

‘More Strangers than Neighbours’:
Aboriginal-African Refugee Relations in Winnipeg’s Inner City

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Executive Summary

This study examined inter-minority group relations. The aim was to find preliminary answers the following questions: How can we characterize the attitudes and interactions between Aboriginals and African refugees in the inner city of Winnipeg? How much do African refugees know of the colonization experiences and current situation of Aboriginals, and vice versa? How often and in what types of places do group members interact? What programs can be put in place to enhance community relations?

For the most part, we examined the perceptions and experiences of recently-arrived refugees who found themselves in the ‘first stage’ of the settlement process where they learn about Canada and gain basic employment and skills relevant to the economy (Gagné 2008: 28). While this study did not focus exclusively on recently arrived African refugees, we paid special attention to this newcomer cohort for a number of reasons. In the past ten years an increasing proportion of refugee newcomers have originated from Africa and a large percentage of them reside in Winnipeg’s inner city. African refugees are visible minorities and they tend to find themselves, at least during their first years in Winnipeg, in largely the same socio economic position as that of Aboriginals. Aboriginals were interviewed because like many newcomer refugees, they are residentially concentrated in the inner city, face socio economic hardships and are racially distinct from Caucasian Winnipeggers.

Through personal, in-depth interviews with 27 service providers, ethno-cultural community leaders and inner city residents, we heard that relations between group members are distant.

African refugees and Aboriginals live in a shared geographic area, yet they maintain social distance and “tolerate each other’s presence.” Interactions usually take place in public spaces, such as inner city parks, sidewalks and *Manitoba Housing* complexes. The misperceptions that both groups have of one another are confirmed through street level interactions when newcomers¹ encounter poor and sometimes intoxicated Aboriginal individuals, and when Aboriginals come across refugees in public subsidized units.

We found that a number of important factors hinder meaningful connections amongst inner city residents; these include a lack of knowledge about the past and current experiences of the ‘other’ group; the cold Winnipeg winter months; a lack of English language skills; mistrust of the ‘unknown other,’ and a system of service delivery that is frequently fragmented along group lines.

Unambiguously, this study revealed that in-group members are unaware of the experiences, cultures and current situations of out-group members. While some respondents pointed to existing negative perceptions of the ‘other’ group, as well as feelings of inter-group competition over jobs and subsidized housing, other participants spoke about how being visible minorities, victims of colonization and targets of racial profiling can positively bring the two groups together.

¹ In order to avoid redundancy, and because I *only* refer to refugee-class immigrants in this study, I use the words ‘newcomers’ and ‘refugees’ interchangeably.

Despite the generally distant relations, an encouraging finding is that on the few occasions where Aboriginals and African refugees associated by attending programs in community-based organizations, relations among them improved. This is especially the case when service providers acted as “cultural brokers,” took a pro-active stance to connect diverse clients, and made them realize that they share more in common than previously thought.

Project participants articulated their views on what programs and public policies could bridge relations. To ensure that newcomers and Aboriginals begin to form more meaningful community-level connections, participants said that community-based organizations require *long-term and sustainable funds*. Others made the case that refugees need to be exposed to professional Aboriginals who defy stereotypes, and service providers serving both communities should be given an opportunity to meet and discuss emerging race relations issues. Ultimately, however, structural realities such as Aboriginal poverty and social exclusion need to be examined so that mainstream and “new Canadians” alike do not evaluate Aboriginals in harmful and unconstructive ways.

By and large, the findings of this paper are based on the experiences and views of service providers. The fact that we interviewed only three African and four Aboriginal individuals means that the findings cannot be generalized to represent the *direct* views of inner city residents. Nor do they necessarily represent the diversity of experiences and opinions within the two groups. While findings are not to be considered exhaustive, this study provides a preliminary snapshot of inter-minority relations in Winnipeg’s inner city.

Table of Contents

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
PART TWO: INTERMINORITY RELATIONS – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH TRENDS	4
PART THREE: WINNIPEG’S INNER CITY	9
PART FOUR: METHODS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	18
PART FIVE: FINDINGS.....	23
Theme One: Lack of Knowledge About the ‘Other’ Group	23
Theme Two: Inter-Group Misperceptions.....	28
Theme Three: Inter-Group Interactions in Winnipeg’s Inner City	42
PART SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS TO BRIDGE RELATIONS.....	53
PART SEVEN: CONCLUSION	69
SELECT BIBLIOPGRAHY	72
APPENDIX I: TABLES	80
APPENDIX II: CONSENT FORM	82
APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW GUIDES.....	84

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“I had a friend once and she was a new immigrant. I remember her crying one day because people were calling her a “DP” [the term is usually meant to denote a ‘displaced person’]. I went home and told my mom about the incident. She replied: “My girl: tell your friend not to cry: what a DP means is a Delayed Pioneer.”

Aboriginal Elder – Confronting Racism Workshop

November 2007

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Part One: Introduction

Manitoba is rapidly becoming increasingly multi ethnic. The Manitoba government, in order to stabilize a declining baby boomer population and strengthen the labour force, aims to increase the annual numbers of immigrants to the province to 20,000 by 2016 (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2008). Immigrants (refugees included) migrate from many different parts of the world. Newcomers to this country are not white skinned Europeans as they generally were in the past. Immigration from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean has jumped to seventy percent of the total, up from only five percent before 1961 (Blake 2003: 491). However, the effects of migration are not all generated abroad. The high birth rates of urban Aboriginal families, coupled with Aboriginals who have - and continue - to migrate from reserves or rural communities, adds to the city’s changing diversity. Winnipeg has the highest proportion of urban Aboriginals in all of Canada with 68,380 of its residents identifying as Aboriginal (Statistics

Canada, an increasingly urban population, 2008).² The Prairie city is being transformed by the social, cultural, religious and economic diversity of rising numbers of both immigrants *and* Aboriginals. In the inner city of Winnipeg, refugee newcomers are settling into neighbourhoods heavily populated by Aboriginals.

Literature focusing on the topic of integration is overwhelming biased towards examining how newcomers interact with the dominant mainstream population. However, little is written about how integration also involves the ways newcomers from abroad relate to other minorities in Canada. New questions about Canadian diversity arise: How does the infusion of refugees into Canadian neighbourhoods affect relations with the Aboriginal community, a physically-established minority group? How is the co-existence of these minority groups managed? And what happens when strangers become neighbours? (Sandercock 2004: 3)

Within the abundant literature on multiculturalism and diversity, there is little research in Canada that focuses on *inter-minority* relations. One recent exception is the Bouchard-Taylor Commission Report which points to the identity-based insecurity that many French-Canadian Quebecers experience as a minority group in Canada, vis-à-vis English Canada. The report highlights how this identity-related anxiety is sometimes targeted towards immigrants who form another minority group and who, “for some Quebecers [have become] a sort of scapegoat” (Bouchard and Taylor 2008: 186). Significant numbers of French-Canadian Quebecers fear being

² The word ‘Aboriginal’ incorporates three groups of people who themselves are diverse; these are the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples.

overwhelmed by immigrant minorities, who are themselves fragile and worried about their future (Bouchard and Taylor 2009: 187).

This particular study adds knowledge to the topic of inter-minority relations in Canada, by examining two groups: newcomer refugees and urban Aboriginals. For a discussion on why I chose to study these two groups, as well as why I conceptualize them as “minorities,” please refer to Part Two of this report.

Focusing on Winnipeg’s inner city and using data from in depth interviews and focus groups conducted with 27 service providers, community leaders as well as Aboriginal and refugee inner city residents, this study begins to address the following questions: How do Aboriginals and refugees who reside in Winnipeg’s core area perceive and interact with one another? What factors determine their relations? Equally important, what policies, according to community members and service providers, can be implemented to enhance relations and promote “welcoming communities” for all?

This report is divided into seven sections. Part two outlines research trends on inter-minority relations within and outside of Canada. Part three presents demographic information about Winnipeg’s inner city, while part four discusses the study’s methods and ethical considerations. The fifth section is the lengthiest one, and it describes the findings emerging from interviews and focus groups. Findings are organized around general themes. The sixth section offers policy recommendations designed to enhance Winnipeg community relations and the seventh section concludes the report with potential future scenarios.

Part Two:

Interminority Relations – Theoretical Framework and Research Trends

Within the field of group relations, Contact Theory posits that under certain circumstances and conditions, increased contact between group members mitigates intolerance and misunderstanding. Personal and positive exposure to ‘out group’ members who disconfirm negative stereotypes is one condition (Dovidio et al., 2003; Pettigrew 1998). A meta analysis of 515 studies involving 250,000 participants in thirty eight countries revealed that greater inter-group contact typically corresponds with lower levels of inter group prejudice; 94 percent of the 515 studies pointed to an inverse relationship between contact and prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008: 922). One of Contact Theory’s tenets is that intolerance stems from ignorance, not knowing the ‘enemy.’ Thus, when members of minority groups realize that they have common experiences (i.e., low standard of living and similar past injustices), they are more likely to empathize and cooperate with one another (Kang 2000: 1171). For cooperation to occur contact must be sustained rather than sporadic; it must also take place in settings that confer equal status towards all group members (Pettigrew 1998). To combat mistrust and negative perceptions, contact ought to be voluntary, reach below the surface and be personal in character (Allport 1954: 276).

