an agent of colonialism, securing increased access to state funding not all of which will be utilized for the benefit of the community. Strategies must therefore be cognizant of these divisions.

Although much of what Watkins and Frideres have described as the colonial experience cannot be disputed, such as dependence on external markets, the outward flow of profits, the lack of diversification of reserve economies, the destruction of traditional institutions and racial discrimination, the causal factors identified are somewhat problematic. In concrete terms, the emphasis on staple export as having created the state of dependency which, as a result, marginalized most native peoples is perhaps overstated. The focus on staples and associated trade relationships has been referred to by some scholars as 'commodity fetishism - the attribution of creative powers in the historical process to the staple commodity as a natural and technical object.'⁶⁰

The most critical perspective of dependency theory is

⁶⁰ David McNally, "Staple Theory as Commodity Fetishism: Marx, Innis and Canadian Political Economy," Studies in Political Economy. A Socialist Review 6 (Autumn 1981): 38.

perhaps taken by the marxist school of thought, which acknowledges the impact of external markets and trade relationships on local economies, but places the discussion in the context of class analysis, arguing that it is social relations of production which drive particular developments. In other words, it is not trade relations between the metropolis and periphery which lead to inequalities but rather the mode of production which produces corresponding social relations, leading to the exploitation of one class over another.

The application of a Marxist approach to native conditions is fairly new, and best represented by scholars such as Loxley and Bourgeault.⁶¹ Loxley concurs with the methodological perspective that an analysis of contemporary native conditions must be integrated with an examination of historical events.⁶² Unlike Watkins or Frideres however, Loxley focuses his analysis on the transition from a primitive mode of production to a capitalist mode of production, linking this transition to the penetration of capitalism into Northern Manitoba. Corresponding social relations are produced with each mode of production, and it is capitalist social relations which are characterized by exploitative class relations. To quote from Loxley, "the poverty of native

⁶¹ Fred Wien, op.cit; 117.

⁶² John Loxley, "The Great Northern Plan," Studies in Political Economy. A Socialist Review 6 (Autumn 1981): 151-182.

people is therefore the outcome of the historical process of capitalist penetration of northern Manitoba in the structural manner described which positioned native people in marginalized class locations. The burden of poverty is, however, not borne by the class responsible for its generation. It is borne, not by capital but, as Marx emphasized, by "the working class and the lower middle class."⁶³

Unlike any other approach, class analysis provides a dynamic in the sense that it can account for shifts in power between the working class and the capitalist class as outcomes of an ongoing class struggle. Furthermore, it can explain the disparities among native people by positioning them in the class structure according to their relationship to the mode of production. Loxley hence divides native people on the basis of their class affiliation, concluding that the majority of native people are part of the working class, filling the ranks of the unskilled labourers earning low incomes and working mostly seasonally. Although fewer in numbers but at the bottom of the ladder are the permanently unemployed, who depend solely on the state for the provision of their most basic needs. A very small percentage of natives are described as petty commodity producers who are engaged in traditional pursuits such as hunting and trapping, and an even smaller number of the very small petty bourgeois class who own small

⁶³ ibid; 163.

business outfits. The last class of natives are those who work for either the bureaucracy or are employed by native institutions such as bands and tribal councils. As alluded to earlier they often act as agents of colonialism, facilitating the implementation of state policies through native organizations.⁶⁴

Bourgeault's analysis is similar to Loxley's, identifying class affiliation as being at the root cause of native oppression, stating that 'the real issue is one of class - to do away with the sources of oppression, not manage them. The native struggle must (therefore) be seen and dealt with within the context of class and colonialism.'⁶⁵ An analysis of the historical penetration of capital hence provides the context within which native oppression is studied. Bourgeault spends a great deal of time describing the effects of mercantilism on the economic and political spheres, but unlike Loxley, pays particular attention to the impact capitalist penetration had on the role of native women.

Although a division of labour based on gender was common in traditional, pre-capitalist native societies, women held equal decision-making powers to that of men. Bourgeault postulates that there is no evidence to suggest that the type

⁶⁴ ibid; 161-163.

⁶⁵ Ron Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Metis and the Fur Trade. Class, Sexism and Racism in the Transition from 'Communism' to Capitalism," Studies in Political Economy 12(1983): 47.

of work women performed was considered in any way less important than the work provided by men and, in fact, there existed a mutual dependence upon one another for survival. With the advent of mercantilism, however, the unit of production shifted from the collective to the family, which had a profound impact on the relationship between men and women.

As communal society slowly became undermined by trade goods and commodity production, women began to lose the decision-making powers they had over their labour and the use of the goods they produced. The creation of individual commodity production was the beginning of a decline in the communal family and the beginning of the formation of the individual family as the unit of production. With men established as responsible for the production of commodities, they assumed the role as head of the family and women became dependent support workers within each family unit.⁶⁶

In addition to becoming dependent on men for their survival, women became commodities in and of themselves. Ample evidence is provided which describes how european men politically and sexually exploited native women, by exerting control over native commodity producers through them, as well as using them sexually as replacements for european women who, at least initially, were not allowed in trading posts.

In sum, Bourgeault's major contribution to the body of knowledge is his focus on the role of women and the gender inequities which subsequently developed. It is the particular

⁶⁶ op.cit.; 55.

attention paid to the historical roots of native women's oppression which is absent in Loxley's analysis, although this gap is filled to some extent in his 1985 report, which addresses the role and needs of native women in the context of community development.⁶⁷

In summary, the body of knowledge dealing with poverty in general and native poverty in particular can be distinguished on the basis of their theoretical framework which in turn dictates both the scope of research as well as the direction of proposed strategies. A review of the pertinent literature revealed that there is indeed a direct linkage between the unit of analysis and the author's underlying assumptions.

Although several conceptual and methodological flaws could be identified in some of the research, it should be noted that all the findings have in some form contributed valuable insights to an understanding of native poverty. More efforts must, however, be devoted to gaining a better understanding of the role and predicament of native women and single-parents regardless of ethnic background. The numbers of single-parents are swelling across the country and with it the number of those living in poverty. We must not forget that with each single-parent in poverty, there are at least as many poor children whose chances of growing up in a stimulating and healthy environment are severely limited. That child poverty

⁶⁷ John Loxley, The Economics of Community Development (Winnipeg: HKL & Associates Ltd., Report prepared for the Native Economic Development Program, 1986).

has reached crisis proportions in Manitoba has recently been illustrated in a very disturbing report by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, alluding once again to the fact that children of single-parents are at greatest risk of living in poverty.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Child Poverty in Manitoba: An Approach Towards its Elimination (Winnipeg: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, February 1992.)

CHAPTER THREE

A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF THE URBAN NATIVE POPULATION OF WINNIPEG

This chapter presents a statistical profile of Winnipeg's urban native population with particular emphasis on the extent to which socio-economic conditions differ between household types and native and non-native populations. To that end, demographic and socio-economic indicators such as income, educational attainment, labour force participation rates, and unemployment rates will be examined and structured over household type and ethnicity wherever data permit. The purpose is to highlight the gap between native and non-native populations in general, and single and two-parent families in particular.

Although the 1991 census will render available a plethora of information on the housing conditions of both non-native and native populations, the 1986 census has not afforded any particular attention to housing conditions at all. For example, the 1986 census did not ask questions which would indicate housing adequacy or suitability and hence no

information is available with respect to these indicators. In order to fill this information gap, Clatworthy's 1982 survey of Winnipeg's urban native housing conditions will be drawn upon heavily, despite its lack of currency.

At the outset it should be noted that considerable caution must be exercised with both the 1981 and 1986 census regarding their aboriginal data base. Unlike the 1981 census, the 1986 census provided a more inclusive definition of who could claim aboriginal origin, with the effect of potentially increasing the aboriginal population count. In 1986, persons who had at least one aboriginal parent could claim aboriginal origin if they so chose. Hence, increases in the size of the aboriginal population as recorded in 1986 may be due to the greater number of those being able to claim aboriginal origin in addition to natural population increase. Furthermore, Bill C-31 introduced in 1985, enabling aboriginal women to regain their aboriginal status, may also have contributed to the increase in the 1986 aboriginal population count. As a consequence, extreme caution must be exercised when longitudinal analysis between the 1981 and 1986 census data is conducted. Further complicating comparative analysis is the fact that in 1986, enumeration on 136 Indian reserves and settlements across Canada was not permitted or was interrupted. For Manitoba, this meant that 8,200 persons from 16 Indian reserves were excluded from the census, and data for

these reserves are not available.⁶⁹ The data provided for Manitoba's native population is, therefore, incomplete because it did not count the entire native population.

The following statistical profile draws most heavily on the special tabulations from the 1986 census, purchased by the Institute of Urban Studies, The Social Planning Council and several other Winnipeg agencies. Although these tabulations provide the most comprehensive data bank of Winnipeg's urban native population to date, certain shortcomings had to be contended with as concerns this thesis. Particularly, the tabulations often fail to extend their cross-tabulations to household type and/or ethnicity. However, as a result of the enormous cost associated with the purchase of special tabulations from Statistics Canada (\$1,000 per table), the author made do with the available statistics.

⁶⁹ Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, Manitoba Aboriginal Persons. A Statistical Profile (Winnipeg: MBS 88-9, 1989), 3.

i. Demographic, Socio-Economic and Housing Profile of the Native and Non-Native Population of Winnipeg

According to the 1986 census data the total population of Manitoba is 1,049,320, of whom 85,235 persons or 8.1 percent are persons of aboriginal origin.⁷⁰ The highest concentration of aboriginal people is in Winnipeg, where 32.7 percent (27,475) of all aboriginal persons of Manitoba reside. The urban native population constitutes 4.7 percent of Winnipeg's total population.

In order to get some sense of the extent to which this urban native population is composed of recent migrants, tabulations revealing mobility status were examined. Data reveal that approximately 80 percent of the urban native population of Winnipeg, five years of age and older, are considered non-migrants, meaning that they have been living in the same census division for at least five years. Hence, only about 20 percent of Winnipeg's urban native population consists of newcomers.⁷¹ This observation is rather significant in light of the fact that the problems experienced by urban natives can hardly be attributed to the initial unfamiliarity with urban life.

Although this thesis does not distinguish between the

⁷⁰ The following data for Manitoba as a whole are taken from:

Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, Manitoba Aboriginal Persons. A Statistical Profile (Winnipeg: Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, May 1989).

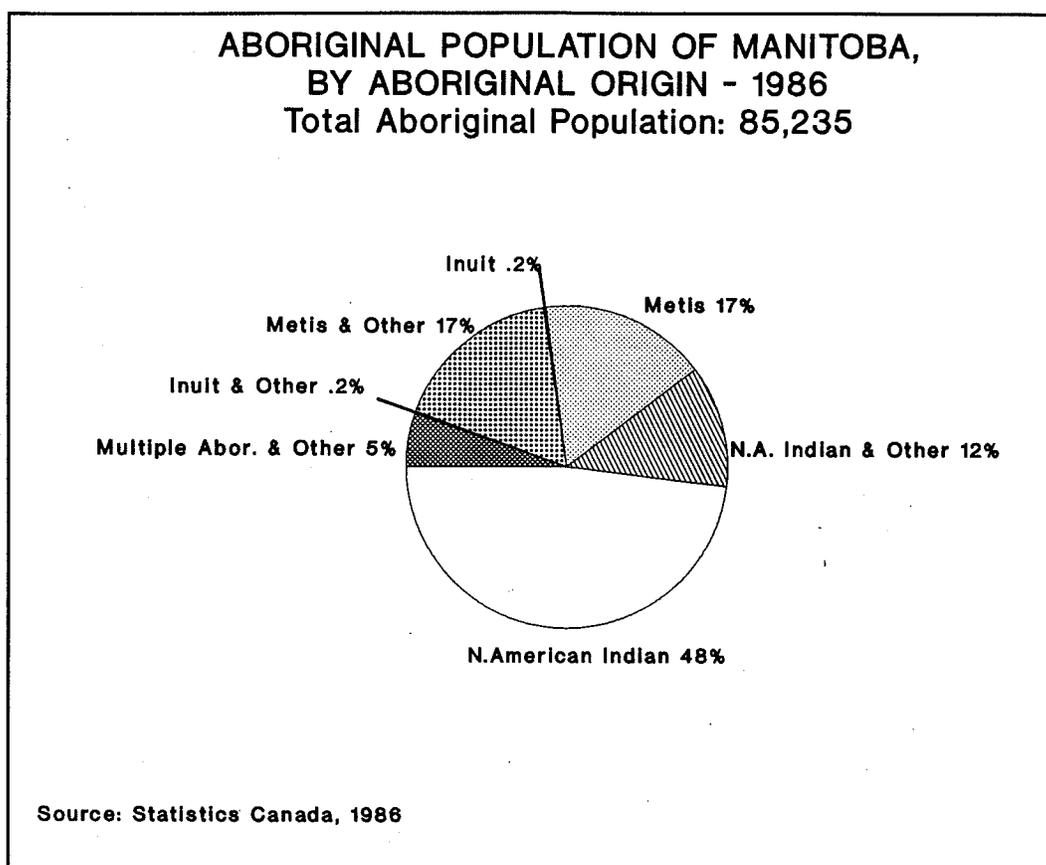
⁷¹ Table 13, Special Tabulations.

externally imposed and artificially created categories of aboriginal status, **Figure 1** provides a snapshot of the aboriginal composition of Manitoba's native population. The intent is to point to the high proportion of North American Indians (48%). An examination of socio-economic indicators structured over aboriginal origin reveals that generally the North American Indian population is worse off in terms of socio-economic status than the Metis population, even though the variations are often marginal. One possible reason may be that North American Indians are 'visibly' of aboriginal origin and hence may be more exposed to racism as opposed to the Metis population.

Although it is not possible to simply compare the 1981 and 1986 aboriginal population count for the purpose of determining actual population increase, it is possible to provide an estimate. In 1981 Winnipeg's native population reached 16,100 compared to 27,475 in 1986.⁷² However, due to factors such as in and out migration, Bill C-31, a more inclusive definition of aboriginal in the 1986 census, and perhaps a greater willingness in 1986 to declare aboriginal origin, it cannot be concluded that the population growth of 11,375 persons is a result of natural increase. Assuming a compound factor of 3 percent over five years, it can be determined that 8,810 out of the 11,375 additional native

⁷² Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Winnipeg Census Data. Insights and Trends (Winnipeg: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1986).

Figure 1



persons can be attributed to a combination of factors, such as in-migration and Bill C-31.⁷³ The remaining population increase is most likely due to generally higher fertility rates and larger families amongst native persons.

In 1986, 40 percent of the urban native population lived in the inner city, where one in every ten residents is native, and where poverty is particularly widespread and common.⁷⁴

As the following data will reveal in some detail, the gap

⁷³ Compound factor of 3 percent over 5 years = 1.1593.
Population in 1981 = 16,100 x 1.1593 = 18,665;
Population in 1986 = 27,475 - 18,665 = 8,810;

⁷⁴ Social Planning Council, Insights and Trends, op.cit.,

between native and non-native persons is significant. On all counts of socio-economic and demographic indicators, native persons are in a disadvantaged position, with the hardcore of the poor living in the inner city. Despite the fact that natives outside the inner city fare better than their inner city counterparts, they are still poorer than the non-inner city population as a whole.

This generally disadvantaged position across the board and over all household types, is indicated by the fact that natives obtain lower incomes in all income categories, show higher unemployment rates, lower labour force participation rates, and higher welfare dependency rates when compared to the non-native population. With respect to housing, it can be observed that proportionally more natives than non-natives are renters and that a higher percentage of native families experience affordability problems, which is not surprising considering their lower incomes. The following detailed empirical analysis will substantiate the above observations.

Gender Distribution

Native women by far outnumber native men in Winnipeg, with 57 percent of the urban native population being female as opposed to 52 percent of the non-native city population.⁷⁵ This overrepresentation of females within the urban native population is of particular importance when government programs geared at improving the status of urban natives will be investigated in a later chapter of this thesis.