Conversely, impersonal contact in settings where competition between groups is perceived to take place can exacerbate negative feelings between group members. Simply being in close proximity to ‘out group’ members does not dispel apprehensive feelings. Even while living in the

same neighbourhoods or housing complexes, encounters between group members can be superficial and impersonal (e.g., passing one another on the streets, or waiting near each other in an elevator). Overall, then, it is the context in which inter-group contact occurs that is essential in determining whether relations will be positive or negative.

The 2006 census reported more than 200 different ethnic groups in Canada, and it also highlighted how the visible minority population in the country had surpassed the five million mark (Statistics Canada 2008, “2006 Census: Ethnic origin...”). Despite these demographic trends and the widespread rhetoric of Canadian multiculturalism, the topic of *inter-minority* relations has been noticeably neglected. Most detectable race relations research in Canada has been conducted and interpreted using a majority-minority framework that examines how mainstream Caucasian Canadians view immigrants and other minorities (for examples see Esses et al., 2001; Blake 2003).

Although inter-minority relations remain largely undiscussed and unanalyzed in Canada, the topic has been recognized as an increasingly important issue in the United States. For this reason and with few alternatives at hand, it is useful to look at American based inter-minority studies to gauge whether their findings coincide with the real life dynamics experienced by refugee newcomers and Aboriginals in the inner city of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Recent American research on inter-minority relations has demonstrated that Latino and Asian immigrants in the United States espouse negative views of African-Americans. As immigrants, they racially distance themselves from Blacks and identify more with Whites because they seek upward socio economic mobility (McClain et al., 2006; Samson 2004). These findings are also present in another study where Korean merchants, due to their vulnerable position in American society as immigrants, as well as their strong fear of downward socio economic mobility were found to hold negative views of African Americans. Korean merchants perceived Blacks as having a low societal status and of being dangerous and criminally inclined. As a result of these perceptions, Koreans were found to socially distance themselves from African Americans as much as possible (Weitzer 1997). Another study revealed that among Hispanics in Texas, those who held negative attitudes towards African Americans often encountered them in seemingly competitive public places, such as waiting in line at social service agencies. In this type of setting, frustration and suspicion are pitted against each other (Mindiola et al. 2002: 120). More positively, another study revealed that exposure to out groups through participation in neighbourhood associations could be a powerful force for reducing inter-group animosity (Oliver and Wong 2003).

While this study did not focus exclusively on recently arrived African refugees, I paid special attention to this newcomer cohort for a number of methodological reasons. First, due to time and resource limitations, I was unable to interview sufficient samples of other categories of newcomers. Further, in the past ten years an increasing proportion of refugee newcomers have originated from Africa and a large percentage of them reside in Winnipeg's inner city. African

refugees are visible minorities and they tend to find themselves, at least during their first years in Winnipeg, in largely the same socio economic position as that of Aboriginals. Aboriginals were interviewed because like many newcomer refugees, they are residentially concentrated in the inner city, face socio economic hardships and are racially distinct from Caucasian Winnipeggers.

In this study, both urban Aboriginals and African refugees are conceptualized as minority groups yet of different kinds. Aboriginals are a 'national minority,' which is to say that, as a group they were previously self governing and only became a minority in Canada through conquest and colonization (Kymlicka 1995). Taking this into account, as well as their continuing desire to be self governing, Aboriginal People have official 'distinct nation' status in the Canadian Constitution and are granted permanent self government rights. Immigrant groups in Canada, on the other hand, comprise another type of minority. They are considered to be 'ethnic minorities' who have migrated to Canada from other countries and seek to have their cultures respected and accommodated within the larger Canadian society but do not wish to become separate self governing nations (Kukathas 1997: 408). Consequently, 'immigrant ethnic minorities' are not afforded special constitutional status or self government rights.

While Aboriginals and refugee newcomers form different types of minorities, they are also alike in important ways. Members of both groups are phenotypically and culturally different from the mainstream society. In the inner city, many Aboriginals and refugees find themselves in an underprivileged socio economic condition living off government assistance and residing in subsidized housing or dilapidated buildings. As a group, Aboriginals were colonized by

European powers and forced to assimilate into mainstream society; as ‘national ethnic minorities,’ they continue to face racism and discrimination on a daily basis (Silver and Ghorayshi 2006: 15). African refugees have also been colonized in their countries of origin, and more recently have been subject to violence, trauma and persecution.

Part Three:

Winnipeg's Inner City

General Characteristics

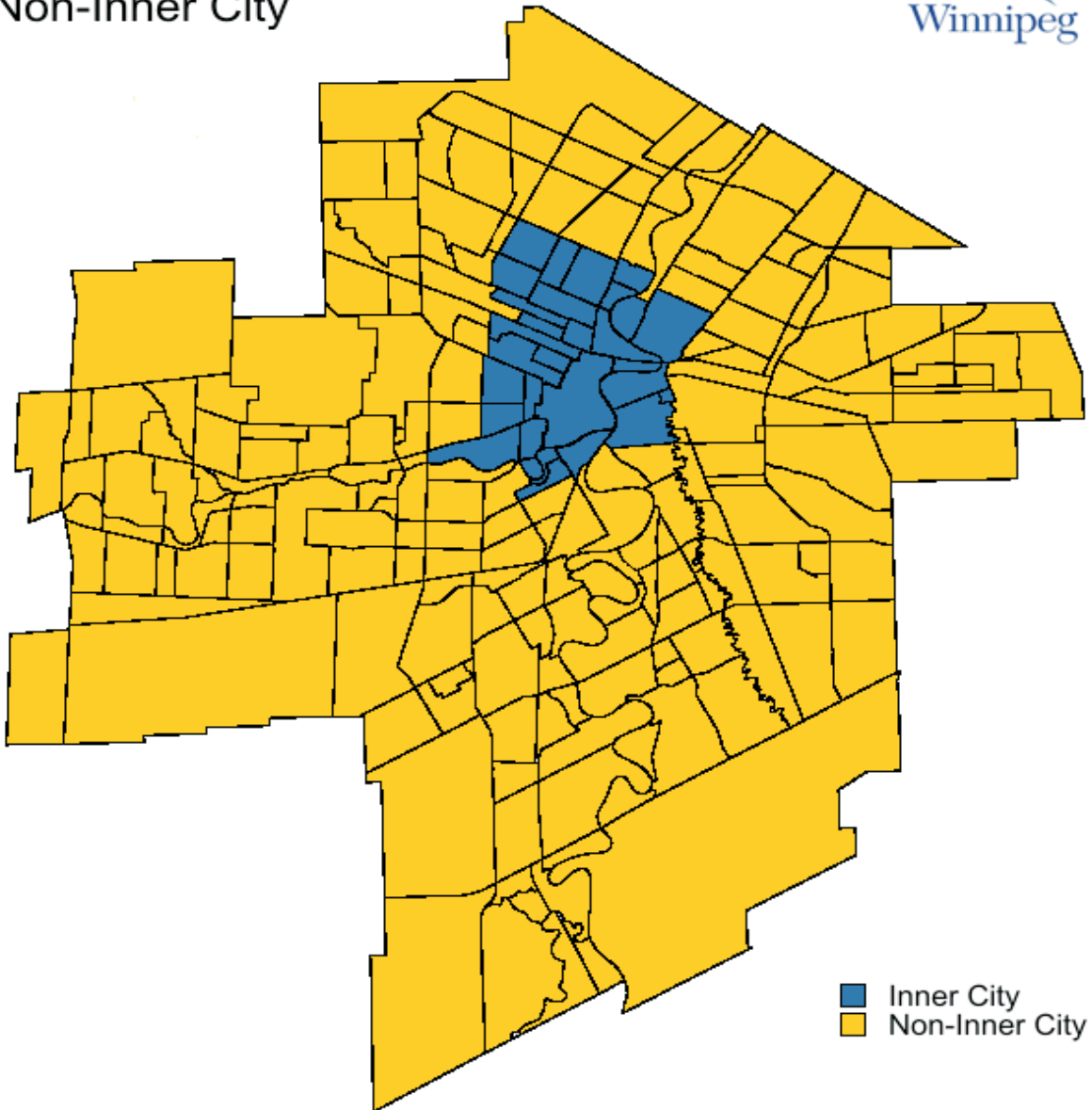
The inner city of Winnipeg is composed of 36 identifiable neighbourhoods; it covers 6.4 percent of the city's area at 30.5 km squared (City of Winnipeg 2006 Census data: 2). In 2006, Winnipeg's inner city had 121,615 residents (City of Winnipeg 2006 census data: 2) In the inner city, poverty is widespread and residents' dependence on government transfers by means of welfare assistance is widespread. A single person living on welfare receives approximately \$6.50 a day, or an annual income of less than \$6,000 (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 2007). Adding to the high rates of poverty and welfare dependency in Winnipeg's inner city is the reality that today's globalized and information-based North American economy no longer requires the semi skilled factory work that existed in previous decades. Thus the unemployment rate in the core of Winnipeg is at 7.8 percent compared to 5.2 percent for Winnipeg as a whole (City of Winnipeg 2006 census data: 10). The few jobs that inner city residents can presently apply for fall within the service sector and are part time, temporary or non unionized (Sheldrick 2004; Hajnal 1995)

Winnipeg's core area is also distinguished by its old and deteriorating housing conditions: 44.1 percent of the area's buildings were built prior to 1946 and 47.5 percent are in need of repairs (City of Winnipeg 2006 census data: 16). Many core area residents, because they cannot afford to become homeowners, are renters within the housing market. Rent prices are cheaper in the

inner city than in the city of Winnipeg as a whole. Due to their inability to pay higher rent prices, poor residents are *structurally* forced to reside in the inner city. The map in the following page illustrates inner city versus non-inner city neighbourhoods in Winnipeg.