Age Structure

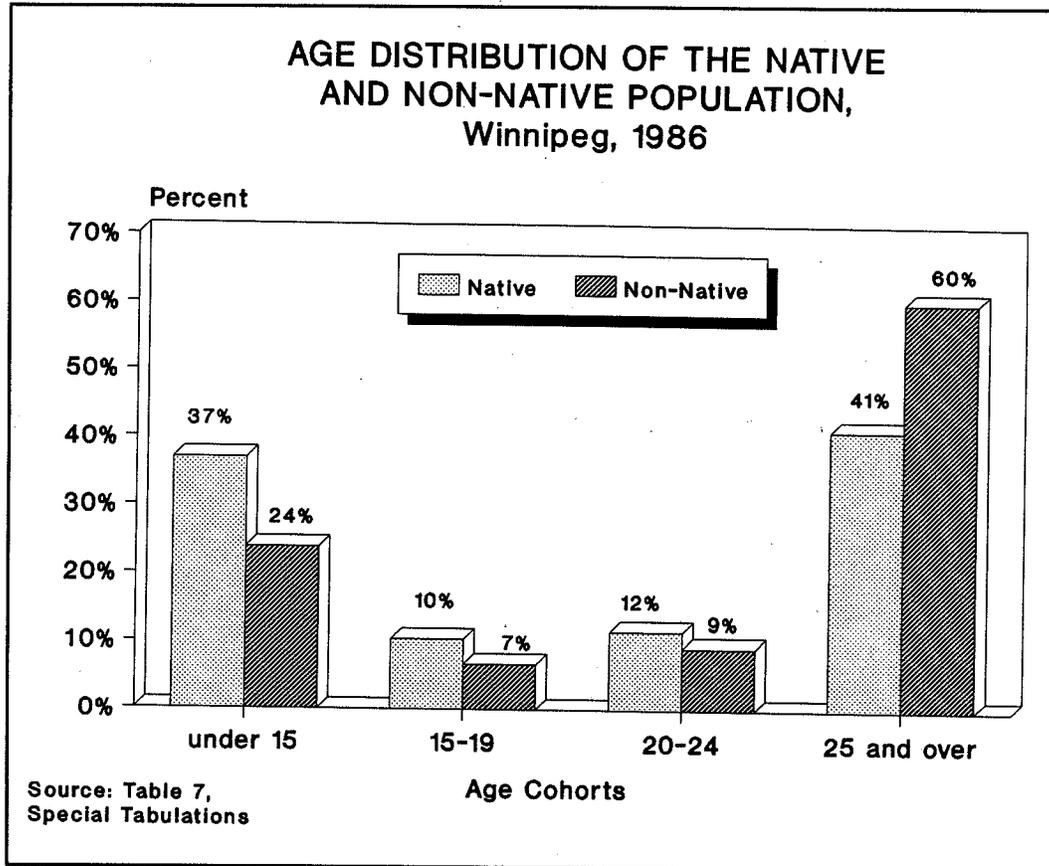
The urban native population is on average much younger than the non-native population with 22 percent of all native persons being between 15 and 24 years of age, compared to 16 percent of all non-natives. The high percentage of natives in the 15-24 year age group has a significant impact on the labour market, considering that persons between 15 and 25 are most likely to seek employment at that stage in their lives, unless secondary education is sought which as data will show, is not the case for most urban natives.

Figure 2 presents a detailed picture of the age structure of the two populations. Almost half of the urban native population is under 15. This is particularly disturbing, given the fact that there is such a high incidence of poverty among urban natives, which subsequently affects a

⁷⁵ Table 7, Special Tabulations.

great number of children who are forced to grow up under these conditions.

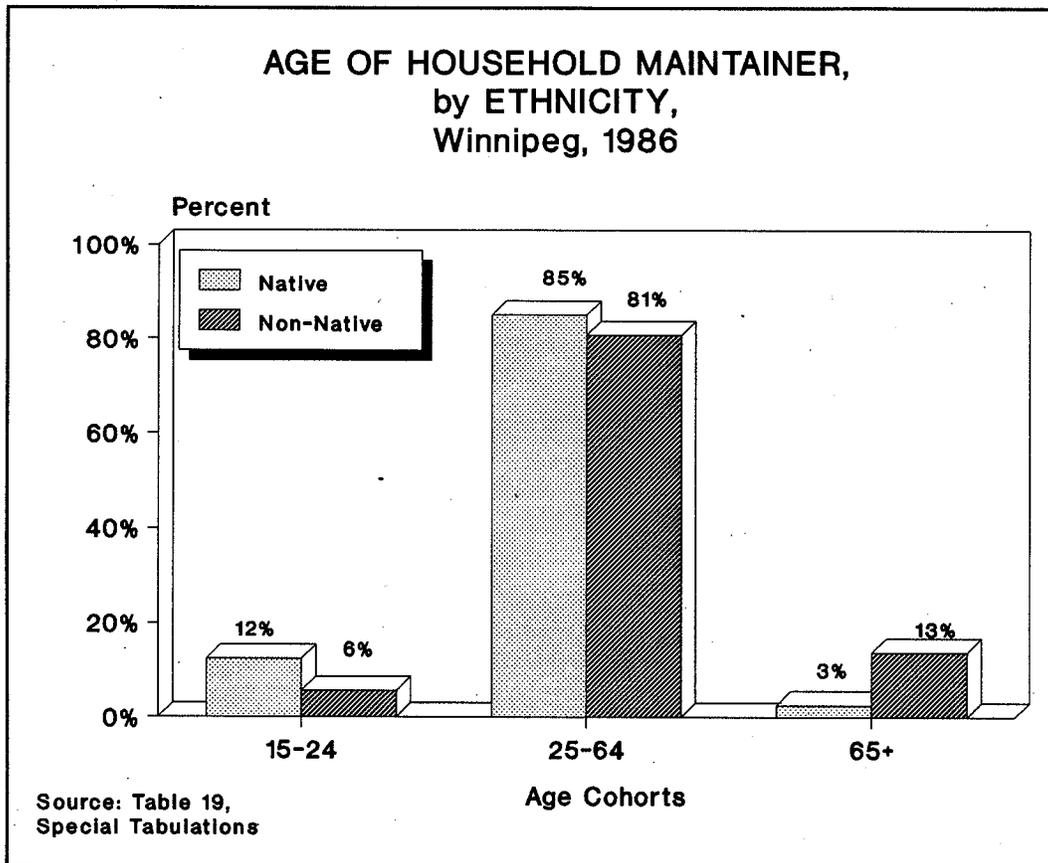
Figure 2



Not only is Winnipeg's urban native population significantly younger than the non-native population, the difference in age also extends to the age of household maintainers. Figure 3 shows that 12 percent of all native household maintainers are between 15 and 24 years of age, compared to only 6 percent of non-native household maintainers. Assuming that a household is more at risk to experience poverty if the household maintainer is fairly young, such as in the case of many single-parent families who

are themselves still teenagers but responsible for both child rearing and economic survival of their family, the high percentage of native household maintainers in this age bracket is especially alarming.

Figure 3



Family Size

City wide data show that the average native household size is much larger in comparison to non-native families, with the native family containing 3.1 persons compared to 2.5

persons per non-native household.⁷⁶ The variation with respect to family size is important, because studies such as Harvey Stevens' research has shown that family size can increase the absolute material deprivation of a family, by virtue of the fact that more children mean a greater strain on an often already limited budget. The number and age of children in a family increases the risk of poverty because it is associated with lower levels of employment and greater demand on limited resources.⁷⁷ The correlation between family size and the risk of being poor appears to hold true for both native and non-native populations.

Education

Although longitudinal analysis cannot be conducted with the 1981 and 1986 census data for reasons alluded to earlier, the Social Planning Council, upon review of the two sets of databanks, has concluded that generally speaking the level of education for native people in the city has improved. The proportion of natives with less than grade nine education has fallen from 33 percent in 1981 to 20 percent in 1986.⁷⁸

However, despite these improvements the native population

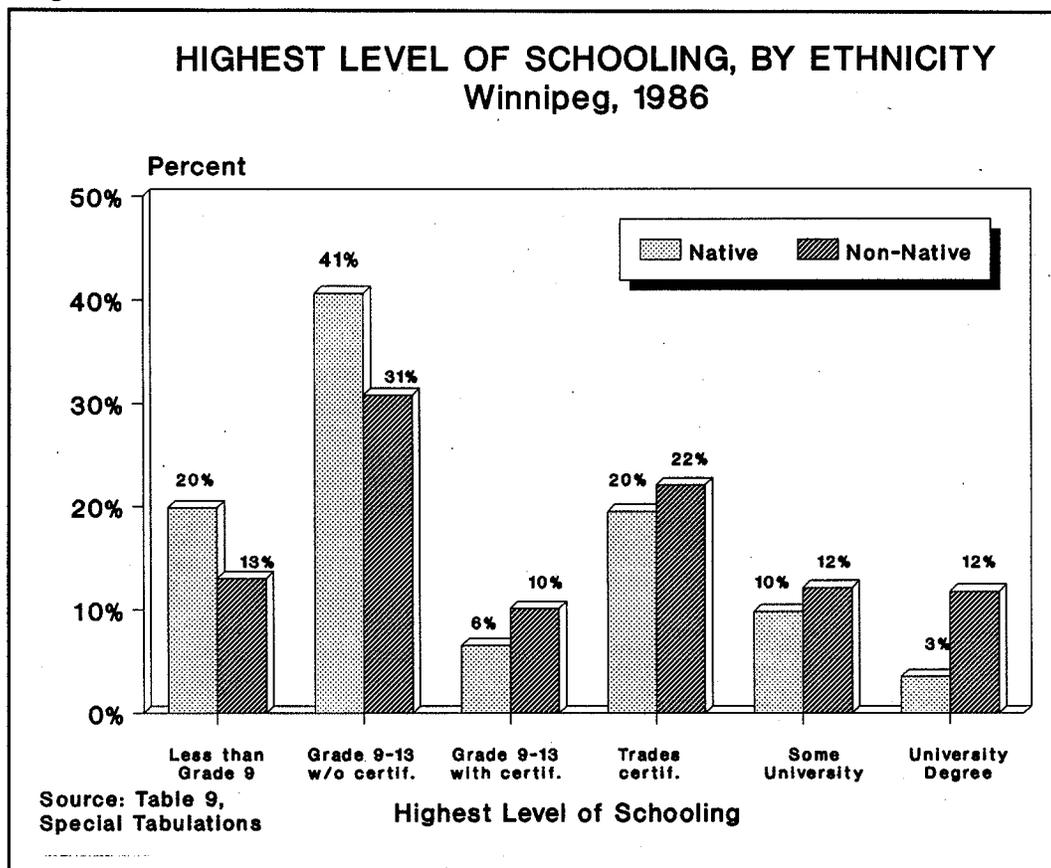
⁷⁶ The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Insights and Trends, op.cit.,

⁷⁷ Harvey Stevens, Child Poverty in Manitoba. An Examination of it Causes and Solutions (Winnipeg: Unpublished Paper).

⁷⁸ Social Planning Council, Insights and Trends, op.cit.

lags far behind the non-native population with respect to all levels of education. Figure 4 illustrates this gap and of particular note is the discrepancy at the post-secondary level. Only 3 percent of all urban natives have completed a university degree, compared to 12 percent of the non-native population. As alluded to in the Literature Review, the weight ascribed to educational attainment in terms of a persons's ability to successfully provide for themselves and their families is a highly debated issue and will hence be revisited in Chapter Four.

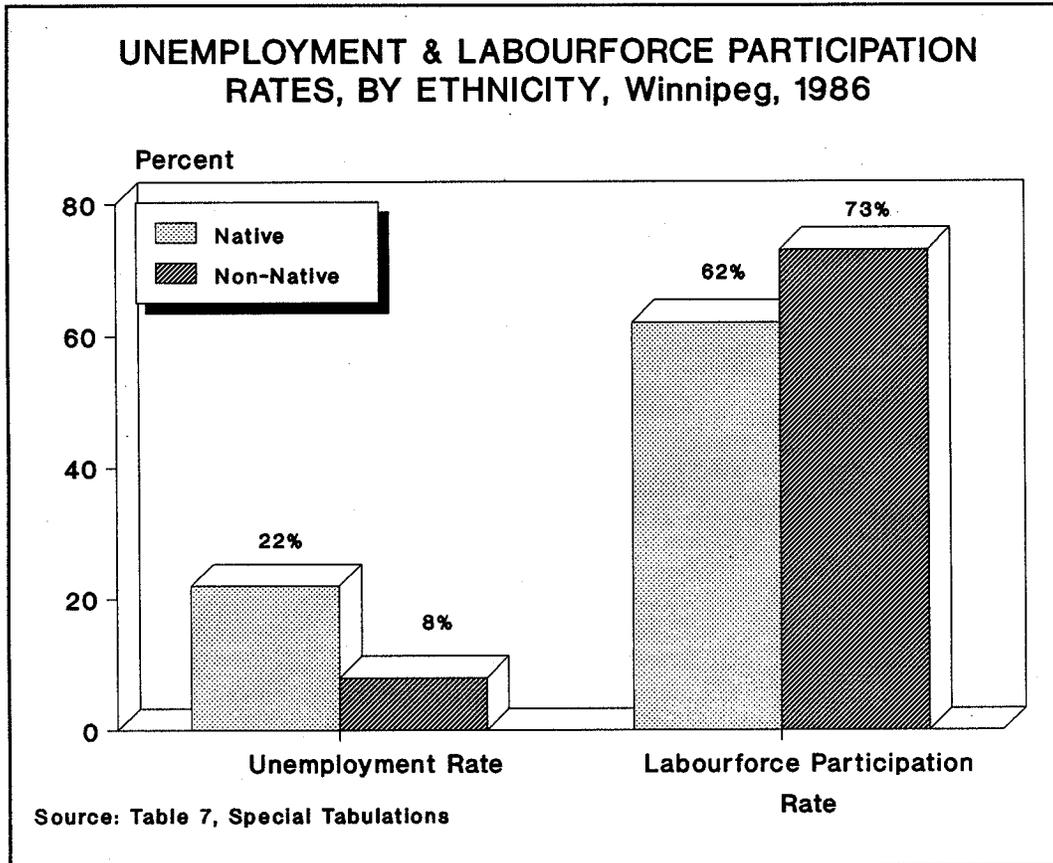
Figure 4



Labour Force Participation and Unemployment Rates

If one accepts that unemployment and labour force participation rates are reliable indicators of a person's socio-economic status, the subsequent data are particularly disturbing. Figure 5 presents both unemployment and labour force participation rates for Winnipeg's native and non-native populations. Twenty-two percent of all urban natives 15 years of age and older are unemployed, compared to 8 percent of the non-native population. .

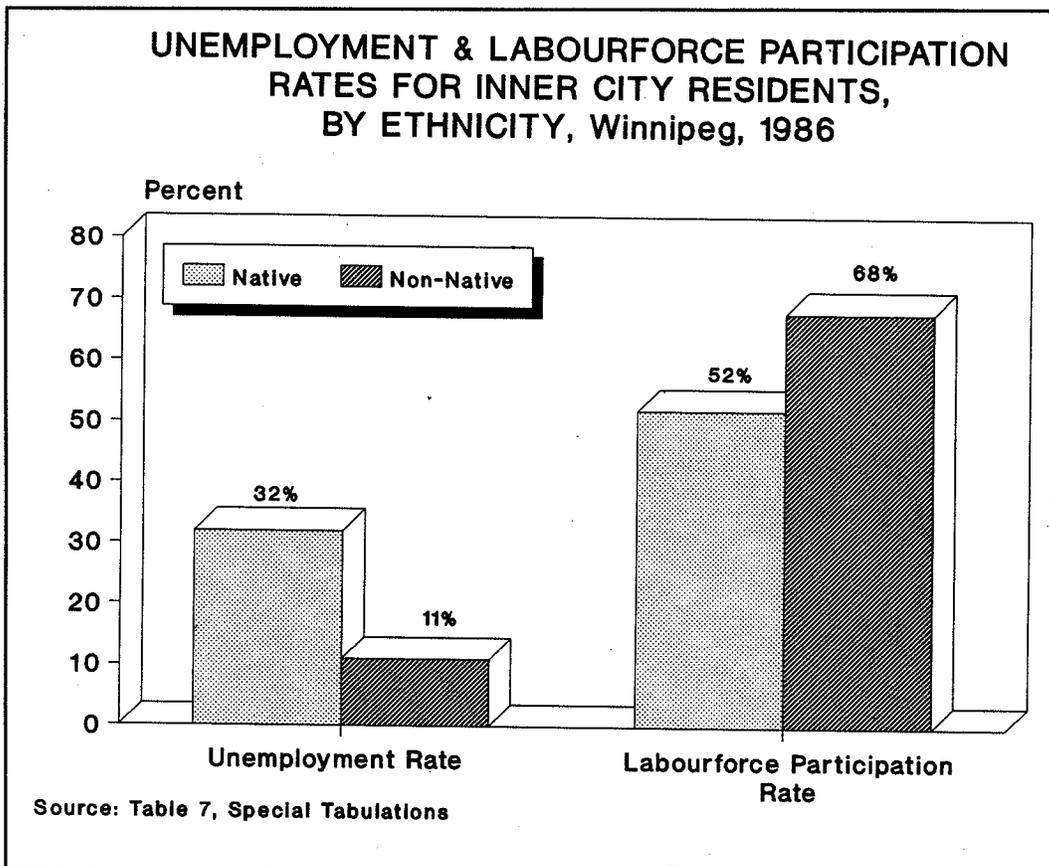
Figure 5



Regarding labour force participation rates, 73 percent of all non-natives compared to 62 percent of all native persons were either employed or actively seeking employment at the time of the census.