Map 1.0 – Inner City Versus Non-Inner City Neighbourhoods (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Inner City & Non-Inner City



■ Inner City
■ Non-Inner City

Source: City of Winnipeg (n.d.). "2006 Census Data - Inner City, City of Winnipeg." Retrieved May 2009, from <http://www.winnipeg.ca/Census/2006/City%20of%20Winnipeg/Inner%20City/Inner%20City%20Map/Inner%20City%20Map.pdf>

Aboriginals in the Inner City of Winnipeg

Within mainstream society, there is a widespread and erroneous perception that being Aboriginal and being urban are mutually exclusive (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1996). In doing so, society-at-large decides for Aboriginals where they ought to ‘belong:’ on reserves or rural communities. Nonetheless, coming to terms with the magnitude of the migratory patterns of Aboriginals makes it clear that city life is part of Native reality just as life on reserves and northern communities is.³ Finding a place to live, dealing with urban landlords, searching for jobs and making spaces for Aboriginal languages in urban settings are as much a part of Canadian Aboriginal reality as are land claims, conflicts over logging, and hunting and treaty rights (Newhouse and Peters 2003: 5). Aboriginals have been moving to Canadian urban centres for eighty years, albeit more heavily since the end of the Second World War. Their movement to urban settings has been demographically significant. In 1951, 7 percent of the Aboriginal population lived in Canadian cities; fifty years later in 2006, the proportion had remarkably increased to 54 percent, more than half of all Aboriginal Peoples (Statistics Canada, an increasingly urban population..., 2008)

In the city of Winnipeg, what is often referred to as the first big wave of migrant Aboriginals took place in the early 1960s (Silver 2006). Pull factors to the city were, and continue to be related to better access to housing, employment opportunities and health treatment services.

³ In order to avoid redundancy, I use the words ‘Native’ and ‘Aboriginals’ synonymously.

Aboriginals congregated in inner city neighbourhoods where housing, largely due to its depreciated and run-down state, was cheaper (Silver 2006). This trend continues to this day where the majority of Aboriginal inner city residents cannot afford to own houses and consequently live in old rental dwellings, publicly subsidized buildings, or rooming houses.

Winnipeg has the highest proportion of urban Aboriginals in all of Canada with 68,380 of its residents identifying as Aboriginal (Statistics Canada, an increasingly urban population, 2008). Even in the early to mid 1990s, when the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was being carried out, as many Aboriginals lived in Winnipeg as in the entire North West Territories (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1996). Yet not only does Winnipeg have a large number of Aboriginals; it also has the highest national rate of Aboriginal residential segregation (Maxim, Keane and White 2003). In the 2006 census 25,485 people who lived in the inner city identified as being Aboriginal. In fact, 20.6 percent of Winnipeg inner city residents identified themselves as Aboriginals compared to 11.2 percent for the rest of the city (City of Winnipeg, 2006 census data: p. 5). Although there are demographic variations from one inner city neighbourhood to another, in this study the inner city is conceptualized as one geographical entity where, relative to the rest of the city, resources are low and social maladies such as alcohol use are high. It is also the area in the whole province of Manitoba with the highest spatial concentration of both Aboriginals, and, as will be discussed below, refugee newcomers.

Severe social and economic problems persist for the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg's inner city. One way to measure the socio economic condition of this community is to examine its

members' education levels. When this is done, the results are bleak. For instance, in 2001 in the province of Manitoba, the percentage of Aboriginals who were fifteen years of age and older and who had a university degree was only 4 percent, whereas it was 16 percent for the non Aboriginal population (Siggner 2003: 126). The lack of education imposes barriers for their work opportunities and leads to an unemployment rate that is far higher than that of non Aboriginals.

Issues that relate to income, education, and housing conditions are presentable through statistics, as shown above. Yet social isolation and alienation in urban settings are also crucial issues among Aboriginals in Winnipeg. Compounded with the perplexity of the city, there is the daily racism and discrimination that Aboriginals face (Silver 2004: 1). The combination of these factors has the effect of pushing some Aboriginal folks into crime, drugs, alcohol and the sex trade. Many Aboriginals who reside in cities experience a sense of isolation that is characterized by a lack of contact or sustained interactions with the individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society (as quoted in Norris and Clatworthy 2003:72). It is important to underscore, however, that while a large segment of Aboriginal People who live in the inner city is struggling, a growing middle class cohort of Aboriginals is settled in more suburban neighbourhoods, such as Windsor Park.

Refugees in Winnipeg's Inner City

Immigration to Manitoba is growing at an especially fast pace. The immigration system is complex and includes many categories under which persons can migrate. In 2006, while 73.4

percent of newcomers to Manitoba represented Economic Class immigrants as well as Provincial Nominees, a much smaller proportion of migrants 1,241 (12.3 percent) found their way to Winnipeg as refugees (Manitoba Labour and Immigration 2007: 2). Due to escalating geopolitical conflicts in Africa and a shift in immigration policy which calls for the resettlement of more ‘vulnerable refugees,’ Canada in general and Manitoba in particular, have accepted an increasing number of refugees from that region (Simbandumwe 2007: 7). From 1997-2006 close to 8,000 individuals originating from 44 different African countries came to Manitoba. The proportion of Africans who immigrated as refugees has increased from 47% in 1995 to a high of 82% in 2003.

In 2006 in Manitoba, the top five source countries for refugees, after Afghanistan, were Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council, “We Can and will do better...” :3). The 2001 census counted 3,280 black-skinned visible minority⁴ residents in the inner city (City of Winnipeg, 2001 census data: 5). This figure is presumed by community activists and residents to have increased exponentially. African community leaders, through extensive consultations, have estimated that the number of people from Africa residing in Winnipeg ranges from 11,000 to 15,000 (Simbandumwe 2007: 1).

⁴ Unfortunately, the Census does not disaggregate data to show the immigrant (refugee) category of inner city residents. However, it is safe to deduce that the majority of dark-skinned inner city residents are refugees to the province, since other waves of black immigrants who arrived to the province decades ago (particularly of Caribbean origin) have largely moved out of the inner city and settled in more affluent Winnipeg suburbs.

Refugees, who are privately sponsored to migrate to Canada, receive financial and social support by the individuals or organizations that have chosen to sponsor them. On the other hand, government sponsored refugees, under the Resettlement Assistance Program, get assistance from the federal government; this assistance is particularly low and tied to the Manitoba welfare payments (Treasury Board of Canada 2005). This means, to take an example, that a single refugee receives \$466 per month, including \$271 for shelter and \$195 – or about \$6.50 a day – for all other expenses (CBC, “Manitoba government urged”, 2007). The insufficient monetary allowances that refugees receive means that like Aboriginals who migrate to the city, they find *housing of last resort* in the core area of the city where rent prices are cheaper (Silver 2006). In this vein, a study in 2005 found that out of 907 refugee households, 75 percent of them were situated in the inner city (Madariaga-Vignudo and Miladinovska-Blazevska 2005).

Upon their arrival to Canada, refugees are highly dependent on settlement organizations. African refugees, most of whom have experienced traumatic events in their countries of origin, may not be accustomed to the ways in which fast paced and technologically driven Canadian society functions. Many African refugees, like their Aboriginal counterparts, have low educational levels. In fact, 90 percent of incoming African refugees to Manitoba from 2005-2007, had a “secondary or less” level of education (Citizenship and Immigration Canada – statistics Prepared by Manitoba Labour and Immigration). Upon landing in Winnipeg, refugees might lack adequate English language skills and also be unfamiliar with the Canadian housing, transportation and education systems. To facilitate their transition and adaptation into Canadian society, organizations in Winnipeg offer an array of settlement services, which include picking

refugees up at Winnipeg's international airport; facilitating medical checkups; finding schools and day care for children, and showing them how to administer bank accounts.

Winnipeg's inner city is undergoing a noticeable demographic transformation. The recent and substantial portion of refugees, who are settling into core area neighbourhoods, has visibly changed the ethnic make up of the area. The key is to better understand *how* newcomers and existing members of the inner city community relate to one another.

Part Four:

Methods and Ethical Considerations

This study gives social service providers, ethno cultural community leaders and inner city residents an opportunity to have their voices, concerns and experiences heard and documented; their candid views and feedback have been *very valuable*. In total, in depth, personal interviews were conducted with 27 respondents:

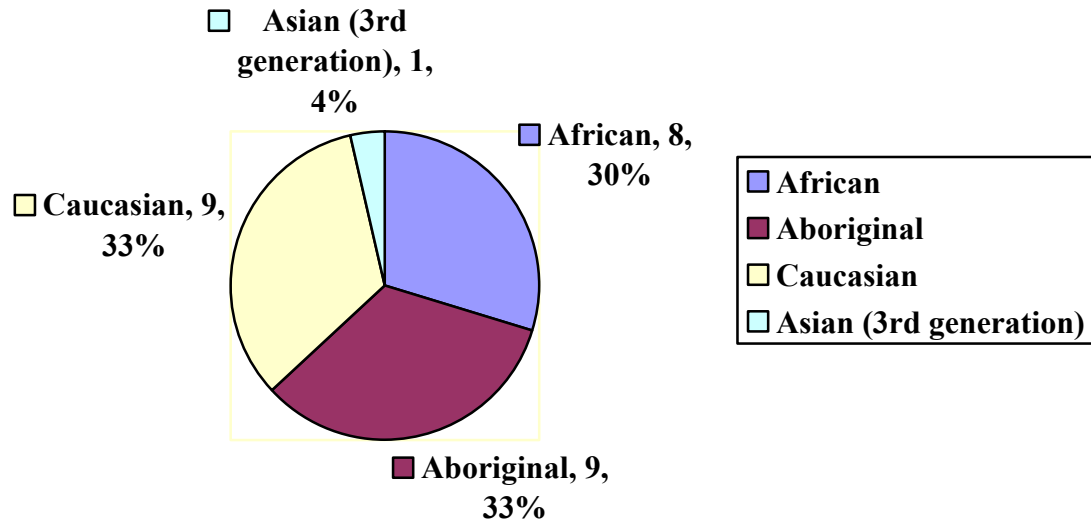
22 = Individual interviews

02 = Group interviews, for a total of 27 respondents.

To substantiate responses and ensure a wide range of perspectives, data was gathered from seven different categories of respondents:

- 13 social service providers working in inner city community agencies;
- 3 public servants, who worked for the Government of Manitoba, and who were responsible for funding and overseeing newcomer settlement policy;
- 2 community leaders, one from the Aboriginal community and the other from the African refugee community;
- 1 journalist;
- 1 inner city high school teacher;
- 4 Aboriginal inner city residents, and
- 3 African refugee inner city residents

The pie chart below shows the ethno-cultural breakdown of the 27 project participants:



This study involved three phases. In the first phase, I drew the names of service providers and community leaders from a database developed for the project called “Diaspora Communities in the Inner City of Winnipeg.” These individuals were carefully identified based on the work they had carried out within the inner city, as well as their involvement to newcomer and Aboriginal communities. I selected a diverse group of service providers and community leaders who held different professional backgrounds and levels of positions within organizations (i.e., not only executive directors of agencies but also front line staff, who had face-to-face interaction with inner city residents on a daily basis). This type of data triangulation offered a broader range of perspectives and increased the reliability of the research’s findings (Yin 2003: 98).

I interviewed service providers because I regard them as knowledgeable persons in the field of community relations. With this said, I am aware of the limitations that come with relying on

service providers as key informants. This is why I supplemented interviews with inner city residents. Due to their daily experience working with the two minority populations-in-question, service providers in this study proved to be information rich cases from which a significant amount of data was gained. Many of the service providers and community leaders had interacted, through the years, with hundreds of inner city residents. As such, they were able to offer valuable insights into what type of inter-minority group dynamics they had come across through their work. Service providers who spoke about their Native and/or refugee clients said that their clients had, on average, a few years of secondary education.

To complement the views of social service providers and community leaders, I also heard from seven adult refugees and Aboriginals who resided in Winnipeg's core area. To recruit inner city residents, I relied on the help of two research assistants, one who was Aboriginal and the other an African newcomer. To ensure that the interview questions posed to inner city residents were appropriately worded and culturally sensitive the two research assistants revised and offered feedback on the questionnaire before the interviews took place. After all the interview data was analyzed, two focus groups were conducted to validate the data and to offer project participants who had been interviewed on an individual basis an opportunity to react and add to the project's findings. Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on a draft version of this paper, before it was finalized.

No one person whom I contacted refused to be interviewed and the personal interviews were conducted from February 2008 - September 2008 in the respondents' area of preference. Out of

the 24 sit-down interviews, 14 were carried out in the University of Winnipeg, nine in respondents' workplaces and one in the home of an inner city resident.

The interviews, which lasted an average of one hour, were digitally recorded and later transcribed for enhanced analytical purposes. Two out of the twenty seven participants did not wish to be digitally recoded. Their request, of course, was respected. Respondents who were inner city residents were offered a \$25 honorarium for their participation. Social service providers and community leaders, who were gainfully employed in various agencies, did not receive an honorarium for their participation.

The project received approval from the *University of Winnipeg Senate Committee on Ethics in Human Research and Scholarship* on February 2008. All interviews were voluntary and signed consent forms were obtained from all participants. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, respondents were briefed on the aims of the study. Confidentiality was an essential component of this research project. The number of agencies that service refugees and/or Aboriginals in Winnipeg's inner city is not high compared to those of a larger Canadian city, such as Toronto or Vancouver. Even smaller is the number of helping professionals who are of African descent.⁵ Therefore, in order to better safeguard the confidentiality of those individuals who openly shared sensitive (and sometimes personal) information on inter-group misperceptions, I do not reveal the names of the agencies that they worked in. Furthermore, when I think it may be fairly obvious to decipher who a particular respondent is, I use he/she to characterize their gender.

⁵ So as to avoid redundancy, I use the terms "services provider" and "helping professional" interchangeably.

While this study adds much needed knowledge to our understanding of inter-minority relations, it does so with limitations. Considering that the research is based on a small sample of respondents in the inner city, the findings cannot be generalized to the greater immigrant and Aboriginal community in Winnipeg or to other Canadian provinces. The study is largely based on the views of service providers and the fact that there were three African and four Aboriginal residents who were interviewed means that the findings *cannot* be generalized to represent the direct views of inner city residents. Likewise, the findings do not represent the experiences and opinions of the *varied* groups of newcomers and Aboriginals. Although results should not be considered exhaustive, this study provides a preliminary view of inter-minority relations in Winnipeg's inner city, and suggests improvements to policies and programs.

Part Five

Theme One: Lack of Knowledge About the ‘Other’ Group

Stereotypes stem from ignorance and oversimplified beliefs (Hoffman 2006: 4). When in group members⁶ have little information about the out group, they tend to perceive out group members as threatening (Stephan and Stephan 2000). One significant finding of this study is that African refugees and Aboriginals who live in Winnipeg’s inner city know very little about one another, and the limited information that they have of each other is oversimplified and erroneous. Some service providers and African respondents said that before migrating to Canada, African refugees were completely uninformed about Aboriginals. Other African respondents, as well as Aboriginal and newcomer community leaders revealed that the information refugees had about Natives before coming to Canada was based on old Hollywood ‘Westerns’ and novels, as well as the opinions of visa officers abroad. However, these sources of information prove to be imprecise; they fail to depict who urban Aboriginals in the 21st century really are. For example, one Native community leader commented:

But what happens here is that...and we know this because we’ve talked to many, many people...they come here and [their] experience starts with what little they know of Indigenous People...watching old Western flicks...they would have gotten the whole

⁶ An in-group is defined as the clique of people with whom an individual identifies. In-groups, such as African refugees, compare themselves to referent out-groups, such as Aboriginals (Mueller et al., 1999: 190). On the notion of in-groups, Gordon Allport [1954] wrote: “perhaps the best that can be done is to say that members of an in-group all use the term *we* with the same essential significance” (Allport 1954: 31).

cowboys and Indian [model] where the Indians were always the savages and of course the cavalry were always the wonderful heroes of the day...and maybe other forms of literature and books and what not...so that racist ideology from a couple of decades back still [has] some currency.

Native Community Leader

Visa officers working abroad may also transmit a downbeat depiction of Aboriginals to African migrants. One public servant working in the immigration field in Manitoba said: “they may hear stuff from the visa officers... ‘Why would you go to Winnipeg? There’s all the Indians there.’” Therefore, when refugees land in Winnipeg they can have old fashioned and distorted conceptions of the Aboriginal community in Canada. The words of one journalist, who worked with newcomer youth, are illustrative:

Some have this stereotypical image of what an Aboriginal person is that they see in books or movies...A few of the young people [whom I interviewed for a journalistic project] said they were excited about finally meeting an Aboriginal person because they knew in Winnipeg we had an Aboriginal population and they were looking forward to meeting, you know, these Aboriginal people. And now when they came, it wasn’t quite what they were expecting. They were expecting traditional regalia or the western type of imagery of an Aboriginal person.

Upon landing and settling in Winnipeg, refugees' inaccurate (and sometimes romanticized) perceptions of Aboriginals are dispelled, as they encounter modern dressed Native persons living in the same neighbourhood as them:

When they arrived here, it was just, you know, Aboriginal persons just like you know, a white person, a black person, we're all the same you know. Everybody sort of dresses the same; everybody lives in the same area. So that was a *little bit of a let down for them because they were expecting something more...* [Emphasis mine]

**Local journalist who worked on a long-term project
with Inner City Youth**

According to one African interviewee, newcomers become perplexed by the widespread poverty that they observe in their new host neighbourhoods; their romanticized conception of Indigenous Peoples in Canada is quickly shattered. One female inner city resident, who migrated from Africa, commented: "The first time I saw them, they were in the street...drunk." Moreover, a male African service provider revealed:

And they [Aboriginals] live in harmony; that's all they [newcomers] know. That is outside propaganda. It's like, that's how they tend to present to them, but when they arrive here, they say: 'why these [Native] people are in the street?'

African Service Provider

For newly arrived newcomers, mouth-to-mouth conversations are more influential means to gather information than television and the print media. In fact, during their first weeks and months in Winnipeg, refugee newcomers are warned about Aboriginals by co-ethnics who have arrived to Canada earlier, as well as by mainstream Canadians. Newcomers hear negative accounts of Aboriginals and see first hand the destitution of Natives who are concentrated in the inner city. A process takes place whereby newcomers begin to associate the behaviour they see on the street (e.g., drinking, homelessness and prostitution) as inherent to the Aboriginal community. According to service providers, as well as African and Aboriginal community leaders, this study revealed that refugees' perception of Aboriginals in Canada changed from a neutral or idealized one prior to migration into a negative one after migration. It is important to underscore, however, that due to their lack of knowledge about oppressive historical relations, recently arrived refugees fail to realize that Aboriginal distress in the inner city is largely a product of what the dominant Canadian culture has caused through colonization (Silver and Ghorayshi 2006).