When focusing on the inner city alone, the picture is even bleaker, with one third of the native labour force being unemployed and almost half of the native population outside labour force (Figure 6).

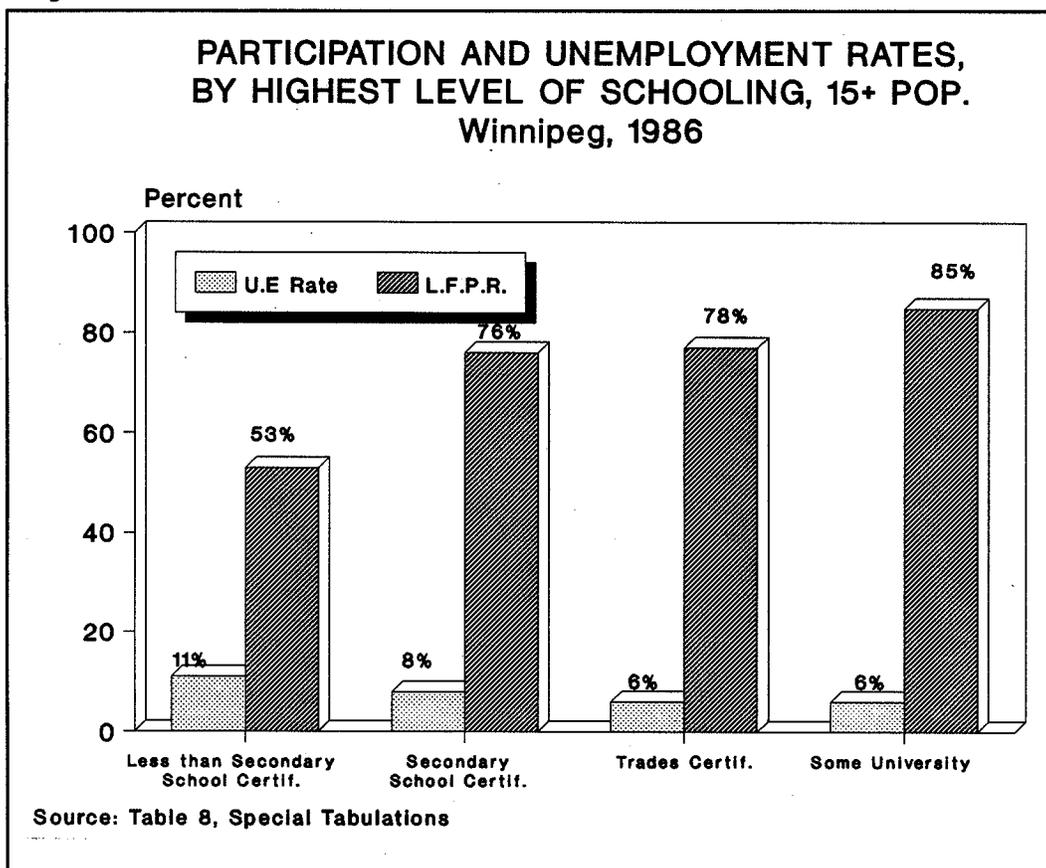
Figure 6



Data reveal, that labour force participation rates are linked to both age, gender and level of education. This

association holds true for both native and non-native populations. In general, lower participation rates can be observed for persons in the 15 - 24 age group and for women. Furthermore, there is also a significant relationship between labour force participation rates and education levels. Figure 7 illustrates that, in almost all instances, participation rates increase with each category of education level, a pattern which holds for both populations varies, however, with gender.

Figure 7



Despite the lack of census data with respect to welfare dependency, it can be assumed that low labour force

participation rates give an indication of high welfare dependency, as the last resort for income security left to many.

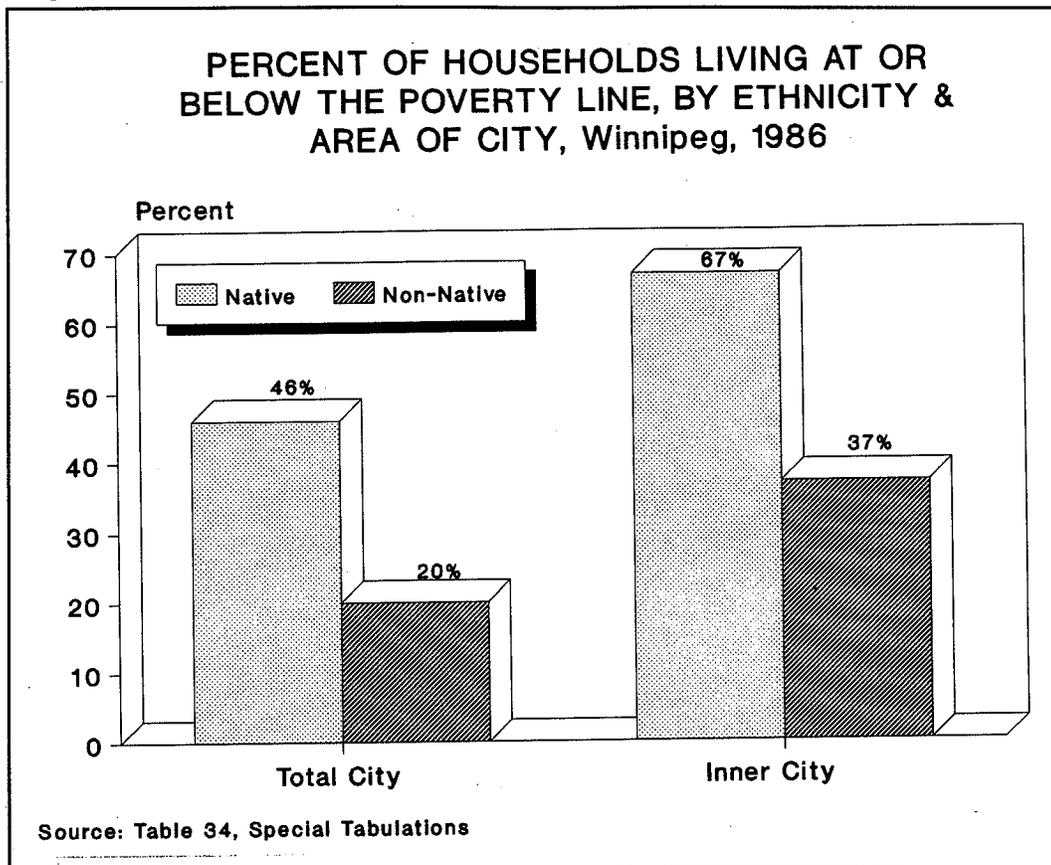
Income

The extreme disparities between the native and non-native population are most notable when comparing income levels. **Figure 8** indicates that half of native households (46%) live at or below the poverty line compared to about 20 percent of non-native households.⁷⁹ As **Figure 8** reveals, the situation for inner city residents is even more severe, with 67 percent of native households, compared to 37 percent of the non-native households living at or below the poverty line.

Upon examination of the actual average household income of those living at or below the poverty line, the depth of poverty comes particularly to light. The following table reveals some important income statistics. Income averages are provided for both the total city and the inner city alone, with inner city figures in parentheses.

⁷⁹ The 1986 census data uses 1985 poverty line cut-offs, determined by number of members in a household in combination with household income.

Figure 8



AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME, WINNIPEG, 1986

Table 1

	Native Households	Non-Native H.h
Av. income of those above the poverty level	\$37,171 (\$31,239)	\$40,536 (\$32,308)
Av. income of those at or below the poverty level	\$8,634 (\$7,856)	\$9,241 (\$8,611)

Source: Table 34, Special Tabulations

Of significance is a recognition of the depth of poverty experienced by those living at or below the poverty level,

particularly in light of the numbers falling within that category.

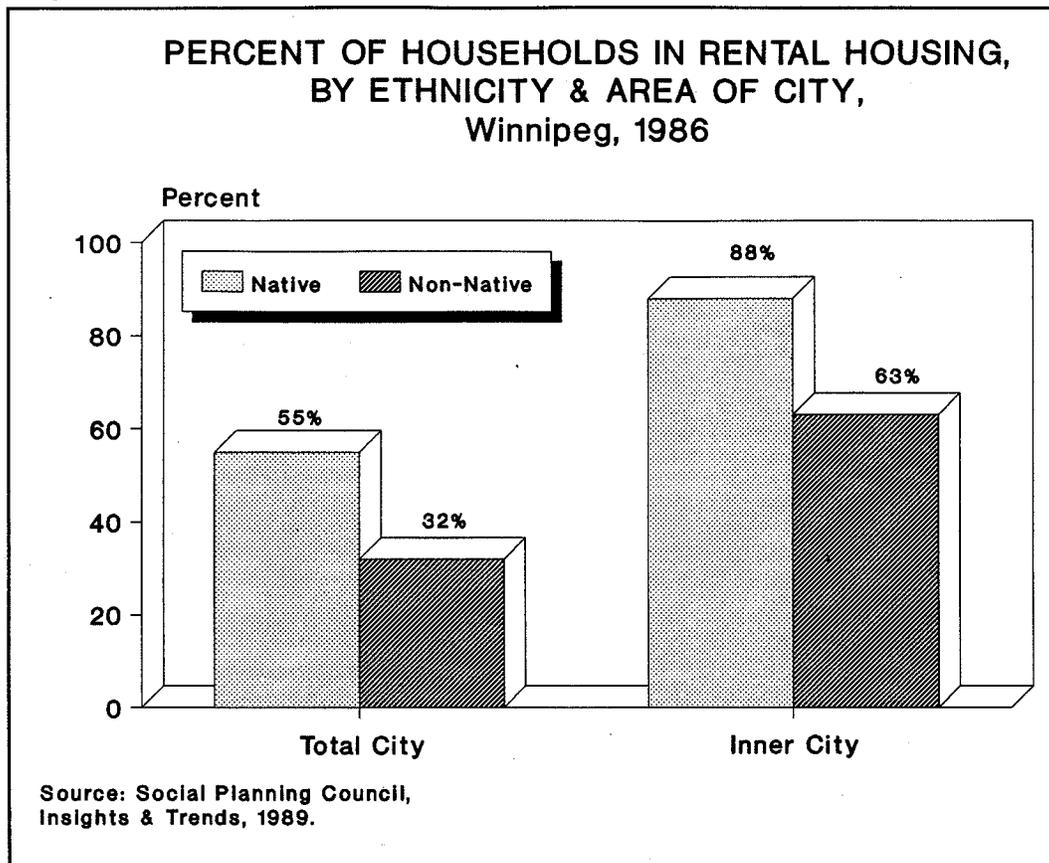
Housing

Despite the fact that comparatively high incomes are necessary to own and operate a moderate home, homeownership remains more prevalent in Winnipeg than rental housing. Out of a total of 227,145 households, 135,265 are owned and only 91,880 are rented.⁸⁰ Because homeownership is above all tied to income levels, it is not surprising that homeownership is dominated by husband-wife households with comparatively high incomes. On the other hand, renter households usually fall within the lower income categories and frequently experience affordability problems, a phenomenon which holds true for all household types, regardless of ethnicity.

As **Figure 9** attests, there is a much higher incidence of rental tenure for native households than for non-native households, a function of their generally much lower incomes. The situation in the inner city is even more pronounced, with 88 percent of all native households meeting their housing requirements through the rental market.

⁸⁰ Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Insights and Trends, op.cit.,

Figure 9



Relying on the rental market for meeting housing needs is particularly challenging for low income earners, because in Winnipeg the number of rental units at the low and, in fact, the high ends of the price range are declining. Between 1981 and 1986, the number of units priced under \$412 a month decreased by 11 percent and the number of units priced over \$962 a month decreased by almost 15 percent. While both low and high priced units decreased, the number of units available in the middle category (\$412 and \$686)

increased dramatically.⁸¹ While the collapse towards the centre is very advantageous to high income earners, it is detrimental to low income earners, whose shelter costs have increased. Many native households are therefore being squeezed into higher priced units and must spend an ever increasing portion of their income on shelter.

While income level is an important contributing factor of tenure, it is not the sole factor. Clatworthy's housing survey revealed that when one isolates the native community, one discovers that ownership is not solely attributable to income, or in other words, even with increased incomes natives are less likely to own their own homes.⁸² Possible explanations may be that natives are discriminated against in the housing and mortgage market and therefore are less likely to qualify for a mortgage despite suitable incomes.

Furthermore, it is also possible that, at least initially, many urban native residents consider themselves temporary residents, planning at one point or another to return to the reserves or rural community from which they came. In these cases it would seem unlikely that they would enter into the relatively long term commitment of purchasing a home.

Figure 9 also reveals that rental tenure is

⁸¹ Winnipeg Social Planning Council, Insights and Trends, op.cit.,

⁸² Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions, op. cit., 54.

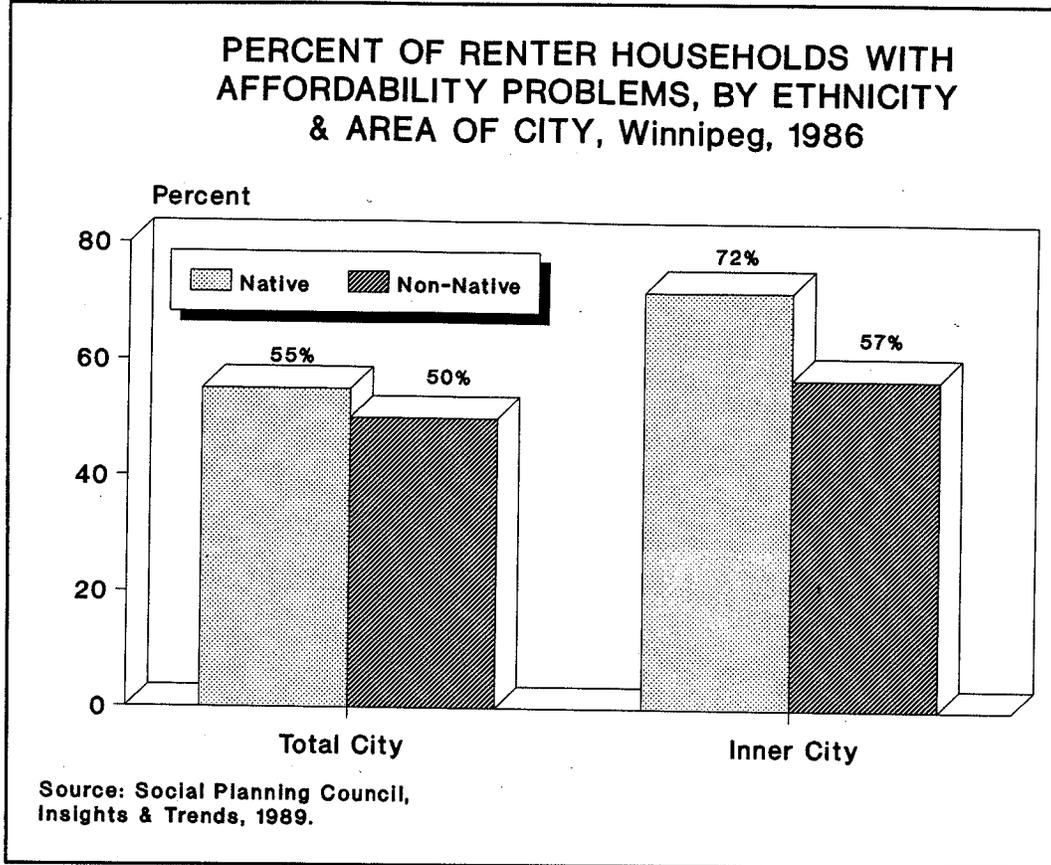
significantly more common in the inner city. However, the inner city housing stock is older and in greater need of repair when compared to the outer city limits.⁸³ Although the 1986 census did not determine the extent of adequacy problems amongst renter households, it is fairly safe to assume that a great many of the 88 percent of native renter households in the inner city live in substandard housing.

Figure 10 illustrates how the generally lower than average incomes of native households correlates with a higher percent of natives experiencing affordability problems. A staggering 72 percent of native renter households in the inner city spend more than 25 percent of their income on shelter. As a result, many households are forced to divert money away from food and clothing towards shelter costs.

In order to determine at which point a household is said to experience affordability problems, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in consultation with Manitoba Housing, develops Core Need Income Threshold Levels (CNITs) annually for every Canadian city. CNITs are determined by totalling all the actual costs a household would incur to buy, finance and operate a moderate home large enough to

⁸³ For more information on the subject, see the wealth of research conducted with respect to housing quality in the inner versus outer city, undertaken by the Core Area Initiative of Winnipeg, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

Figure 10



house all family members. Different CNITs are then calculated for one, two three, four and five bedroom homes. A household earning below the CNIT level is considered to experience an affordability problem and deemed to be in core need, because they would need to pay more than 25 percent of their income to obtain suitable and adequate housing.

The foregoing socio-economic analysis of native households explains why there is such a high incidence of affordability problems experienced by native households. As discussed previously, the affordability problem in turn determines other manifestations of housing need, such as adequacy and suitability problems.

As stated at the outset, the 1986 census data did not collect information on adequacy or suitability. However, there are a number of research reports utilizing the 1981 census data which provide some insight into the extent to which the native population experiences both suitability and adequacy problems. Most notable is Clatworthy and Stevens' 'Overview of the Housing Conditions of Registered Indians in Canada'.⁸⁴ According to their findings, Indians are nearly three times as likely as non-Indians to live in dwellings needing major repair.⁸⁵ Although they found that the incidence of adequacy problems is generally significantly lower among off-reserve than on-reserve Indian households, it can be assumed that even in urban areas, such as Winnipeg, adequacy problems would more likely affect native than non-native households because of their limited purchasing power and their predominance in the inner city, where housing stock has aged considerably.

With respect to suitability, Clatworthy and Stevens found that when compared to adequacy and affordability problems, crowding is not as widespread a problem for populations in Southern Canada as it is for Northern Canadians. Although affordability and adequacy problems are more frequent than suitability problems for both the native

⁸⁴ Stewart Clatworthy and Harvey Stevens, An Overview of the Housing Conditions of Registered Indians in Canada (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1987).

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 76.

and non-native population, native households are nearly ten times as likely as non-native households to live in crowded conditions.⁸⁶ This disparity is both a function of larger native families (3.1 persons compared to 2.5) and the lack of large housing units available for rent or purchase.

Conclusion

The above statistical profile of Winnipeg's native population provides ample empirical evidence of the significant disparities between the native and non-native population. Native households in general run a much greater risk of living in poverty than non-native households. However, as the following section will demonstrate, not all household types are affected equally. In fact, it is female-led single-parent families in both populations who are at greatest risk of living in poverty.

The subsequent section of this chapter will examine the relationship between household type and socio-economic conditions, focusing on single-parent families. The statistical profile of native and non-native single-parent will show that although, both native and non-native single-parent families have much in common, native single-parents are indeed the poorest of the poor.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 81.

**ii. A Statistical Profile of the Socio-Economic and Housing
Conditions of Native and Non-Native
Single-Parent Families**

The previous section indicates the grave disparities between the native and non-native population, irrespective of household type. Of significance in the context of this thesis is, however, an examination of the importance of household type and its impact in terms of affecting a person's risk of living in poverty. In an effort to test the hypothesis empirically, that there is indeed a relationship between household type and socio-economic status, the following section will contain a comparative statistical analysis of single-parent versus two-parent families in both populations, controlling not only for household type but also for ethnicity.

However, data availability often limits the extent to which a comparative analysis can be conducted between two-parent and single-parent family households. A further constraint is the fact that not all Special Tabulations providing information structured over household type distinguish between native and non-native populations. In an effort to compensate for the lack of household as well as ethnic specific data, the trends identified in the previous section between non-native and native populations will be drawn upon. Although there are five different household types, focus will only be on single-parent versus two-parent family households.

A thorough examination of the 1986 census data confirms Falconer's research using 1981 census data, namely that household type is indeed an important mechanism by which poverty is perpetuated.⁸⁷ Compared to two-parent family households, single-parent families are generally much younger, have larger families, have less education, are more likely to be unemployed, and show lower labour force participation rates. As will be discussed further in chapter four, these factors contribute to the much higher percentage of single-parents living at or below the poverty line.

A close examination of the difference between native and non-native single-parent families reveals, however, that household type alone is not the sole contributing factor. A significant gap persists between native and non-native single-parent families and these quantitative differences become ones of quality. When compared to non-native single-parent families, native single-parents are generally much younger, have larger families, are more likely to be unemployed and less likely to participate in the labour force. Their incomes are by far lower than those of non-native single-parents and a much higher percentage of native single-parent families live at or below the poverty line. In an effort to account for these differences, ethnicity

⁸⁷ Falconer, Patrick, The Overlooked of the Neglected, op.cit.,

will be drawn upon to explain the gap between the native and non-native single-parent population.

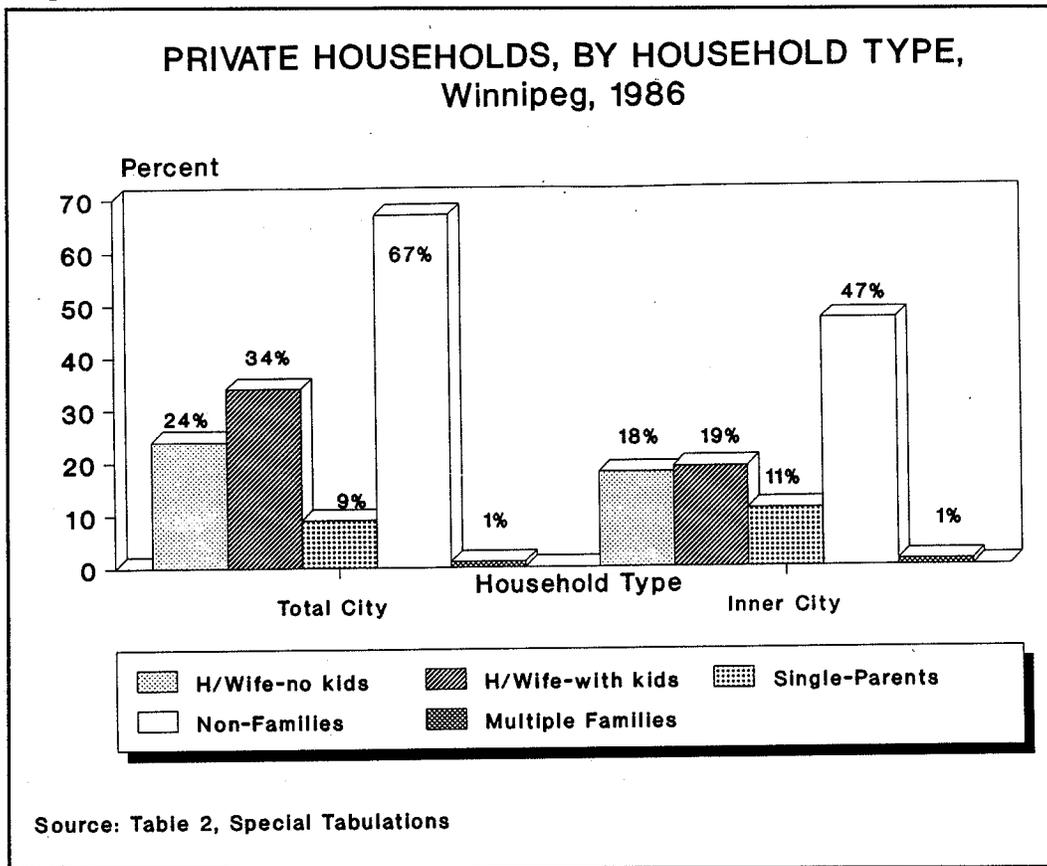
Household type distribution

Nationwide the trend towards less traditional households such as, single-parent families and single persons (non-families), is striking. The 1986 census clearly indicates that the increase in numbers of single-parent families has been most noticeable and extends to both the native and non-native population. In Winnipeg, the number of single-parent families increased by 19 percent from 17,970 in 1981 to 21,385 in 1986. This stands in stark contrast to two-parent families, marking only a 3 percent increase over the same time frame.⁸⁸ Overall, the proportion of all Winnipeg families headed by a single-parent in 1986 was 9 percent, which is higher than the national average.⁸⁹ As **Figure 11** illustrates, household type distribution varies depending on place of residence. For example, there is a higher incidence of single-parent families living in the inner city (11%) than for the city as a whole. This trend should cause concern, in light of the fact that the core is the most economically depressed part of Winnipeg.

⁸⁸ Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Insights and Trends, op.cit.,

⁸⁹ Table 2, Special Tabulations.

Figure 11



The trend away from more traditional households is particularly common amongst native people, where the proportion of the age 15+ population which is single-parent, was three times that of the non-native population in 1986. Of the 12,160 native households in Winnipeg in 1986, 2,485 were single-parent families.⁹⁰

Not only is there a higher percentage of single-parent families in the native population, but this household type has also grown at a tremendous rate. According to the

⁹⁰ Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Insights & Trends. op. cit.,

Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, this household type has increased by 58 percent within 5 years, which is of grave concern considering that urban native single-parent families face the most severe hardships. In particular, the number of native single-parent families under the age of 25 increased by 64 percent between 1981 and 1986.⁹¹

Gender Distribution

The vast majority of lone-parent families are headed by women, a trend which is consistent in both populations and as subsequent analysis will reveal, is of extreme importance in the context of labour market dynamics. Of all single-parent family households in Winnipeg in 1986, 85 percent were headed by women.⁹² When structured over age of household maintainer the balance shifts even more towards female headed single-parent household maintainers. For single-parents under the age of 25 almost 97 percent are women.⁹³

Age Structure

Figure 3 presented in the previous section illustrated the comparatively young age structure of the urban native

⁹¹ Social Planning Council, Insights and Trends, op.cit.,

⁹² Table 3, Special Tabulations.

⁹³ Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Insights and Trends, op. cit.,

population. **Figure 12** examines the difference in age between two-parent and single-parent household maintainers and as data indicate, there are by far more single-parent families (8%) between 15 and 24 years of age than there are two-parent families (3%). This is significant because as Chapter Four will show, the age of household maintainer is an important factor in determining socio-economic conditions.

Figure 12

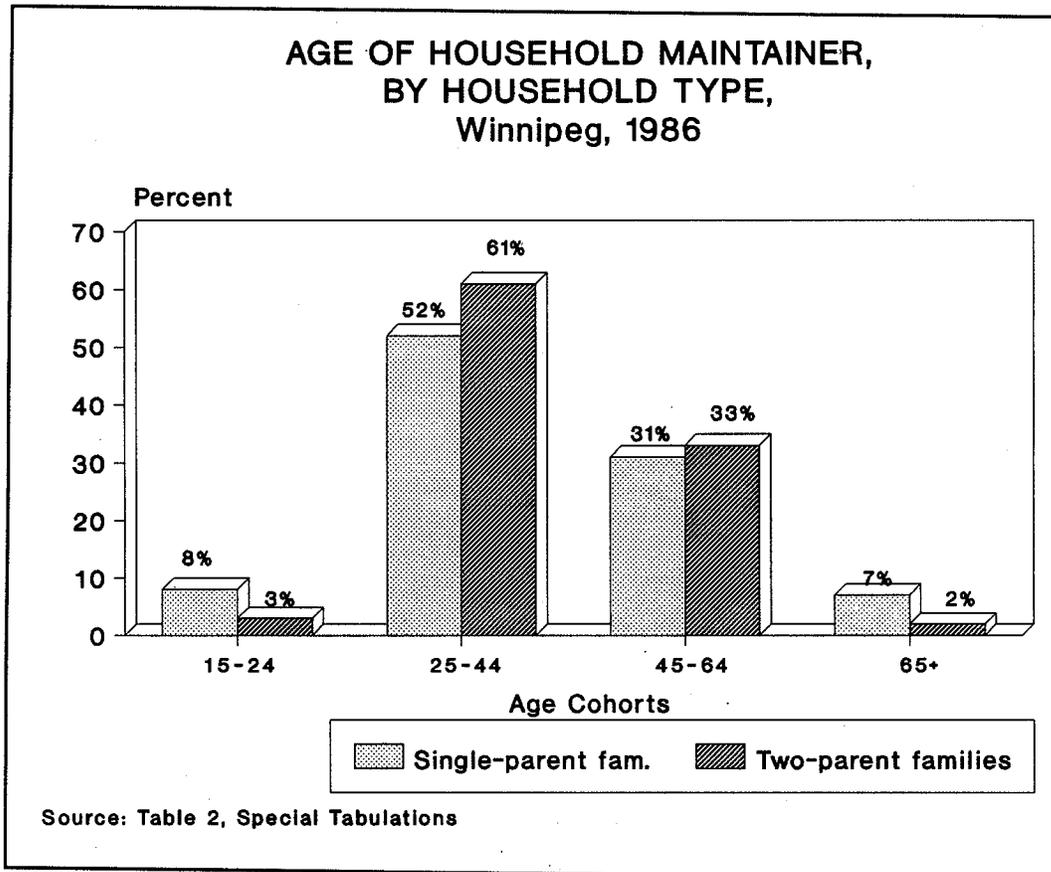


Figure 13 takes the analysis one step further and examines the age structure of single-parent families in more detail, comparing both native and non-native single-parent

families. The differences in age are particularly striking in the 15-19 and 20-24 age cohorts. A significantly higher percentage of native single-parent family household maintainers are in this relatively young age group, as compared to their non-native counterparts.

Figure 13

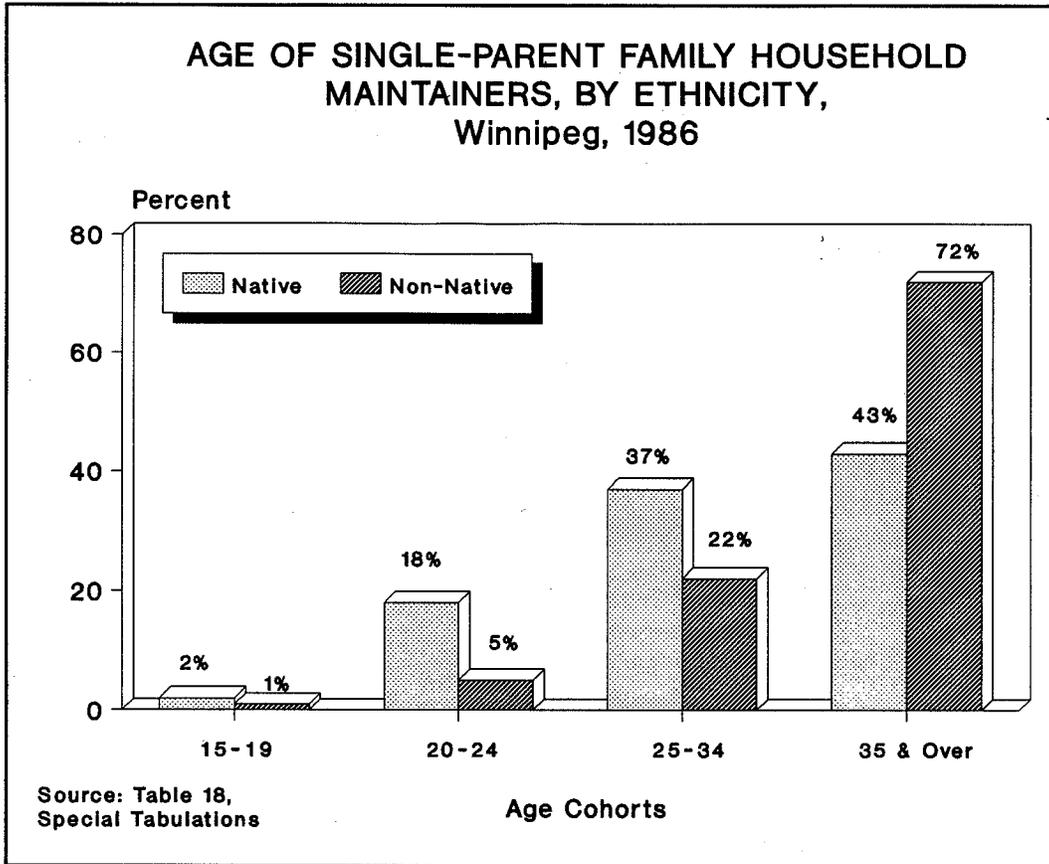
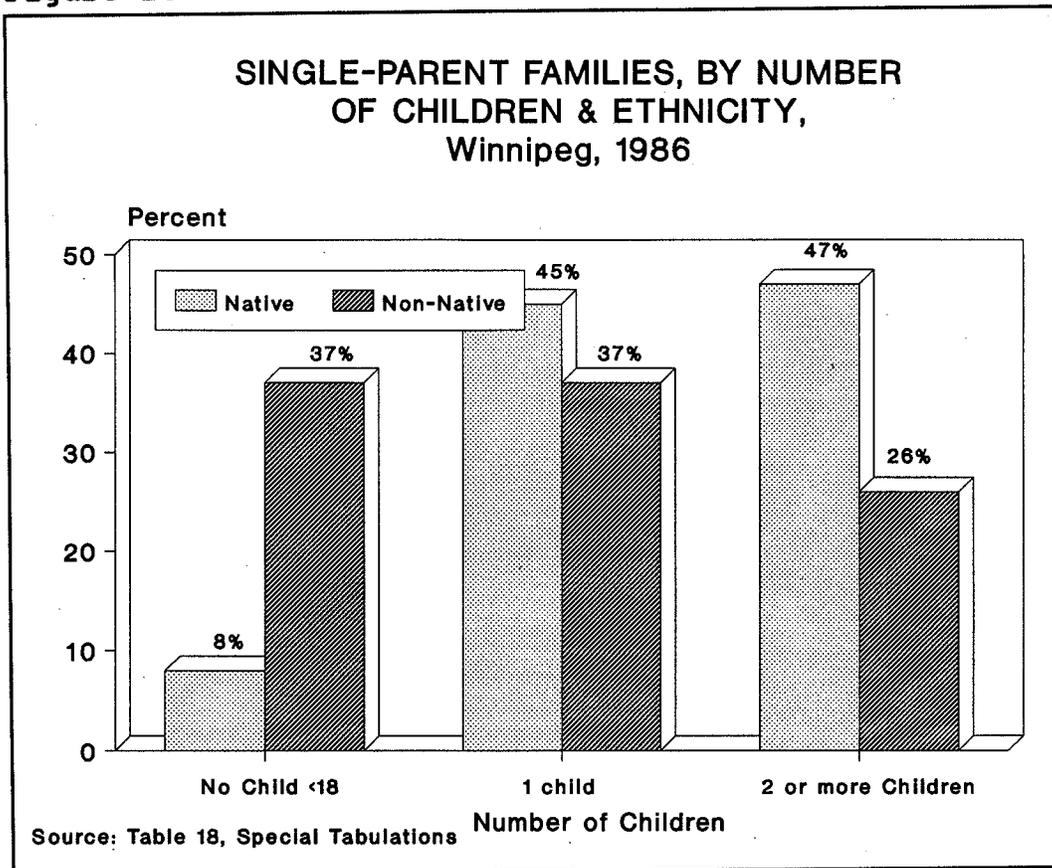


Figure 14 reveals the number and age of children of the native and non-native single-parent population. These data are critical because the number and age of children have a powerful effect on the rate of poverty. In light of this, it is particularly disconcerting that 47% percent of native

single-parents, compared to 26% percent of non-native single-parents, have at least two children under the age of 18.