Aboriginals who live in the inner city also have very limited knowledge about refugees in Canada. Again and again, I was told by all categories of respondents that the majority of Native inner city residents are unaware of what it means to be a refugee, nor the reasons *why* refugees migrate to Canada, such as ethnic related persecution. Regarding the experience of being exiled, one study participant said of her Aboriginal clients: "I think they know very little." Another service provider admitted, "No, I don't think they would know...I don't think many...actually know that refugees are not here by choice; [that] they had to flee their country." Further confirming this trend, an inner city resident who came to Manitoba as a refugee said: "They

[Aboriginals] don't have a clue about [what it means to be a refugee]." As is the case for refugee newcomers, Aboriginals' low educational levels and their lack of opportunity to learn about the immigration system leads them to be unaware of the life experiences of their new neighbours. One Aboriginal community leader declared: "I think that there's very little information...the education system is pushing out about half of our [Aboriginal] children a year, eh? And these [children] are being pushed out...on the streets...and so...they know very little about the African experience." Yet, unlike recently arrived refugees who tend to lack English language skills, Aboriginals acquire information about newcomers and dark skinned people in general through what they watch on television.

Part Five

Theme Two: Inter-Group Misperceptions

Refugees' Perceptions of Aboriginals

Despite the fact that Aboriginals and refugee newcomers share neighbourhood spaces and housing complexes, this study revealed a severe lack of knowledge about each other. This unawareness, coupled with impersonal street level interactions, leads group members to form misperceptions about each other. During interviews, I heard from African and Aboriginal community leaders, as well as service providers and inner city residents that recently arrived newcomers often form negative beliefs about Aboriginals living in core area neighbourhoods. Native people are characterized as not working hard enough, not paying taxes, over drinking, and being exceedingly dependent on welfare. In this light an African community worker revealed the unconstructive ways that his/her refugee clients perceive Aboriginals. He/she went on to say:

And [newcomer] communities, they just label the Native people with a mean name, as a group; they call them different names which I just don't want to say [laughs]. Ah, so even the immigrants, some are very biased. I mean because they learn this...you can hear... 'this lady bum,' 'they are useless people' from mainstream society; you hear a lot of things. They say: 'this lady, this Indian; they don't do anything; they're on welfare.'

Silver and Ghorayshi have written that in Canada, Natives have been construed as the ‘other.’ The assumption that they are inferior has become “woven into the dominant culture’s belief system and is, whether consciously or not, now a deeply embedded part of mainstream Canada’s worldview” (Silver and Ghorayshi 2006: 15). According to the service providers who were interviewed, refugees, upon their arrival in Winnipeg, quickly pick up the same stereotypes that pockets of the mainstream population hold towards Aboriginals. This pattern was acknowledged not only by policy makers and service providers working with refugees, but by Aboriginal respondents as well. Instead of taking into account the structural and oppressive history that Aboriginals have been subjected to for over 150 years, Aboriginals themselves are held responsible for their own poverty. Their moral disposition and culture, as Peter S. Li has written “become the sources of their misfortunes” (1999 p: 4).

When an African community leader was asked about newcomers’ perceptions of Aboriginals, he replied: “I guess, to answer your question, their perception is always negative and their idea is: ‘look at these [Native] people; they don’t work; they don’t do nothing; look at this; look at that.’” Going into more depth, another person who worked with refugees on a daily basis disclosed the following about his/her clients:

[T]hey don’t see them as worthy or people who are productive, as part of the community...they hear every time that these are the scum of society who just depend on welfare and who do not work they think that Aboriginals are useless people, lazy people, who don’t like to do any work; they don’t go to school, they are drunk and so

they live on taxes and I'm better than that; I work I contribute, I go to school, or my children go to school...

African Social Service Provider

The views of refugee newcomers above are associated with a “blaming the victim” discourse, whereby “lack of success is often attributed to a group’s cultural deficiencies, such as insufficient motivation, education, or skills” (Malhi and Boon 2007: 129). Refugee newcomers’ views of Aboriginals mirror the way Hispanic migrants have been found to view African Americans in the United States. One American study, based in North Carolina, concluded that African Americans’ lack of success was interpreted by Hispanic immigrants in individual and cultural terms, as a lack of work ethic and a dependence on government subsidies (Marrow 2005).

Another widely held perception by many refugee newcomers is that although Aboriginals have many opportunities to succeed in Canadian society, they do not take advantage of them. For example, when an African inner city resident spoke about the types of remarks that he and his African friends made when talking about Native people in private, he replied:

[We talk about] the kinds of opportunities that they could be taking advantage of...ways that they could try to improve themselves ... some of the issues we discuss sometimes is ... they have so much opportunities, you know, they could really improve their lives, but

you know ... I hear stories ... if they go to school, they don't have to pay tuition,⁷ they don't ... there's so many of those opportunities, I'm thinking: well, If I could go to

school for free, that's what I'd do.

African Inner City Resident (University Student)

The views of Aboriginals that are expressed above derive, in part, from the lack of knowledge that newcomers have about Canadian history. Misperceptions also derive from the fact that refugee newcomers are vulnerable members of Winnipeg's inner city who, having recently been transplanted from Africa to Manitoba, Canada are trying to make sense of the social realities of their new milieu. Not only are refugees foreigners in Canada; they are also residents of Winnipeg's inner city, an area that, when compared to other parts of the city, has higher rates of crime, poverty, and related social ills:

Most [refugees], they have good idea about Canada and ... whatever they heard through orientation, other things: that it's a beautiful country, it's nice people, and when they come here and they see the people and the divisions of society, and when they see that

⁷ This, in itself, is an erroneous perception. Aboriginals who are Inuit or Métis do not qualify to receive funding for post-secondary education; only Aboriginals who are Status Indians are eligible, but even this option is limited to some and not all First Nations individuals. The federal department of Indian and Northern Affairs sends money to Indian bands, which then decide on the *select* number of residents living on the reserve who can be financed to attend a post-secondary educational institution in the city.

part of Canadian community is being oppressed or forgotten ... they just lose hope or they think twice; they think [of] what their fate may be in Canada as new immigrants, as a new group. So Canada, which treated the Native People for years in such an inhuman way ... they [refugees] think twice, they ask: 'What will happen [to us]? What will be my role? What will be my fate in this country?'

African Service Provider

Similarly, an African community leader articulated the shock of newcomers upon witnessing Aboriginal-mainstream disparity in Winnipeg:

When you come from other countries, you are coming to the level so superior in every aspect and you don't expect to see people in the lowest status or ... so when they see: 'well, why like this? Why people are asking [for change on the streets]?' They kind of [get] shocked and they ask ... nobody thinks that when you come to Canada, there's persons who doesn't have enough money to fly to any part of the world in a couple of days, or to go for holidays, all that ... but when they come, they see people asking for little money and they are very poor: 'why?' They ask ... and then they don't have the resources to understand what really historically happened to have certain numbers of people to be in that situation. So they judge.

While considerable numbers of refugee newcomers appear to have negative views towards Aboriginals, it is important to note that not all reactions towards Aboriginals are negative; a more

positive (or mixed) view of Natives is expressed when refugees question *why* Aboriginals are in the deprived position that they are in, and are shocked to realize that Canada – a country that they perceived as ‘heaven on earth’ would allow a segment of its population to live in this way. For example,

There is also those [refugees] who are really conscious of the ... you know who went through the oppression in their ... being colonized in their country or who lived under dictatorships, they understand and say, ‘Why? Who are they? What happened?’ I mean those who were involved with drugs or who were persecuted, they really feel about it, what’s happening to these people, to the Aboriginal People.

African Service Provider

One African inner city resident put himself in the shoes of an Aboriginal. The fact that at the time of the interview, he had been living in Canada since 1999 and been immersed in a university setting for three years, could have meant that he had time to learn and reflect about Aboriginal issues. Through his statement, he illustrated a deeper understanding of the psychological internalization of inferiority (imposed by European colonization) that prevents many Aboriginals from succeeding in life (Silver and Ghorayshi 2006: 15):

Aboriginals ... have internalized those things that people are perceiving about them ... I may not do them justice but let me try to put myself in their shoes for a bit ... when you don’t have a job, you’ve been in a juvi [juvenile facility] for a few times, and that is now used against you every time you have to go find a job. You haven’t really ... you didn’t

come up in a model family setting, cause you were either with your mom, with no father figure around or the mother had multiple partners all over the place. Your mom drinks and passes out; does not pay much attention to you. But then when you go outside the house, you get even more of the same. And that tends to create a cycle, because you don't know how to get out of it; nobody's ever shown you a way of 'OK this is the proper system of what you should be as a family or as an adolescent growing up' ... so you look into other ways ... to get out of that and usually that is either getting drunk or using drugs.

African Inner City Resident
University Student

Therefore, while misperceptions about Aboriginals appear to be common amongst refugee newcomers, exceptions occur and, as illustrated above, intuitive and discerning accounts of Aboriginal distressed are sometimes offered.