Figure 14



In order to determine childcare needs of these families a more detailed account of the exact age of the children would have been necessary but, unfortunately, is not available. It can, however, be assumed that on the basis of the very young age of many single-parent families, the ages of the children must be young, most likely between 1 and 5, which would place most single-parent families in need of childcare, presuming that childcare is sought to enable the

parent to either complete their education or seek employment.

Family Size

The average household size for native families is 3.1 persons compared to only 2.5 persons per non-native households. As Figure 14 illustrates, this trend holds true for the single-parent population as well. There is a higher percentage of native single-parent families with at least two children when compared to non-native single-parent families. The difference in family size between the two populations is of importance, by virtue of the fact that the economic strain on a family increases with each additional child.

Education

Data presented earlier revealed that despite some improvements since 1981, native persons continue to obtain lower levels of educational attainments than their counterparts in the non-native community. Figure 4 has shown that 20 percent of native persons 15 years of age and older have less than grade nine education, compared to 13 percent of the non-native population.

A detailed analysis of differences in education levels between single-parent and two-parent families in both populations could not be conducted due to the lack of

available information. However, 1986 data reveal that three out of five native single-parent families have not graduated from high school, compared to two out of five for the general population.⁹⁴ Given that native youth is more than twice as likely to have less than grade nine education (7.5 percent compared to 3.3 percent), it can be assumed that native single-parent families, who most frequently fall in this age group, have less education than non-native single-parent families.

Although the various schools of thought weight the importance of education differently, the relationship between educational attainment and labour force participation cannot be dismissed. Low levels of education are generally correlated with low labour force participation rates. However, the relationship between education and labour force participation rates may not be as significant as expected, as Hull's research attests.⁹⁵

Hull surveyed 182 native women in Winnipeg in 1982 with the intent to identify the barriers which can be drawn upon to explain native women's high unemployment rates and low labour force participation rates. Of most relevance in this context are Hull's findings regarding the relationship between educational attainment and occupational achievement.

⁹⁴ The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Insights and Trends, op. cit.,

⁹⁵ Jeremy Hull, Native Women and Work (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1984).

While survey results indicate that educational attainment usually has a positive effect on employment, the relationship between educational levels and occupational attainment is not one of cause and effect.

Hull concludes that 'Native women are less likely to work in professional or administrative positions than non-native men or women, even at comparable educational levels. Sex and race are also important in determining occupational group status.'⁹⁶ In fact, the lack of education is more of a perceived than a real barrier for some native women and despite their career aspirations and their relatively high educational attainment, gender and race driven discrimination in the labour market provides a more powerful barrier than educational achievement and/or personal motivation.

It is possible that for these reasons, native women are less likely to participate in the labour force, recognizing that even with comparatively high levels of education and personal motivation, they are likely to be trapped in low paying, clerical and service oriented type jobs.

Labour Force Participation and Unemployment Rates

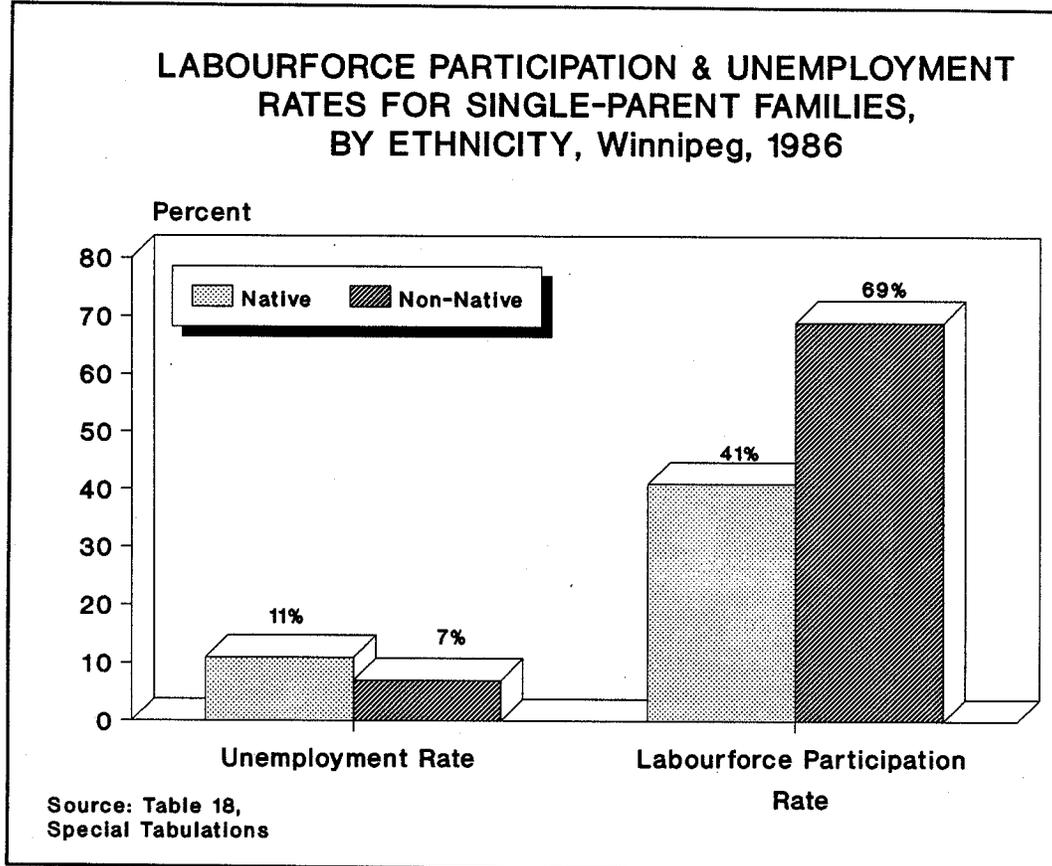
Figure 5 compared the labour force participation and unemployment rates of the native population with those of the non-native population. Although labour force

⁹⁶ ibid; 12.

participation rates for the native population were much lower than for the non-native population, 62 percent compared to 71 percent, the rate for native single-parent families is even lower, hovering around 41 percent.

Figure 15 provides the rates structured over household type, and it is clearly evident that labour force participation rates are much lower for single-parent families in both populations than for the general population.

Figure 15



Less than half (41%) of all native single-parents are in the labour force, compared to 69 percent of the non-

native single-parent population.

The gap in labour force participation rate is highlighted to an even greater degree in the inner city, where 70 percent of all native single-parent families, compared to 42 percent of all non-native single-parent families are outside the labour force.⁹⁷

Regarding unemployment rates, an interesting observation can be made. When unemployment rates are structured over household type, it is evident that the unemployment rate is actually lower for the single-parent population than for the general population. The explanation for this is that most single-parent families are outside the labour force, so that those who do participate have comparatively high employment rates.

Income

The disparities between single-parent and two-parent families become particularly evident when comparing levels of income. Almost four out of every ten single-parent households live at or below the poverty line, compared to one out of every ten husband and wife families with or without children.⁹⁸

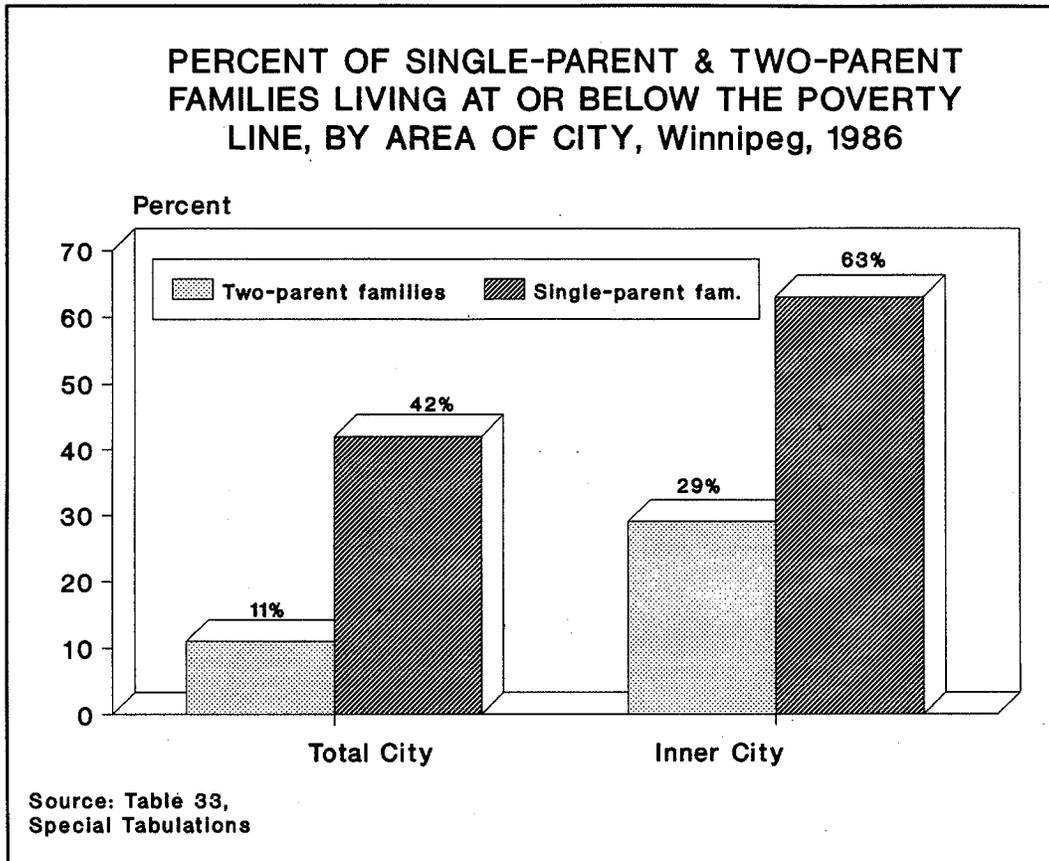
As **Figure 16** depicts, the problem of low incomes is

⁹⁷ Table 18, Special Tabulations.

⁹⁸ The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Insights and Trends, op.cit.,

even more severe in the inner city, where 63 percent of all single-parent families live at or below the poverty level.

Figure 16



To appreciate the depth of poverty **Table 2** provides the actual average income levels single-parent are forced to survive on. Inner city incomes are provided in parentheses.

**AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME BELOW AND ABOVE THE POVERTY LINE OF
SINGLE-PARENT AND TWO-PARENT FAMILIES, WINNIPEG, 1986**

Table 2

	At/or below the poverty line	Above the poverty line
Single-parent families	\$8,601 (\$8,151)	\$34,398 (\$31,657)
Two-parent families	\$13,564 (\$13,126)	\$50,451 \$(41,075)

Source: Table 2, Special Tabulations

Household type alone does not account for the variations in income. In fact, gender must be also considered as a contributing force in this context. A comparison between the average incomes of male and female single-parent families attests to that, showing that female headed single-parent families earned an average income of \$19,919 compared to male headed single-parent families who earned an average of \$31,789.⁹⁹

The fact that native households earn much less than non-native households has been explored in some detail in the previous section, and is disturbing in and of itself. However, even more discouraging is the fact that the ability for native households to improve their socio-economic condition does not improve with age. Whereas the average household income for the total population increases by 18.4 percent from the age group 25-44 to 45-64, an increase of only

⁹⁹ Table 2, Special Tabulation.

5 percent occurs for the native population. Hence, not only does the average income stay fairly constant for all native households over all age groups, but the income gap between the populations is actually increasing with age.¹⁰⁰

Tabulations indicating income levels of native and non-native single-parent and two-parent families are not available for Winnipeg, but there is no reason to believe that the trend identified for the entire single-parent population would differ for the native population. Indeed, one can make the argument that the discriminatory nature of the labour market affects native women even more, because they are carrying a 'double-burden', being a woman and being native.

Although somewhat outdated, Falconer's and Clatworthy's research confirms that the same income gap between the two household types exists in the native population as well, with native two-parent families earning much higher average income than single-parent families. Falconer in effect observed that 'native single-parent families are roughly twice as likely to be poor as native two-parent families in major urban areas.'¹⁰¹

Although no data are available regarding the incidence of welfare dependence, the aforementioned income data give some indication of the degree to which single-parent families rely on social assistance. Clatworthy's research, while dated, speaks to the issue of welfare dependence and

¹⁰⁰ Social Planning Council, Insights and Trends, op. cit.,

¹⁰¹ Patrick Falconer, op. cit., 3.

found that for native single-parent families the earned proportion of their income, as opposed to the source of income being transfer payments, is significantly lower (only 18.9 percent) when compared to two-parent families whose proportion of earned income is 74.8 percent.¹⁰²

While this trend is not unique to native single-parent families, there is a difference with respect to magnitude. Clatworthy found that the earned proportion for the total single-parent population is 64.7 percent, compared to only 18.9 percent for native single-parent families.¹⁰³

On the basis of Clatworthy's and Falconer's research, combined with the present analysis of the 1986 census data, it can be concluded that single-parent families run a much higher risk of living in poverty than two-parent families. This holds true for both populations, supporting the thesis that household type is indeed a crucial factor in the mechanism by which poverty is perpetuated. However, despite the similarity in trends in both populations, it must be recognized that native single-parent families experience still greater hardships than their non-native counterparts, an explanation of which must be sought by examining the role of

¹⁰² Stewart Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions in Winnipeg, op.cit., 43-44.

¹⁰³ Unfortunately no information is available from the 1986 or 1981 census data indicating welfare dependency, and the Department of Economic Security, who would have access to this information, cannot, on the basis of confidentiality, release data of this nature either.

ethnicity and demographic variations.

Housing

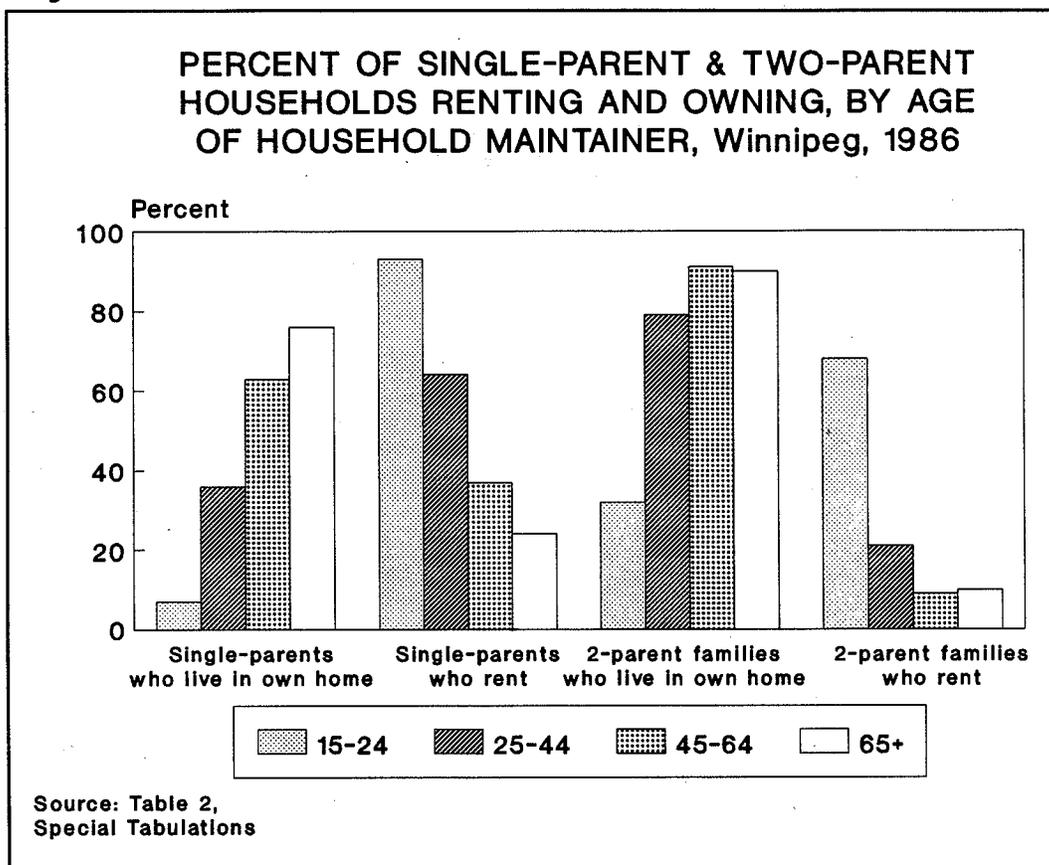
Housing need is a function of one's socio-economic status and it should come as no surprise that the socio-economic disparities between native and non-native single-parent families have a direct impact on the magnitude of housing problems encountered. Since income determines a household's ability to satisfy housing need, the comparatively lower average income of single-parent families is at the root cause of the high incidence of shelter poverty experienced by this household type. By the same token, native single-parent families who are the poorest of the poor are, therefore, even more likely to experience a multitude of housing problems.

Tenure

Low incomes amongst single-parent families usually leave few options regarding the type of housing available. Since homeownership necessitates comparatively high incomes, single-parent families, as well as other low income earners, are forced to look to the private rental market or to subsidized housing for shelter. **Figure 17** shows not only that, as anticipated, single-parent families are much more likely to rent than two-parent families, but that tenure is also a function of age of household maintainer. The higher rate of homeownership amongst two-parent families can be explained by

their comparatively higher earnings and Table 3 provides average income data for households who own and rent.

Figure 17



AVERAGE INCOMES BY TENURE AND HOUSEHOLD TYPE, Winnipeg, 1986

Table 3

	Renting	Owning
Single-Parent Families	\$16,076	\$32,566
Two-Parent Families	\$28,771	\$50,306

Source: Table 20, Special Tabulations

As alluded to, however, income is not the only determinant of homeownership, showing that there is a correlation between age of household maintainer and homeownership. The proportion of homeownership increases with the age of the household maintainer. Although this holds true for both single-parent and two-parent families, the correlation between homeownership and age of maintainer is nowhere nearly as significant for single-parents as for two-parent families. These factors combined account for the high rate of renters amongst single-parent families.

Unfortunately no statistics are available to determine the rate of rental tenure between native and non-native single-parent families. Given the fact, however, that native households generally are less likely to own their own homes, coupled with the fact that native single-parent families are on average much younger and earn lower incomes than non-native single-parent families, it is reasonable to assume that there is a higher percentage of renters amongst native single-parent families than non-native single-parent families.

Aside from seeking shelter in the private rental market, low income earners have the option to apply for subsidized housing or housing provided by the non-profit sector. However, it is highly questionable whether social housing is in fact a desirable and realistic alternative, since the waiting period for public housing is on average two years and for those who need immediate assistance, it is not a viable

option.

Unfortunately, Manitoba Housing does not keep records of the demographic characteristics of social housing clients and it is impossible to determine the extent to which single-parent families are utilizing social housing programs. For reasons of confidentiality, it is also impossible to ascertain how many native households are occupying or waiting to secure social housing.

Clatworthy's 1982 survey provides some indication with respect to the demographics of social housing clients. Survey findings show that the vast majority of native households consumed housing in the private housing market, despite some variations between household types. Only 7.9 percent of all native households in Winnipeg consumed shelter in the public housing market. When household type is taken into consideration, only 5.6 percent of all native two-parent families, compared to 13.5 percent of all native single-parent families consumed housing in the social housing sector.¹⁰⁴

In summary, it can be noted that household type, ethnicity, income and age of household maintainer all determine the rate of homeownership. The combination of these factors, namely low incomes, young household maintainers and ethnicity all explain the extremely low rate of homeownership amongst single-parent families, particularly those of native single-parent families.

¹⁰⁴ Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions, op. cit., 53.

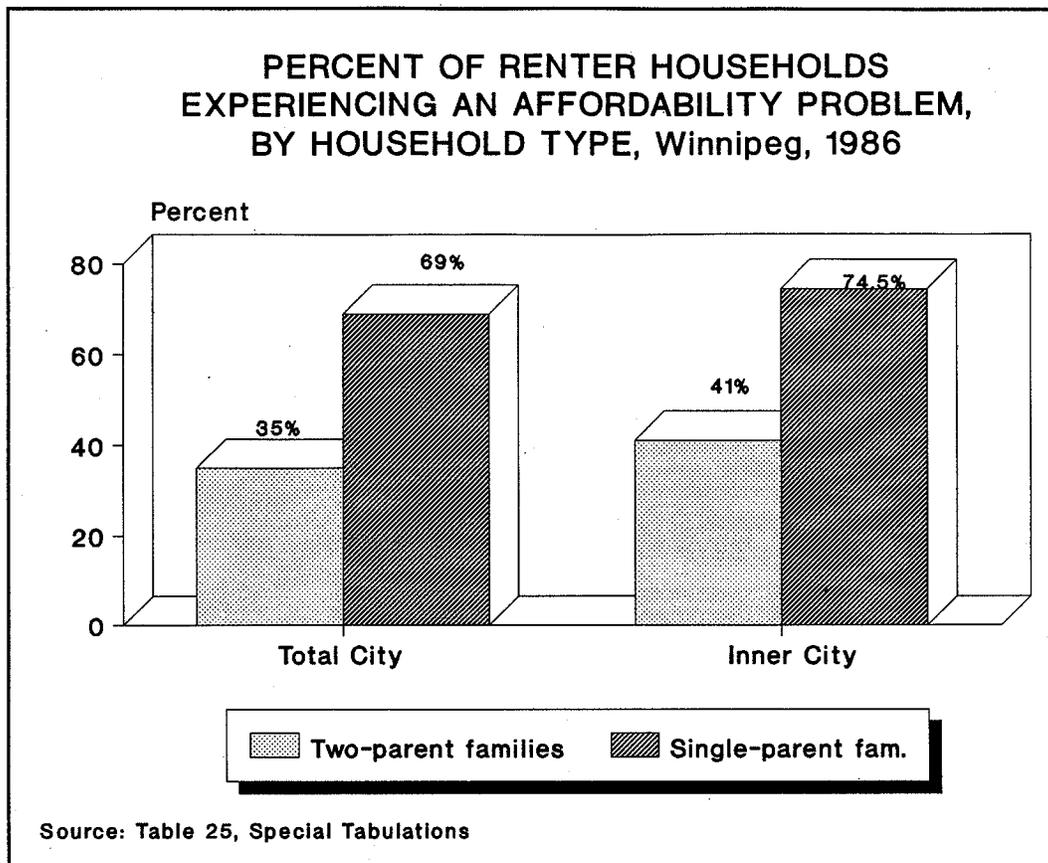
By virtue of the fact that native households in general, and single-parent families in particular, are most frequently relying on the private rental market for meeting their housing needs, they are also most exposed to discriminatory landlords, high rents and, above all, slum landlords. Since their low incomes inhibit them from seeking alternative shelter arrangements, they are trapped in a private rental market which responds only to effective housing demand not housing need.

Affordability

As explored previously, affordability problems are directly related to a person's purchasing power in the housing market. Consequently, the root cause of affordability problems is low income. As with all other socio-economic factors, there is also a direct linkage between household type and affordability problems. **Figure 18** illustrates that a much higher percentage of single-parent families (69%) experience affordability problems than do two-parent families (35%). The situation is even worse for single-parent families living in the inner city, where 74.5 percent of all single-parent families encounter affordability problems.

Unfortunately data do not permit the structuring of affordability over household type and ethnicity. However, Clatworthy's survey conducted in 1982 provides a wealth of housing specific information which, to this date, continues to

Figure 18



be the most comprehensive empirical research on housing available to the public. His research confirms the thesis that it is primarily household type which determines the incidence of affordability. Ethnicity, however, was found to only marginally influence whether or not affordability is experienced. This phenomenon is most likely a result of the fact that despite income differentials between native and non-native single-parent families, neither household has sufficient purchasing power to escape affordability problems. It should be noted though, that Clatworthy set the contribution rate standard at 35 percent as opposed to 25 percent, which would have the effect of reducing the

importance of ethnicity by bringing more non-native families into the unaffordability range.

Ethnicity is, however, a determining factor when the incidence of affordability problems is paralleled with the age of household maintainer. While the number of those suffering from affordability problems decreases with age of household maintainer for the non-native single-parent population, this trend does not hold true for the native single-parent population. Native single-parent families have a much smaller chance to rid themselves of affordability problems as they get older, which is consistent with their inability to improve their general socio-economic status in later life.

Adequacy

Clatworthy's research on the housing conditions of Winnipeg's urban native community provides the greatest amount of detail, to date, regarding adequacy and suitability information. As a result, his research findings will be drawn upon to compensate for the gap in the 1986 census data.

According to Clatworthy, the forces impacting on adequacy are complex in the sense that it is more a combination of factors which accounts for observed variations. Based on his findings, Clatworthy concluded that a combination of tenure, income and household type account for 73 percent of the total variation in the incidence of housing quality problems. Approximately 15 percent of the variation is attributable

solely to ethnicity.¹⁰⁵ Those who were native, single-parents and renters were found to experience the highest rate of adequacy problems.

In this context, Clatworthy advances an interesting hypothesis, namely that the high incidence of welfare dependency among native and non-native single-parent families directly contributes to the adequacy problems experienced by this population. Because of the absolutely inadequate shelter allowances allowed under social assistance programmes at the provincial and municipal level of government, many recipients are frequently forced to accept substandard housing conditions due to their limited purchasing power. The low portion of money assigned for shelter forces recipients to satisfy their housing needs in the lower, substandard private rental housing market. He notes that several studies have shown that the problem with respect to adequacy is not one of a lack of availability of housing which is in good condition, but rather one of insufficient income available for shelter. 'Social assistance transfer payment formulae simply do not appear to provide most households with sufficient purchasing power to obtain adequate private market housing.'¹⁰⁶

Clatworthy's concerns regarding the inadequate levels of housing allowances were echoed by the Manitoba Task Force on Social Assistance:

¹⁰⁵ Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions, op.cit., 70.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 65.

...The most serious problem with benefit levels in Manitoba's social assistance system is the very low level of support which they offer....Social assistance rates in Manitoba are generally between 39 percent and 63 percent of Statistics Canada low-income cut-off with only the benefits of large families in rural areas rising above this....The very minimal nature of support from social assistance is beyond dispute.¹⁰⁷

A person on welfare may, as a result of insufficient shelter allowance, be very restricted in adjusting to rising rents, and hence may have to settle for substandard housing in order not to exceed what has been allocated for shelter costs. The other alternative is to cut back on other expenses, such as food and clothing or rent housing units which do not meet the family's space requirements. In the case of such trade-offs the household is said to experience multiple housing problems, a condition where a 'low-income household is forced to trade off housing quality and/or housing space in order to acquire housing which it can afford.'¹⁰⁸ Native single-parent families are particularly prone to experience multiple housing problems as a result of the high incidence of welfare dependence common in this population.

¹⁰⁷ Manitoba, Report on the Manitoba Task Force on Social Assistance (Winnipeg: Department of Community Services and Corrections, 1983) 49-50.

¹⁰⁸ Stewart Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions, op. cit., 72.

Suitability

Suitability measures the extent to which a household incurs crowding, a function of family size in relation to space. As has been demonstrated in the previous statistical profile of the native population, natives, on average, have larger families than their non-native counterparts. Consequently, crowding is a more common problem for all native families since limited income, combined with scarcity of affordable larger rental homes, leads native families to settle for smaller, affordable units.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

Upon an examination of affordability, adequacy, and suitability it can be concluded that it is primarily household type which determines housing consumption patterns and conditions. By virtue of the direct relationship between socio-economic conditions and housing consumption patterns, it is single-parent families in both populations who must endure the most severe hardships with respect to shelter. Ethnicity and tenure should, however, not be underestimated in their importance with respect to their impact on housing conditions. Native single-parent families are clearly at a higher risk of living in poverty than non-native single-parent families.

As data indicate, many housing problems are associated

¹⁰⁹ For more detailed information regarding suitability see: Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions, op. cit.,

with rental tenure in the private housing market, which suggests that perhaps other alternative forms of shelter provision must be sought. Collectively owned housing co-ops might be such an alternative because problems inherent in a private housing market, which treats housing like any other commodity to be traded under free market conditions, could be surpassed. In order to ensure that low income groups such as native single-parent families have access to co-op housing programs, it is important that the state guarantee low down payments and interest rates.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF POVERTY AFFECTING NATIVE SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

The previous chapter provides a statistical profile of the socio-economic as well as housing conditions of Winnipeg's urban native community, drawing a comparison with the non-native population wherever data permitted. Based on the empirical evidence provided, it could be clearly demonstrated that there is a significantly higher rate of poverty amongst the urban native community when compared to the general population. Native people continue to be severely disadvantaged in all socio-economic categories, earning far lower average incomes, participating at a much lower rate in the labour force and experiencing much higher unemployment rates than the general population. As anticipated, the high rate of poverty amongst the native population has a direct impact on their ability to meet their housing needs. Because of the severe poverty experienced by the majority of native people, it follows that most native households experience a number of housing problems, the most common of which is affordability.

However, an examination of the data also revealed that

not all household types are equally affected. Single-parent families in both populations are significantly more prone to living in poverty when compared to two-parent families. They earn by far the lowest incomes, are least likely to participate in the labour force and most likely to depend on social assistance. Consequently, it is also this household type which experiences the greatest housing needs when compared to any other household type.

In sum, the thesis that household type is an important mechanism in perpetuating poverty could be empirically supported. However, although there is ample empirical evidence which attests to the fact that household type indeed plays a critical role, it would be misguided to conclude that it alone determines the extent to which a household is at risk of living in poverty. The fact that native single-parents are much more at risk than non-native single-parents cannot be ignored and indicates that ethnicity is also an important determining factor.

Furthermore, a comparative analysis of the average incomes of male and female led single-parent families revealed, that gender must also be added as a factor. The income gap between men and women suggests that gender is a consequential factor in determining socio-economic status, an observation which is well documented and supported by a plethora of research studying gender based discrimination in the labour market.

While the empirical analysis provided in the previous chapter describes the socio-economic conditions of native single-parents in some detail and points to the differences between population segments, it does not go beyond the descriptive. Although the data provide conclusive evidence that there is indeed a significant relationship between household type, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic conditions, how these factors contribute to the dynamic and whether they are merely reflective of a larger context is yet to be examined. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, an analysis of the determinants of poverty as they affect urban native single-parent families.

Firstly, an explanation must be sought as to what it is about the single-parent household type which makes it more prone to living in poverty. Secondly, those characteristics which distinguish native single-parent families from non-native single-parent families must be identified and drawn upon, in an effort to account for the differences in rates and depth of poverty between these two subgroups. It is within this context that ethnicity will be discussed as a barrier to improving one's socio-economic conditions, supplemented by a discussion regarding the status of women in the native community as an indication of their political power and their potential to initiate social, political, and economic change.

i. Towards An Eclectic Approach

The literature review already gave some indication of the various approaches taken to explain native poverty, drawing on both their strengths and weaknesses. Although distinct theoretical models are utilized in each, not all approaches are mutually exclusive and to some extent they complement one another. For example, class analysis incorporates many of the findings rendered through the application of dependency theory, although it ultimately arrives at different conclusions as to the source of poverty. In light of the complexity of the causal factors which together place urban native single-parents at such high risk, it will be argued that in fact no single approach offers all the answers. Instead, numerous factors, including both external and individual determinants, must be drawn upon to fully comprehend the mechanism whereby poverty is perpetuated.

The following discussion will, therefore, adopt class analysis and the theory of colonialism as the broad analytical framework, complemented by an assessment of several other causal factors which together place urban native single-parents in such a high risk group. To that end, household type, ethnicity, demographic characteristics, gender and other environmental conditions will be examined. This approach is intended to produce as complete and comprehensive a picture as possible.