Aboriginals' Perceptions of Refugees

Interview responses revealed a mixed picture of how Aboriginals living in the inner city perceive newcomer refugees. Some service providers who were interviewed indicated that their Aboriginal clients held a sympathetic view of refugees, since they could identify with them as visible minorities; others maintained that Aboriginals felt a sense of competition with newcomers over scarce resources. The remaining respondents noted that it was too soon to tell how

Aboriginals felt about African refugees, given the latter's recent arrival to and concentration in Winnipeg's inner city.

Positive perceptions of African refugees are not uncommon among Aboriginal inner city residents. One Caucasian service provider disclosed an incident where an Aboriginal client who had led a difficult life in Manitoba compassionately acknowledged the hardship of Africans from war-affected countries. The Native client's words emit a sense of sympathy and understanding:

... and one of the moms [a client of mine] who is just bright and lovely, and she was part of the Scoop of the 60's⁸ and went through a lot and also realized that she was Fetal Alcohol [Syndrome], which challenged her chances ... she said: 'we [Natives] always feel we never fit in; imagine how they [refugees] feel ... '

Caucasian Service Provider

Interviews with African inner city residents revealed that Natives identify with them, and that there is a degree of solidarity with newcomers, particularly towards refugees who are dark skinned. This stands in contrast to the Euro-Canadian population and the state, towards which Natives appear to hold anger and resentment for past and current injustices. A couple of quotes from inner city residents revealed these points. One African inner city resident indicated,

⁸ The '1960's Scoop' refers to an era where thousands of Aboriginal children were unilaterally taken from their communities and placed in non-Aboriginal homes as wards of the state. This government-sanctioned policy had a very negative effect on Aboriginal children, families and communities.

My impression [is] that they're very friendly to me, more so because I think they identify with ... they understand that I'm a minority and maybe that creates a level of 'OK we're sort of one and the same: we're in the same box-type-of-thing.'

Another African inner city resident spoke about an encounter that he had with an Aboriginal person in the Central Park inner city neighbourhood:

There was one time I was sitting with some friends ... and then [these] Aboriginal guys ... came and gave me a fist [similar to a 'high five' gesture] ... and [one] asked me: 'do you like white people?' I said: 'I've got no problem with them.' I did not want to choose yes or no. And he [the Aboriginal man] says: 'I hate them. But you are my brother.' And he does the fist again. So that one is a signal that ... there is nothing between them and the immigrants ... they have no room to think of immigrants: they are carrying this thing [resentment] against the mainstream.

And yet another inner city resident – of Aboriginal descent - said:

I think the Aboriginals give the refugees and the immigrants a lot better chance than the mainstream. I think that in the meetings that I've had or sat in with different colours, I think that the Aboriginal has a tendency to feel for the newcomers and their racism. And I think they easily become friends with them faster than the mainstream.

Repeatedly, study participants who were Native showed frustration towards the dominant group in society regarding the unjust treatment they continue to receive from the Canadian public and its governing institutions. One Aboriginal community leader expressed how the white Canadian ‘settler population’ was responsible for creating Aboriginal despair:

They’re [members of the mainstream society] always trying to help the Indian in terms of ... it’s everywhere, it’s inherent in western superiority, this kind of need, this kind of freaking need: can’t help themselves, but they need to change other people, eh? ... they get to do the programming on Indigenous people and on refugee populations. They get to do their mojo on us and they get to study us, examine us, probe us; that kind of stuff. They get to be our saviours: [sarcastically] they’re wonderful.

Aboriginal Community Leader

What I found, which is often not reflected in the literature is that instead of fostering negative attitudes towards refugee minorities, the process of immigration appears to fortify Aboriginals’ negative feelings towards the mainstream. Aboriginals realize that it is the dominant group that holds the policy making power which determines how many and which kinds of people enter Canada as immigrants. The interview data suggests that the aim of the Aboriginal community is not to halt immigration to the province. Instead, Aboriginals wish to be better informed, consulted, and included in policy making processes. They may feel, as one respondent did, that mainstream bureaucrats are making immigration decisions without consulting them. As the *First*

Nations of Canada, Natives feel it is their right to be informed and involved in shaping public policies, including ones related to immigration:

Aboriginal people are not consulted ... so I think a lot of work has to be done, I think, for Aboriginal people to understand Canada's immigration policy, and for Aboriginals to be a part of it, 'cause ... Aboriginal People are not a part of that process. You know, these are federal and provincial government policies ... Aboriginal People should be included in that process.

Aboriginal Service Provider

Native resentment appears to be more directed towards the mainstream population and the state than newcomers. However, it is important to note that even when feelings of sympathy towards African refugees exist among Aboriginal inner city residents, so does the perception that they are taking away valuable and scarce resources. In this light, refugees are regarded as competitors. This finding lends credence to the Realistic Group Conflict Theory, which posits that group antagonism arises from competition over access to tangible yet limited economic, political and social resources, such as housing, territory, jobs and government services (Esses et al., 2001; McLaren 2003; Insko 1992; Quillian 1995). One Aboriginal inner city resident, for example, communicated his perception of how newcomers are the beneficiaries of state attention:

I hate to say this but I feel they're getting better treated than we are...especially the Native people: we've been here a long time. One day I went to the welfare office; how

come I don't see them at the welfare lines? So they must be getting extra funding or somebody's looking after them. I don't know what it is. *So there's something in between there, where they're getting money or they're paying them ... something economically going in between there, right?* That's the way I look at it, cause you don't see them pan handling. You don't see them worried, you know. They're being looked after. And so yeah, I get kind of ... angry about that. I mean if I went to their country, I don't think I'd be treated like that. And I think the Native people are feeling cheated again because the immigrants are being treated more fairly and they're being ... doors are more open for them ... for us, there's always doors being closed ... we've been here all our lives and our grandfathers and everything. So I really can't say that if we all met at the airport [we'd say]: 'OK welcome!' [Laughs] [emphasis mine].

Aboriginal Male Inner City Resident

Employment is one distinct area where Aboriginals seem to perceive competition vis-à-vis refugees. One Native community leader who was interviewed said that "Indian people think that these people [newcomers] are coming in to steal their jobs." This complaint echoes the one found in Houston, Texas, where African Americans believed Hispanics were taking away their jobs (Mindiola et al., 2002: 33). Yet more important than the perception that newcomers are stealing jobs is the belief that they are taking away limited subsidized housing spots in the inner city and in doing so, displacing Aboriginals who have been residing in the area for decades. In Winnipeg, public subsidized housing, which is an affordable and stable option for low income people, makes up a very small proportion of the overall housing stock. The scarcity of public housing

units coupled with the increasing presence of black refugees exacerbates the perception amongst Aboriginals that newcomers are competitors. The comments of one Caucasian bureaucrat working in the provincial department of immigration are illustrative:

Many of these *Manitoba Housing* [buildings] in the inner city would have been almost fairly Aboriginal ... not exclusively, but pretty close. But now we have in the last few years more Africans coming in. So when the African families are large, often single moms, husband killed or disappeared, where are they moving? Into Manitoba Housing, which has almost been completely Aboriginal ... So right away [Aboriginals say:] ‘These are our places ... This is my space ... I don’t have anything to start with and now you’re pushing me out of here?’

Caucasian Public Servant

Another Caucasian helping professional adds to this pattern, by saying:

You know, feeling like they’re [newcomers] taking their [Aboriginals’] spots and that sort of thing. And housing ... and housing ’cause, you know, when the housing is not ... people are on waiting lists and people [Aboriginals] want to stay in the inner city, cause it’s easier for them to live and this is where they’ve always lived.

Caucasian Service Provider

Family Drop in Agency

Besides perceiving competition over subsidized housing spots, interview data point to competition between Aboriginal and African street gangs over ‘turf’ or territory. This type of rivalry often results in criminal activities; yet, it persists among only a *minority* of Aboriginal and African teenagers and young adults. Members of youth street gangs defend what they consider to be their turf, primarily to facilitate drug dealing. Each group has a definite turf, which they claim as their own (Mellor et al., 2005). While respondents acknowledged competition over gang turf, they had little in depth knowledge on this topic. Thus, we did not gather enough evidence about gangs to make confident research claims.

The overall scenario is one where Aboriginals and refugees have mixed perceptions of one another. Although I detected examples of inter-group sympathy and understanding, I found that misperceptions are common, and often induced by the impersonal interactions that transpire between uninformed group members.

Part Five

Theme Three: Inter-Group Interactions in Winnipeg's Inner City

Impersonal Interactions in Public Settings

Infrequent and impersonal interactions take place among the majority of refugee newcomers and Aboriginals in the inner city of Winnipeg. Generally, contact is fleeting and transpires in public places, such as inner city parks and shopping malls. Respondents did not cite workplaces as settings where members of both minority groups interacted. Taking into account the fact that recently arrived refugees do not generally participate in the paid labour force during their first couple of years in Canada, this finding is not surprising. In inner city parks and shopping malls, group members tend to “tolerate each other’s presence.” Yet, tolerance does not signify the absence of inter-group apprehension:

I think they just, for most of the interactions, it’s very distant; they [newcomers] just sort of stay away from them [Aboriginals]. For most of our clients, I think it is difficult because it’s that fear of the unknown and how they [Aboriginals are] going to react.

Third Generation Asian Service Provider

The same pattern was articulated by another respondent, this time an Aboriginal service provider:

I think it's that people are still segregated in their silos; I don't think there is much cross interaction between groups ... People are giving each other the space, right, in an urban setting ... they share the space; I don't think they integrate ... I think people just don't see each other; like they just ignore ... they don't acknowledge the other person, right?