The basic organizational framework which arranges the

following material is adopted in most part from Harvey Stevens' Study on Child Poverty in Manitoba. The analysis distinguishes between individual and external determinants of poverty, using both single-parent and two-parent families, to extract those factors unique to single-parent families.¹¹⁰ Individual determinants of poverty are defined as those factors which are characteristic of the family and deemed to have an impact on the household's ability to become economically independent, as for example, household type, family size, age of household maintainer and children, and educational attainment of household maintainer.

The analysis of individual determinants will be followed by an examination of external determinants of poverty, such as the structure of the labour market as it affects native single-parents, the welfare system, the distribution of power, the availability of childcare services, and the potential for natives to accumulate their own capital in order to create an alternative to the current system.

It should be noted that the separation between individual and external determinants of poverty is purely an organizational tool, aiding in the distinction between the socio-demographic factors which when combined are strong predictors of the risk of income poverty, but cannot be drawn upon as the sole explanation of the current inequities.

¹¹⁰ Harvey Stevens, Child Poverty In Manitoba. An Examination of Its Causes and Solutions (Winnipeg: Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1989), unpublished paper.

External determinants, on the other hand, are forces operative in the person's environment, which create barriers for urban native women, thereby limiting their ability to improving their socio-economic conditions. It is not the author's intention, however, to imply that the two types of determinants are completely independent of one another. The author is aware of their mutual reinforcement but has chosen to separate them analytically for reasons of clarity only.

ii. Individual Determinants of Poverty

Stevens' analysis of the microdata tapes of the 1982 and 1983 Surveys of Consumer Finance and the 1986 census data is premised on the assumption that the level of employment (number of weeks worked) and the amount of earned income are key determinants of income poverty. Based on this assumption, those factors believed to have an impact on these two determinants, such as household type and select demographic and structural characteristics, are isolated and their effects are studied. In order to examine the extent to which household type determines income poverty, demographic factors are structured over both single-parent and two-parent families. Unfortunately, no distinction is made on the basis of ethnicity but it can be assumed that the contributing factors identified as impacting on the general single-parent populations have a similar effect on the native single-parent population.

Although Stevens acknowledges that demographic characteristics are important contributing factors to poverty, single-parent families are disadvantaged right from the outset when compared to two-parent families, because single-parent families, unlike two-parent families, provide only one source of labour which significantly reduces their level of employment and, hence, their income. Only one person is in a position to supply labour, while at the same time carrying the sole responsibility for child rearing. Hence, the higher rates of poverty among single-parent families compared to two-parent families is, among other factors, a result of their curtailed ability to attain comparable levels of income and employment. It is for this reason that household type is a powerful determinant of poverty and becomes a barrier in and of itself.

Less powerful, but equally important, are a number of demographic factors which compound the already disadvantaged position of single-parent families. In particular, educational levels of the household maintainer, age and number of children, and age of household maintainer. With respect to age of household maintainer and number of children, Stevens found that the rate of poverty is highest for single-parents under the age of 25 or those with two or more children.¹¹¹ The fact that younger single-parents are more likely to live in poverty than older families is especially

¹¹¹ *ibid*; 3.

disconcerting in light of the fact that, as chapter three illustrated, there is a significantly higher percentage of native single-parent family household maintainers between 15-24 than in the non-native single-parent population.

The number and age of children also have a powerful effect on the rate of poverty. Research indicates that with each additional child labour force participation is interrupted, assuming that the household maintainer is actively seeking employment. This interruption for purposes of child rearing impacts more severely on single-parent than two-parent families, because they are not only the sole source of employment but also solely responsible for parenting. In other words, single-parent families with more than two children under the age of 18 are more likely to be outside the labour force and hence dependent on social assistance as a last resort, because of their dual responsibility. Compounding the problem is the fact that more children means greater pressure on an already limited budget.

Stevens concludes that two children under the age of 12 can have a detrimental effect on the household's income and employment levels, especially amongst single-parent families. Although 'among two-parent families, the risk is increased substantially only for those with less than a grade nine level of education, for single-parent families the risk of poverty remains high even for those with post-secondary education.'¹¹²

¹¹² *ibid*; 5.

This raises two important issues. Firstly, in light of the fact that 47 percent of native single-parents, compared to 26 percent of non-native single-parents have at least two children under the age of 18, the devastating impact of the number of children is more prevalent amongst native single-parents. Secondly, educational attainment appears to make a pronounced difference for two-parent families, whereas for single-parent families education seems less critical.

The existing controversy surrounding education as an explanatory tool utilized in the context of native poverty has been addressed in previous sections of the thesis. The research by Hull and Clatworthy demonstrated that education appears to have less of an impact on labour market success for natives in general and native women in particular. Forces, such as ethnicity and gender, appear to override the otherwise positive effect of higher education levels on labour market success, a phenomenon contributed frequently to a segmented labour market. Although Stevens cannot comment on the power of ethnicity in terms of providing a barrier, he does provide conclusive evidence that gender is a significant barrier to labour market success.

However, caution must be exercised not to underplay the importance of education. In fact there is little doubt that low education levels are associated with low labour force participation rates, resulting in lower levels of employment and incomes, a trend consistent in both native and non-native

populations. Why are individuals with lower levels of education less likely to participate in the labour force? One answer may be that with lower levels of education the chances of finding full-time and regular employment are so slim, that potential job opportunities consist most likely of low paying short-term or part-time employment. In recognition of the curtailed opportunities to find meaningful and steady employment, combined with the fact that there are fewer and fewer jobs available, many may give up looking for employment and instead are opting for social assistance.

Although higher levels of education do have the effect of increasing labour force participation rates, the question yet to be addressed is whether improved levels of education, aside from leading to improved labour force participation rates, also correlate with better paying and more long-term jobs.

It is in this context that gender and ethnicity must be analyzed as barriers to improving one's socio-economic condition, and the subsequent analysis will focus on gender as a structural impediment. The importance of gender is particularly highlighted when integrated with an analysis of the differential impact of education on single-parent and two-parent families. Stevens found that even at equal levels of education, single-parent families still experience a much higher rate of poverty than two-parent families.¹¹³ In fact, for single-parent families the average family income increases

¹¹³ ibid; 4

only marginally with higher levels of education when compared to two-parent families. Even at comparative levels of education and employment levels, single-parent families earn far less than two-parent families.

The reason is that the vast majority of single-parent families are headed by women who, due to the discriminatory practices of the labour market, are prevented from participating as equals in their search for employment. The wage gap between men and women and occupational discrimination are two dimensions of labour market discrimination and have been thoroughly researched by scholars, such as Phillips and Phillips¹¹⁴ and Armstrong and Armstrong.¹¹⁵ It is the presence of a segmented labour market which is argued to be responsible for paying women lower wages for the same kinds of jobs (wage discrimination), as well also trapping women and minorities in low-paying, part-time jobs (occupational discrimination), regardless of their educational attainment and individual aspirations. Hence, women have become victims of job and wage discrimination, both of which combined lead to their lower average incomes.¹¹⁶

For reasons of a discriminatory labour market, education

¹¹⁴ Paul and Erin Phillips, Women and Work (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1983).

¹¹⁵ Pat and Hugh Armstrong, The Double Ghetto. Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1989).

¹¹⁶ Paul and Erin Phillips, Women and Work op. cit., 52-76.

has less of an impact on single-parent families, than two-parent families. Because the vast majority of single-parent families are headed by women, it is this household type which is most vulnerable to the discriminatory wage and job practices of the labour market.

To sum up, a review of individual determinants of poverty illustrated that levels of employment and income, both of which are key determinants of poverty, are strongly patterned over household type and gender. Although family size, age and number of children, age of household maintainer, and low levels of education are contributing factors and combined are strong predictors of poverty, gender and household type have a much more powerful effect in terms of contributing to the causes of poverty. The rate of poverty amongst single-parent families is substantially higher when compared to two-parent families despite comparable levels of education and number and age of children. The reasons for the higher rate of poverty are their lower employment and income levels, which above all are influenced by their gender and their confined ability to supply labour.

Based on these findings and on previous analysis, there is no reason not to assume that the combined effects of demographic factors, household type and gender have the same detrimental impact on native single-parent families as on non-native single-parent families. In fact, part of the reason for the significantly higher rate of poverty amongst native

single-parent families is likely attributable to the fact that the aforementioned demographic characteristics are more pronounced in the native single-parent population than in the non-native population single-parent population. As was illustrated in chapter three, native single-parent families are on average younger, have more children, and have lower levels of education when compared to non-native single-parent families.

However, the significant differences in terms of magnitude between native and non-native single-parent families cannot solely be a result of their lower educational attainment, their larger families and the generally younger age structure. The statistical profile of the urban native population, along with the research conducted by scholars such as Clatworthy, Hull, and Stevens indicates that ethnicity is an important determinant of poverty and is clearly part of the mechanism by which poverty is perpetuated.

As Clatworthy's empirical analysis revealed, unemployment rates remain high even among better educated native peoples, which is argued to be the result of a segmented labour market, crowding native people into the secondary sector. In the same way as gender is argued to be a structural impediment, ethnicity is seen as having a similar effect. The impact of a discriminatory labour market which does not afford equal participation to neither women nor native peoples, has consequently a detrimental effect on

native women, who carry a double burden. When the curtailed ability of a single-parent to provide labour is added, it is not surprising that female led native single-parent families run the greatest risk of living in poverty. The combination of these three factors carries with it the greatest potential for being impoverished which contributes to the explanation of their higher incidence of poverty.

Clatworthy adds to the discussion by arguing that the recognition of the limited opportunities available to native women may have the effect of discouraging many from participating in the labour force and opting instead for social benefits as an income source which, although marginal in amount, may exceed possible earnings in the labour market.¹¹⁷ Further contributing to lower labour force participation rates may be the fact that, as Meadows argues, native women highly regard motherhood and the task of child rearing is considered central to a woman's life. The woman therefore, consciously chooses to remain at home with her children, instead of considering wage labour.¹¹⁸

In sum, the foregoing analysis of individual determinants of poverty highlights not only the complexity of the problem but also the interrelationship between contributing factors. It is this complexity and interrelationship which makes it

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁸ M.L. Meadows, Adaptation to Urban Life by Native Canadian Women (M.A. Thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Calgary, 1981).

exceedingly difficult to ascertain the exact impact of each factor in isolation. Nevertheless, it is possible to extract household type, gender, and ethnicity as strong predictors of poverty, particularly when all three factors are combined, as in the case of native female led single-parent families. When particular demographic characteristics come into play, the chances of living in poverty are even greater.

It can therefore be concluded that part of the explanation for the significantly higher rate of poverty amongst native single-parent families is a manifestation of a worst case scenario with respect to the combination of causal factors.

iii. External Determinants of Poverty

While native women and native single-parent families are at greatest risk of being poor, poverty is not confined to this segment of the population. In fact, disparities between native peoples and the general population are a distressing phenomenon throughout Canada, and the absolutely intolerable conditions many native peoples are forced to endure have even received international attention. The magnitude of poverty in terms of its depth and numbers affected, and the fact that the high incidence of dependence upon government transgresses geographical areas and household types and is a reality both on and off reserves, suggests that forces other than unique individual characteristics contribute to the causes of

poverty.

Based on these factors the author concurs with the position that contemporary conditions can only be fully understood if a historical perspective is taken which unveils some of the underlying forces operative in shaping present conditions. Demographic factors will simply not suffice in explaining the degree of powerlessness, dependency upon government and the level of social and economic destruction of so many native communities. Only if there is an appreciation of the tremendous sense of loss experienced by native peoples can one begin to understand the high rates of violence within native communities, the unacceptable levels of teenage suicides, the wide spread use of alcohol and drugs, the loss of culture and language, unemployment rates unmatched by any other segment of the population and the general ill health of communities, both on and off reserve.

Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a comprehensive historical account of the process of colonization of native peoples in Canada and link it to the destruction of traditional social, economic, spiritual and political systems which have organized native societies. The impact of the appropriation of lands and resources, the development of underdeveloped economies and the imposition of the Indian Act and its creation of an entirely alien and powerless quasi indian government are well documented events which need not be repeated in this context. What needs to be

addressed, however, is the concrete and direct impact of these historical forces on present urban native conditions.

Among a number of present ills which are a direct result of the colonial experience, as for example the loss of aboriginal languages, the most fundamental and powerful impact of colonialism is the stratification of traditional native society. As alluded to earlier, only few scholars have applied class analysis to explain the disparity between the native and general population. John Loxley is one of these scholars, describing the historical progression of capital expansion in Northern Manitoba and linking the stages of capital penetration to distinct social relations which emerged in response. While a more detailed analysis of this approach is provided in the literature review, of consequence in this context is that it is capitalist social relations of production which have created dependent economies and placed the majority of native people into a marginalized position. A fundamental causal factor behind native poverty is therefore their predominance in the working class or the ranks of the permanently unemployed. In the final analysis, it is their position in the class structure which determines their socio-economic conditions and must be drawn upon to understand the plight of native peoples today.

Consistent with marxist theory, Loxley identifies capitalist social relations of production as having created dependent economies, characterized by the marginalization of

the majority of the population and, what Loxley calls, divergent economies in which local demand is not dictating local production. On the contrary, external interests are shaping local economies with no regard for the best use of resources from the perspective of the community. Surplus as well as jobs created from the exploitation of resources are leaving the community, instead of generating meaningful employment opportunities on reserves or reinvesting profits back into the community.

The lack of employment and economic opportunities for local native people on reserves is, therefore, one of the foremost motivators to migrate to urban areas, although reasons for leaving reserve communities differ for women, an area which will be explored in more detail at a later stage. Unfortunately though, the urban economy provides few opportunities for native migrants. Firstly, there is a general lack of employment opportunities across the board, evidenced by staggering unemployment rates and high rates of welfare dependence. The Free Trade Agreement and the generally depressed state of the economy have in fact worsened the employment situation, which has the effect of intensified competition for jobs. Secondly, many of the jobs which are available in cities are either low paying, part-time jobs or altogether closed to native people as a result of the structural racism which restricts their equal participation in the labour market. A segmented labour market which crowds

most native people, especially native women into primary sector employment, consequently enhances their disadvantaged position in an already tight labour market.

One solution would be to seek alternative sources of employment to escape the discriminatory practices of the labour market. The question must therefore be asked to what extent the urban native community is in a position to provide an alternative to the current system, providing employment opportunities to their members and thereby lessening the present dependence on the state. According to Loxley, who has studied the potential for native controlled economic development, the urban native community is severely restricted in its ability to provide employment opportunities to urban natives. Although reasons are numerous, the following will highlight some of the major problem areas.¹¹⁹

Loxley observed that generally speaking, internal problems, such as a lack of management skills, accountability problems and corruption, in addition to such broader environmental problems as inadequate, short-term government funding and insufficient assistance as well as a lack of infrastructure and restricted markets all contribute to the common failure of native business schemes. Above all, however, there simply seems to be a lack of capital by the native community to develop and sustain any efforts of native

¹¹⁹ John Loxley, The Economics of Community Development (Winnipeg: HKL & Associates Ltd., Report prepared for the Native Economic Development Program, 1986).

economic development.¹²⁰

The above problems, it is argued, are enhanced for urban natives because,

To begin with non-native opposition to special native assistance programs is likely to be more vociferous in urban areas where such programs have greater visibility and where competition is more acute. Secondly, the native community is less organized in urban areas and constitutes a much weaker political pressure group than it does elsewhere. Finally, urban economic development strategies for and by Native people are less well developed than they are for and by Native people living elsewhere. The result is that economic development programming for the urban areas is virtually non-existent.¹²¹

As a result of the above noted impediments urban natives are presented with few alternatives and the dependence on the urban labour market is therefore enhanced.

Compounding the problems of a segmented labour market and the inability to provide alternative employment opportunities, is the impact of pre-market discriminatory practices affecting native women. Phillips and Phillips advance the argument that, 'a great deal of female poverty is directly related to women's inferior status in the labour market combined with social conditioning, sexual stereotyping, and their primary responsibility for the maintenance and reproduction of the household.'¹²² Low participation rates in the labour force

¹²⁰ Ibid., Chapter 4.

¹²¹ Ibid., 155-156.

¹²² Paul and Erin Phillips, Women and Work, 71.

can, in addition to the previously identified factors, be a result of the sexual division of labour, which dictates that women carry the primary responsibilities for child rearing and the maintenance of the household. Whether or not the sexual division of labour, and the stereotyping of women into certain jobs is more pronounced and less challenged in the native community is difficult to determine and unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.

Because women regardless of ethnicity are considered the primary caregivers in our society, it is also women for whom the lack of affordable child care becomes a real barrier to seeking employment. Women are having to cope with totally inadequate state assistance for child care, which often results in preventing many from either seeking paid employment or returning to school to upgrade their education and training. The gross inadequacies of current child care policies at both the federal and provincial levels are well documented in numerous reports, task forces and other studies. Regardless of what perspective one chooses to take, the conclusion that there simply are not enough child care spaces available seems inescapable.

The National Council of Welfare provides empirical evidence to indicate the need for child care, stating that in Manitoba there are 10,526 licensed child care spaces, but 76,916 children under the age of 13 whose parents are working outside the home and who therefore would be potential users of

child care services.¹²³ This severe shortage in child care spaces clearly inhibits women to enter the labour force if they so choose, especially in the case of single mothers, where no other person shares the responsibility of child rearing. The lack of child care spaces affects poorer women even more, because only part of the available spaces are subsidized and therefore accessible to low income families.

The state has shown little intention to rectify this situation and instead of providing more non-profit child care spaces continues to use the income tax system to subsidize child care. Child care subsidies are of little use to low income parents, who may very well qualify for a subsidized space in a non-profit child care centre, but are still unable to place their children into child care because of the shortage of subsidized spaces. Unless more child care spaces are created, which are universally accessible, affordable, non-profit, and high in quality, poor families will continue to have to rely on the non-regulated private child care sector or stay home with the children, thereby foregoing potential employment and educational opportunities. The short-sightedness of this policy is not only reflective of a patriarchal ideology, and is therefore rejected by the author, but also makes little economic sense, seeing that the state must now pay for social assistance for those women who

¹²³ National Council of Welfare, Child-Care - A Better Alternative (Ottawa: National Council of Welfare, 1988), 4.

are unable to participate in the labour force as a result of unavailable child care.

The issues of child care policy and economic assistance programs raise questions of the general effectiveness of government policies and programs in addressing the plight of urban natives. The aforementioned research conducted by Frideres and Reeves seeks answers with respect to the impact of social policy on urban natives and concludes that public service institutions, for the most part, have failed to meet the needs of urban native clients because their services are remedial only and do not deal with the root causes of the problem.

These observations are particularly relevant with regards to social housing policy. Housing policy is generally confined to the provision of shelter by way of the income subsidy approach coupled with the supply of social housing units. In either approach, only modest attempts are made to integrate social housing policy with overall social policy, the result of which is that the root cause of most housing problems, namely poverty, is not being successfully addressed. All that is accomplished currently is the provision of shelter for those in need, and even that objective is not being met in light of the ever increasing numbers of homeless people in Canadian cities.

Although data presented in chapter three provide evidence that, using the three dimensions of housing need, single-

parent families most frequently encounter affordability problems, studies suggest that the nature of the housing problem for this household type are in fact more complex than just insufficient income. As a result, housing subsidies alone may be an insufficient response to their unique shelter problems.¹²⁴ For example, most social housing projects do not have on-site child care and other support services available to the tenants which may be particularly important to single-parent families who do not have easy access to these services.

While social housing does little to encourage self-help or provide additional support services to its tenants, the options for those households who do not have the chance to live in social housing are even more limited. For example, assisting households with affordability problems through income subsidies is problematic because it requires households to rely on the private market as the housing supplier. The problem here is that the private housing market responds not to need but to demand, and if not deemed profitable will not supply affordable, adequate, and suitable housing. In fact, the presence of slumlandlords and the general lack of affordable, suitable and available housing in the private market suggests that housing solutions requiring a reliance on the private market may be extremely misguided.

¹²⁴ Fran Klodawsky, Aron Spector and Damaris Rose, Single-Parent Families and Canadian Housing Policies: How Mothers Lose (CMHC, 1985).

Compounding the problems associated with current housing policy is the fact that ineffective housing solutions go beyond the realm of housing, but impact on the general well-being of a household. For example, experience shows that crowding enhances the risk of family violence due to the stress associated with a lack of physical space in the home. In addition, inadequate housing conditions also do not provide a supportive environment for learning which, in turn, has long lasting effects on children who are struggling to keep up with the pressures at school.

In sum, it can be concluded that the myopic view of social policy often contributes little more than temporary relief to those in need. Especially with respect to housing policy, tremendous developmental opportunities are foregone. The recent decision by the federal government to slash the program budget for the non-profit and co-operative housing programs is more than short-sighted indeed, since these are the only two programs which have the potential to offer real alternatives, especially for single-parent families. The co-op housing program in particular is a means whereby housing policy can be integrated with other social and economic policy objectives. The Payuk Housing Co-op in Winnipeg attests to that, targeting not only native single-parent families but providing on-site child care and a number of other services for its community.

Fostering community driven projects such as these, which

can set their own targets and priorities is especially important for urban natives, who frequently fall between jurisdictional cracks. It is becoming increasingly apparent that both provincial and municipal governments refuse to award special treatment to urban natives, or target their programs and services to meet their specific needs, because their welfare is argued to be the sole responsibility of the federal government due to its fiduciary relationship with native peoples. An analysis of whether or not the federal government is trying to offload its responsibilities for native peoples to the provinces is beyond the scope of this thesis. Of importance is the fact that urban natives are treated as any other client when seeking assistance, despite their desperate socio-economic conditions, and no provisions are made to target them as a special needs group, needing both culturally sensitive and above all, immediate attention.

The extent to which policy can either impede or foster the improvement of socio-economic conditions has been researched by Evelyn Peters, who examines the ineffectiveness of welfare policy in addressing the complex needs of urban native single-parent families. The basic premise of her argument is that the breakdown of the urban native family is largely a result of 'the uncertainty of the job situation for native males and the security of welfare payments for mothers

with young children'.¹²⁵ The hypothesis is advanced that single-parenthood is a logical coping mechanism and response to the welfare system which, as a result of its eligibility criteria, discriminates against two-parent families in favour of single-parent families. 'Children mean single parents are eligible for social assistance, and additional children mean additional income.'¹²⁶ Peters implies, in fact, that native single-parents are making the conscious and calculated choice not only to remain single-parents but also to have large families.

Although it is possible that in some cases native women actually make these conscious decision in response to the welfare system, Peters' thesis can be challenged on two grounds. Firstly, the insufficient resources provided through social assistance, guaranteeing little more than a stable state of poverty, are hardly sufficiently attractive to offset the problems associated with single-parenthood and large families. Secondly, Peters completely fails to recognize that the extremely high incidence of family violence within the native community may in fact be an exceedingly more powerful factor in determining household type than welfare policies.

¹²⁵ Evelyn Peters, Native Households in Winnipeg: Strategies of Co-Residence and Financial Support (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1984), 29.

¹²⁶ Evelyn Peters, Indian Families: Coping with Unemployment and the Welfare System (Unpublished paper), 11.

Prior to a discussion of the high levels of violence within the native community, it should be noted that extreme caution must be exercised in this context. Based on the data presented it would be all too easy to link ethnicity with the high rates of violence, arguing that being native means being more prone to exert as well as be accepting of abuse. Furthermore, the argument that native women have traditionally been in positions of subservience and are hence 'used' to physical, verbal, and emotional abuse is totally void of any foundation in fact and is extremely racist at best. Although the reasons for abuse are highly complex and justice cannot be granted to the multitude of factors involved, an alternative to the simplicity of the above approach and a starting point may be in Frantz Fanon's writings on colonialism. He describes the outbreak of violence amongst the colonized as a people turning inward, focusing their anger against one another, which is a reaction of their frustrations associated with having lost all power over their existence.¹²⁷

Whichever explanation one wishes to pursue there is unfortunately little doubt of the crisis proportions the problems of abuse against native women and children have reached. The figures counting the victims are simply unconscionable and it is not unreasonable to refer to the current conditions as evidence of outright warfare against

¹²⁷ Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1968).

women and children.

A recent survey conducted by native women themselves not only provides empirical evidence of the extremely high incidence of violence within native communities, but also supports the thesis that violence is the root cause of both migration to urban areas as well as family break-up.¹²⁸

The report states that the extremely high rates of family violence in the aboriginal community, estimated to be eight times higher than the average for Canadian society as a whole, has 'led to family separation, and in almost all cases the mother and family members have fled to larger urban and other communities for protection and better services.'¹²⁹

The impact of family violence on migration patterns is also examined by Clatworthy who found that native men and women appear to migrate to cities for different reasons. Although the desire for employment was the dominant reason cited for migration, 'native females were more likely than males to state problems on the reserve or in their previous home community and family ties in the city as the major reason for moving to the city.'¹³⁰ In light of these findings, it can be assumed that violence may indeed be an important factor

¹²⁸ Ontario Native Women's Association, Breaking Free. A Proposal for Change to Aboriginal Family Violence (Thunder Bay: Ontario Native Women's Association, December 1989).

¹²⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁰ Clatworthy, Native Housing Conditions, op. cit., 22.

explaining gender based migration patterns and the predominance of single-parenthood amongst native women.

Aside from the failure to recognize family violence as a contributing factor in determining household type, Peters also neglects to link the perceived role of women, especially teenage women, to the high incidence of single-parenthood. Linda Taylor's research is particularly relevant in this context, asserting that a belief in the traditional role of women as mothers in fact encourages adolescent parenthood as a positive position to be in, when measured against other alternatives.¹³¹ Hence, many young women have become mothers because their conditioning leads them to believe that women are best suited to the care of children and the maintenance of the home.

The issue of violence within the native community raises important questions about the extent to which native women hold power in their own organizations, a matter which will subsequently be discussed and will finalize the discussion on external determinant of poverty. As previous analysis has illustrated, native women in general and native single-parents in particular are the poorest of the poor and must endure the gravest hardships; they are not only victims of racism and sexism, but also of domestic violence, which affects both themselves and their children and significantly curtails their

¹³¹ Linda Taylor, Teen Parents: The Need for Public Policy (unpublished paper, December 1988).

ability to improve their socio-economic conditions.

As alluded to in the Introduction, it is imperative to understand the role and needs of native women not only because they form the majority of the urban native community, but also because they are the most disadvantaged population segment. Since a great deal of their disadvantaged position has to do with a lack of power to make decisions which affect them and obtain the resources to realize their objectives, the question to be asked at this point is whether the current distribution of power within the native community itself lends native women a political voice to address their concerns.

At the outset it should be noted that it is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis to engage in a thorough discussion regarding the traditional role of women in native cultures.¹³² Of relevance in this context is only that colonization brought with it a system oppressive toward native

¹³² The most pertinent texts in this area are:
Sherrill Cheda, "Indian Women. An Historical Example and a Contemporary View," Women in Canada, Marylee Stephenson (ed.), (Don Mills: General Publishing Co. Ltd., 1977).

Kathleen Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus (Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1978).

Anne Cameron, Daughters of Copper Woman (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1981).

Native Women, a special issue of "Canadian Women's Studies," (Summer/Fall 1989) 10(2&3).

Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, Volume 1 (1991): 475-507.

women, finding its ultimate expression in the Indian Act which, until recently, afforded different treatment to women than men in regards to band membership.¹³³

An analysis of the types of issues which compose an organization's agenda can be drawn upon to get a clearer understanding of the dynamics within the native community. Clatworthy and Gunn have utilized this method and have shown in their survey of native organizations in western Canadian cities, that many of the issues on the agenda are driven by a concern for the long-term goals of the native community at large, and less so by bread and butter issues which are of direct relevance to most native women. In part, this is a function of the fact that most native organizations are rural-based and hence their focus is more on landclaims, aboriginal self-government and the distribution of power between the Department of Indian Affairs and band councils.¹³⁴ Urban issues such as poor housing conditions and the high incidence of poverty among single-parent families are therefore not always addressed in this context. Aside from the rural/urban split which, in part, accounts for the lack of attention paid to these issues, the argument can be made that in general native women seem to assign different priorities to issues

¹³³ Kathleen Jamieson, Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus (Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1978).

¹³⁴ Clatworthy and Gunn, Economic Circumstances of Native People in Selected Metropolitan Centres in Western Canada (Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1981).

than the frequently male-dominated native mainstream organizations.

The controversy surrounding the attempt of native women to remove discriminatory practices from the Indian Act by way of amendment is important in this context, because it reflects the fact that native women could not rely on the support of native mainstream organizations in their struggle for equality. The current constitutional debate in fact reflects that many of the issues which are of particular concern to native women have not been addressed to date, and there is no agreement regarding the appropriate forum through which solutions to these problems can be achieved.

The recently formed Aboriginal Women's Unity Coalition of Winnipeg (AWUC) perhaps best captures the demand made by many native women, namely an insistence that the aboriginal leadership "treat the issue of violence against Aboriginal women and children as a political concern equal in importance to achieving recognition of our inherent rights to govern ourselves".¹³⁵ After all, aboriginal self-government will not be a viable mechanism for providing aboriginal peoples with the authority to govern themselves, if half the aboriginal population is excluded from the decision-making process. It is power struggles such as these which account for the reluctance of many native women's organization to give

¹³⁵ Marilyn Fontaine-Brightstar, "Breaking the Silence", Canadian Dimension, 26(2), (March 1992): 5-8.

the current leadership the mandate to speak on their behalf.

In sum, the lack of power of native women in many mainstream organizations not only has the effect of dividing the native community and thereby weakening its overall position, but also impedes their struggle towards improved socio-economic conditions.

The previous discussion drew on both internal and external determinants of poverty to provide as complex and comprehensive a picture as possible of the causal factors behind the high rates of poverty amongst urban native single-parent families. As is evident from the information presented, there are a number of forces in play which individually and combined contribute to the socio-economic conditions of urban native single-parent families.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated that the causes of the high incidence of core housing need amongst urban native single-parent families are extremely complex and, in the final analysis, are an expression of the poverty so predominant in the native single-parent population. A direct relationship could be established between socio-economic conditions and the ability to provide shelter. This relationship is further refined, however, when household type, ethnicity, and gender are drawn upon as possible contributing factors. In this context, the hypothesis that household type is indeed related to housing need and socio-economic status could be supported, although a more thorough examination of the urban native population revealed that numerous other factors such as ethnicity, gender, demographic characteristics and ultimately class are also important contributing factors.

Only if the complexity and the underlying dynamics of the problems experienced by the majority of urban native single-parent families are recognized, can we begin to address current conditions adequately. Myopic and departmentalized thinking of a problem so all-encompassing and complex must be overcome if solutions to the unconscionable levels of poverty of native women and their children are sought. In light of

the interrelationship of factors, it also follows that the burden to provide relief cannot rest with housing policy alone and the following recommendations are in recognition of that fact.

As alluded to in the introduction and suggested throughout the text, contemporary conditions are a result of the colonization process which shifted the power away from native peoples into the hands of european settlers, who have since controlled all aspects of the lives of the colonized. Social, political and economic change must therefore begin with the reversal of the impacts of colonialism by means of the political mobilization of native peoples, which in many respects is already underway. The struggle for the recognition and constitutional entrenchment of the inherent right to aboriginal self-government and the relentless insistence on settling outstanding claims and fulfilling treaty obligations attest to that.

Aboriginal self-government is fundamental to social, economic and political change, because it provides the mechanism whereby native peoples can shape their own future. Aboriginal self-government will, however, remain an elusive concept if the required resources are not made available to implement the set objectives. Furthermore, unless, these resources are collectively controlled and the benefits accrued through their sale or use are shared by the entire community, it is conceivable that a non-native bourgeoisie will simple be

replaced by a native one.

In regards to the high rates of violence against women and children, it is also possible to assume that aboriginal self-government can provide the mechanism to solve these problems, which after all are likely a consequence of the devastating effects of colonialism. It is also reasonable to hope that aboriginal self-government can provide the necessary powers to reverse these trends. However, if native women continue to be excluded from the decision-making processes and native leadership fails to acknowledge that the current level of violence against women and children has reached crisis proportions and must be afforded equal attention, aboriginal self-government has the potential to create nothing other than a homegrown system of oppression.

Current constitutional negotiations hold promise regarding the aspirations of aboriginal peoples on and off a land base. Aboriginal self-government off a landbase, although limited by the very fact that it cannot exercise jurisdiction over a distinct geographic area, is not ruled out. The establishment of institutions with exclusive jurisdiction in certain matters may in fact provide urban natives with the necessary control over the decision-making process as it affects them. Hence, it is conceivable that native run and controlled schools, cultural institutions, shelters, housing projects and social service providers be established in urban centres throughout Canada.

Based on past experience, however, constitutional changes of this magnitude will unlikely become a reality in the near future and therefore provide little consolation for those who require immediate assistance. Albeit only remedial in its impact, nevertheless of extreme importance, are therefore short-term measures such as the provision of short-term and long-term shelters for women and their children, the implementation of an adequate child care strategy, the provision of more suitable, adequate, and affordable housing, the improvement of current income and shelter support programs and the continued funding of community based organizations which provide badly needed services to those in need of assistance. Above all, however, regardless of the type of service provided native single-parent families must be targeted as a special needs groups in an effort to meet their specific needs.

Furthermore, housing policy in particular must recognize and support the importance of community driven initiatives such as housing co-operatives, which have the potential to go beyond the provision of shelter and use housing as a means to address the social, economic and cultural needs of urban native single-parent families. Only bottom-up approaches such as this will empower people to make their own decisions and regain control over their lives.

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