Aboriginal Service Provider

Contact Theory contends that if group members have limited contact in situations that are uncomfortable, then inter-group anxiety should be closely related to prejudice (Stephan et al. 1998). Encounters between Aboriginals and refugees reinforce stereotypes, since the Aboriginals that refugees come into contact with are poor and sometimes under the influence of alcohol. One Caucasian key informant said: "Often their [newcomers'] first experience of Aboriginal People, are [with] street people." Another respondent, an African community leader, expressed:

Well, what you see is what you get. The first thing they see about Aboriginals are not ... they don't see the professional Aboriginal People ... Aboriginal People today, they [are] ... judges and lawyers, all other professionals, but the immigrants that walk around downtown, they don't see those people. So their understanding of Aboriginals is based on

few people who have been in a situation where they are not working or [are] staying in an undesirable story ...

Determinants of Distant Relations

The misperceptions that refugees hold about Aboriginals (e.g., that Aboriginals are lazy and reluctant to work) are confirmed through street level interactions. African refugees and Aboriginals live in a shared geographic area, yet they maintain social distance. In addition to the lack of knowledge about the other group discussed earlier on in this paper, an obvious factor leading to distant group relations relates to language. In Winnipeg's inner city, communication is limited by a lack of English language skills among refugee newcomers and (to a lesser degree) among Aboriginals whose first language can be Cree or Ojibwa, for example. Consequently, minimal dialogue occurs between members of both groups. In one of the focus groups held, however, one refugee participant expressed that even more important than language barrier is the *lack of trust* among group members.

The frigid climate in Manitoba constitutes another determinant of distant relations. During the winter months, people stay indoors and refrain from spending time outside. One project participant said: "and you see it [contact among groups] a lot more in the spring, in the summer [and] in the fall of course, because in the winter they can't ... It's too cold to be out, so you're not sure where they are."

Social services in Winnipeg are fragmented along group lines, representing an important reason why community relations are distant. Refugee newcomers and Aboriginals have a tendency to participate in separate community based organizations; agencies make available or inadvertently advertise their services to either newcomers *or* Aboriginals. This segmentation is largely structural, resulting from the fact that community workers are often compelled to direct their proposals to departments whose mandate is to service one minority group and not the other. Two of this study's respondents revealed that if their funding proposals included the intention to service clients from both ethno-racial communities, the likelihood that they would be successful in attaining funds would be reduced. This type of funding mechanism is "a political strategy designed not necessarily to solve problems, but rather to manage them ..." (Silver and Ghorayshi 2006: 43). One Caucasian respondent, working at a women's resource centre admitted that:

A lot of programs, I think, focus on newcomers, which is great, but at the same time it doesn't really [integrate them] into society; it sort of keeps that label of newcomers *and if you don't have that label you may not get funded or the focus of your program may change, and that's not necessarily what people want ... so they [government officials] sort of keep everything separate rather than integrating people together*, which is ... hopefully would be the end goal [emphasis mine].

Fundamentally, this model of funding fragments service delivery and hinders the bridging of relations among inner city community members. However, it is not only inner city folks who are

detached from one another; at a macro level, government departments, like inner city residents, exist in isolation from one another. One Caucasian bureaucrat candidly admitted:

[A]nd I wouldn't say this to everyone ... but there was a point when I started doing this [community] work ... they [my superiors] told us not to go near the Aboriginal community; keep it totally separate, because they didn't want to get into conflict.

Exceptions to the general lack of interaction occur. Through interviews I learned about sexualized street relations between single African men and poor Aboriginal women. Here, sex functions as a connecting point between small pockets of community members:

People might say there is a good relationship with Aboriginal People in other communities ... there is no connection ... there is a gap really. *I mean there could be connection between young guys who are preying on young girls* ... they get along you know ... hang around Portage [Place] because of the interest ... they do have common interests [girls from the other community] that kind of ... apart from that, at the community level ... [emphasis mine].

African Service Provider

Another professional working with refugees on a daily basis said:

We've had had a lot of prostitutes. We used to have apartments here upstairs, and so they would know exactly that our clients were arriving ... however they found out, I'm not sure ... but they would sort of be very friendly to, especially the male clients ... and so it was positive that way because our clients would think: 'oh all these Aboriginal women are friendly and they want to be with us!' and all that kind of stuff, so we've had to go in and sort of explain that: no this is not the way they want to be; this is a certain part of society ... these are prostitutes, and eventually they're gonna want money for being friendly to you and stuff ... but I mean that's just a very small ...

Third Generation Asian Service Provider

Unlike the two quotes above, an Aboriginal community leader speak of the way Aboriginal women are exploited and taken advantage of by newcomer men:

There's ... horrendous sexual exploitation ... It's very big in this city, around ... I mean these are children that these men are exploiting because they recognize that Canada is still fundamentally indifferent to Indigenous populations and they can get away with it, and they are! There's been some prosecution but there's lots and lots of stories that we hear about newcomer communities ... they see the most vulnerable population ... and

they see that not a lot of ... there's not a lot of repercussions with it ... there's a belief that they can get away with it.

Conscious of how gender, ethnicity and class intersect to dis-empower Native women, the same Native community leader articulates:

Our girls are the lowest of the lowest; the most disempowered people in the community because they're young, they're Aboriginal, they're female and they're Indigenous, right? So they have all those layers? They're completely powerless.

If encounters do not lead to members learning about other group's similarly unjust experiences, stereotypes are likely to prevail, since "ignorance promotes prejudice" (Dovidio et al. 2003: 10). The finding that Aboriginals and African refugees residing in Winnipeg's inner city, for the most part, have impersonal, infrequent (or in some cases exploitative sexual encounters) suggests that group members are not afforded the opportunity to alter their mixed opinions of one another.

Cases of Positive Connections: Service Providers as Social Cohesion Brokers

On the few occasions where Aboriginals and refugee newcomers were able to associate by attending programs in community organizations, relations among them improved. This finding lends support to Contact Theory's general proposition that interactions in safe, organized and cooperative settings, over time, helps disconfirm stereotypes. One Caucasian community worker, who ran parenting workshops for inner city residents, took the time to get to know each one of

her clients. As a leader of the program, she highlighted and celebrated the similarities in the way Aboriginal and African mothers raised their children. As a result, positive interactions between the program participants were fostered:

I remember the mom from the Congo one time, how she always strapped the baby [with a cloth] around the [back] and would come in every morning with the baby sleeping; and a couple of the [Aboriginal] moms would mimic her to show how they did it because they were trying to explain to her that Aboriginals would tie their babies [in a like manner] ... I ran and got all these big scarves and she was teaching them how to ... it was so cute! We were all standing at the door learning how to tie it [with] no English, and laughing ... it was beautiful, just beautiful ... those are the moments that are...you know, those are the seeds that will bring us ... and that's why I think [community] centres ... programs like that are so, so important.

Similarly, another Caucasian service provider noted how motherhood can bring members of both groups together:

... they can see [that] *all two years olds have tantrums* or things like that, you know; where it doesn't matter if you're Aboriginal or newcomer or anybody; you're a mother and so that can hook you up [emphasis mine]

According to Contact Theory, if contact is to increase empathy and understanding, there must be a sense of equality among community members. This case study revealed that community workers, such as the one below, can act as leaders to promote equality and communication, and to take a hard stance against discrimination (Dovidio et al., 2003: 7):

I remember when I hired a woman from Ghana and oh some of the [Aboriginal] participants were mean to her and they basically told her that she wasn't wanted here [at the parenting centre] ... and I had to do a lot of work and sit there and say: 'No, this is bullshit, and if you're going to treat people like that, you can't come here anymore ...' It's like: 'Have you gotten to know that person? Have you talked to that person?'

Caucasian Service Provider
Executive Director of a Family-Drop in Centre

Service providers and teachers have a unique and important role when it comes to improving inter-minority relations; they can make an effort to connect clients by deliberately highlighting the similarities that group members share. A positive psychological space is created by a trusted leader in a neutral physical setting (Chupp 2003: 191). While this takes time, the results are positive and inter-group anxiety is mitigated:

... what I find is disenfranchised groups not identifying that they're in the same situation ... they can't and aren't at this point, in my opinion, connecting their reality ... so I feel

that part of my job is to sit there and say: ‘Don’t you think there’s similarities with what you’re experiencing?’ So we’ve talked about social assistance [welfare] and how ... it doesn’t work! ‘Nobody’s getting a free ride here! Do you guys think you’re getting a free ride?’ And then they start talking ... when they start talking they’re like: ‘Yeah, they really treated me shitty and I thought it was just about me.’ And then they can start connecting.

Caucasian Service Provider

Family Drop-in Centre

Service providers and teachers have the potential to teach their clients or students about the experiences of the “other” group. One Caucasian service provider who was interviewed explained how at her family drop-in agency, learning is facilitated through maps and informal discussions amongst clients:

Like even at our centre, you know, we try to talk if something’s happening or what country they’re from; we’ll get out a map and look and chat what was happening in that country and what [were] the root causes [of refugee flows] and try to talk about it, to help people understand. They’re not here to ... for a good time; they’re here for survival.

Caucasian Service Provider

Generally, the prerequisites for the development of positive group relations (as specified by Contact Theory) are lacking in the types of interactions between African newcomers and Aboriginals in Winnipeg's inner city. Rather than being positive, personal and consistent, contact between group members tends to be superficial, fleeting, non verbal, and/or exploitative. Despite distant inter-minority relations, on the rare occasions when Aboriginals and refugees associate by attending programs run by community organizations, relations among them appear to improve. The next section proposes program and policy recommendations to enhance relations and foster a more accepting and multicultural environment among Aboriginals and 'new Canadians.'

Part Six:

Recommendations to Bridge Relations

Already, innovative projects to enhance community connections have taken root in the inner city of Winnipeg. A few agencies, for example, have begun to offer Aboriginal awareness workshops for newly arrived newcomers. In one high school, a teacher has initiated a widely successful storytelling program which brings African and Aboriginal youth together. And another community organization has developed booklets to teach newcomers about Aboriginal issues. Despite these and other commendable initiatives, more work could be carried out to make certain that programs reach a wider range of community members.

Recommendation # 1: Increase Support towards Community Based Organizations: Recreational Activities Work!

This study's findings lend support to programs run by community based organizations that are designed to bring refugees and Aboriginals into contact, in safe and structured settings. Service providers working in various agencies can expose members of one ethno-racial group to *new and accurate information* about the 'other group' helping to disconfirm stereotypes and to develop more favourable out-group views (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Dovidio et al., 2003).

Information sharing can be achieved through inner city residents' participation in recreational activities, such as craft and cooking programs, soccer games, and African-Aboriginal drumming

workshops. One Caucasian service provider articulated what her vision of a successful program to bridge relations would look like:

Well, I guess ... with something as easy as our craft program: it's putting women together in the same room with ... some supports like food and child care and having them participate ... you know ... where language isn't a major thing ... and in an environment [where] they can smile at each other, they can pass things to each other, they can get to know each other; so really entry level stuff.

Another Caucasian service provider excitedly spoke about how shopping for food and preparing meals can bring people of any culture together:

... shopping is a good way of bridging ... 'cause if you have different cultures, they look at what each other buys and they get chatting about it ... and what you eat and how you eat [it] and if you don't eat meat, what do you eat instead of meat? And so I ... always find food is a great conversation place of learning about each other ... we have a cooking class every Friday morning, and we try to put mixtures of people in there ... food is the best [laughs]. I think there's something deep rooted in all of us cause we need food and we love food ... like you know, you make a nice curry chicken and everybody's in to taste it ... 'cause you can smell it ... what a wonderful way to bring people together.

Recommendation # 2: Fund a Full-Time Community Liaison to Increase Participation in Community Based Organizations

To ensure that recreational programs are well attended, helping professionals stressed that Aboriginals and refugee newcomers need to be *personally* invited by community organizers to participate. According to respondents, putting up posters or mailing community newsletters advertising programs are not effective means to entice new clients to join in the activities; this view is consistent with Silver's [2004] study, which determined that getting inner city residents involved in local activities was always a concern for service providers. The Aboriginal participants in Silver's study claimed that they did not get involved in local activities because they "had never been personally invited...and they considered anything other than a personal invitation not to be an invitation" (Silver 2004:11). Yet, service providers in Winnipeg's inner city are already overworked and do not have enough time during their work days to extend personal invitations to inner city residents. Government funds could be earmarked to hire a full-time community liaison who can spend time connecting with people and personally inviting them to take part in various activities. Two Caucasian service providers who were interviewed for this study supported this initiative:

Respondent X: [We need] more support ... for someone, you know, in our community to be going around and inviting people, telling them about things that are going on ... visiting ... give more of that information ... If they get an invitation to come then they will ... they all start coming.

Respondent Y: And they'll bring their friends ... so it's that alternative way of getting them here versus just assuming they're gonna come. Like, I noticed a big difference for workshops if someone calls them and says: 'we're having this workshop; please come.'

During one focus group, a participant who migrated from Southern Europe to Canada decades ago, revealed how the lack of outreach by a North End community recreation centre meant that African newcomers did not get involved:

Most of the people from that area for a long time were Aboriginal. A lot of the programs there were targeted to Aboriginals, which is fine. But now we have a lot of people from different backgrounds ... families that are from Africa. And they're not necessarily ... there's a community centre across from them but they're not necessarily involved in that community even though it's right across from them ... No one is making the effort to say: 'well, how can we reach the Africans in the community?' And that's of course, by that nature, you abridge. You're not changing the Aboriginal people; you're inviting more people in, whether it's kids or parents, that's where they get involved.

**Immigrant – Migrated to Canada as a child
From Southern Europe, decades ago**

Recommendation # 3: Introduce *Recently Arrived* Newcomers to Professional Aboriginals who defy Stereotypes

In Winnipeg, the Entry Program was established in 2004. Advertised to newcomers as “your first step to success,” the program constitutes a series of free classes for all incoming immigrants and refugees to the province. For one month, newcomers attend sessions from Monday to Friday, for three hours a day (Government of Manitoba, ‘Arrive and Settle’, n.d.) What is unique about this program is that the courses are offered within the first three months of refugees’ arrival to Winnipeg, and they provide an in-depth orientation on topics that are important to newcomers, such as family law, drinking and driving, and legal services in Canada. Bearing this study’s findings in mind, it is important for newcomers attending the Entry Program to be exposed to Aboriginal guest speakers who defy negative stereotypes (Dovidio et al., 2003: 6-7). Refugees need to be made aware, during the early stages of their settlement in Winnipeg, that not all Aboriginals are poor and that there is socio-economic diversity *within* the Native community (Satzewich 1999: 336-337). In the words of one African service provider:

Yeah and just ah ... they have to see, [newcomers] have to see Native people in action ... they don’t think they are working, they don’t see. What about the successful Native person who can speak to immigrants? There could be a school professor at the university: Why he’s not invited to come and talk ...?

Along the same lines, another African service provider expressed:

If somebody says: ‘Well, I’m [an] Aboriginal judge or an Aboriginal police officer,’ they [newcomers] associate that: ‘Wow, OK!’ ... they can fight the negative stereotypes ... [It’s] easy to organize also: bring a few Aboriginal ... professionals or elders ... and in some transition [program] of immigrants, when they are coming, make that as a part of, you know, awareness ...

Recommendation # 4: Organize Cross Cultural-Ceremonies and Sharing Circles

Another way to assuage inter-group tension is by having service providers in community organizations stress *similarities* between refugees and Aboriginals (Stephan et al., 1998). Helping professionals could organize events where members of both minority communities convene and share their personal life stories. As representatives of the First Nations in Canada, Aboriginal community leaders and elders, through a cultural ceremony, could formally welcome recently arrived refugees in Winnipeg; they could say: “New immigrants ... OK ... welcome; we accept you, welcome, this is who we are ...” Aboriginal inner city residents can discuss the effects that colonization, residential schools and systemic racism have had on them and their families. One respondent declared: “[Native People] can come and talk to [newcomer] people and say: ‘Hey! I am Aboriginal; do you know about our history? What do you know about our history? Let’s talk about it.’” On the other hand, refugees could - if they are emotionally prepared - disclose the reasons why they fled Africa.

Aboriginals who migrate from rural reserves to the city are, by definition, ‘migrants’. Like newcomers from Africa and other continents, many Aboriginals experience culture shock when they arrive in Winnipeg and require settlement services to adapt to urbanized and modern city life. Thus, members of both minority groups can also reveal their experiences *migrating* to Winnipeg from African countries or rural Canadian reserves, respectively. Through the work of qualified counsellors, facilitators and language interpreters, engaging in personal and emotional discussions, as well sharing photos and watching films can lead to members of both groups to realize that they have a lot of circumstances in common. It is important, however, to have qualified counsellors present at these events in order to ensure that support is available if conversations stir up overwhelming emotions by group members who may have experienced physical and/or psychological trauma in their lives. As was made clear during the data validation focus groups, if community members are expected to talk about their personal experiences, they must feel culturally safe to do so.

During the focus groups I was repeatedly told that the topic of colonization can be an important bridging point between Aboriginals and African refugees. One public servant of Portuguese descent explained how both African refugees and Aboriginals have been – in one way or another – victims of colonization:

Well, I think the similarity ... would be that ... Aboriginals feel very much like refugees in their own land, because the land was taken away from them ... I think for many of the African refugees, they’ve been displaced too. So there’s a commonality there, you know

... There's a history there of oppression, of racialized violence, of systemic discrimination and racism, and displacement and all of that's connected to what refugee people have experienced.

Dovidio et al. [2003] argued that spreading knowledge is useful, but it too seldom stirs the heart; events that share pain and arouse feelings are several degrees better than those that rely purely on cold fact (Dovidio et al. 2003: 6). In this light, one Aboriginal service provider recommended:

We could do it as a sharing circle with a talking stick and have some of the people who've experienced their displacement talk about their history and their story and their community ... their experiences ... I think that would be an excellent way to exchange that understanding, particularly for the common people ... people that have not had that opportunity to learn it at the higher [educational] ... level; this is grass roots stuff.

Learning about one another's similar experiences (i.e., injustices and persecution) is crucial for improving inter-group relations (Batson et al., 1997). A few gatherings where members acquired new information about the out-group have already taken place in Winnipeg's inner city. The results have been very encouraging:

So we put the two groups together ... we've talked with our [refugee youth] ... about the Aboriginal People and how our [refugee] youth can look at them as internally displaced because that's the term that our clients can understand, and talked about how they were,

you know, in history, they were placed on reserves, their kids were taken and put into private schools and they had their languages taken away; they were separated from families; they weren't allowed to continue with their cultures, and all of that kind of stuff. So our [refugee] kids really understood and grabbed on to that and couldn't believe that it was happening here. They had a lot of questions about the reserves [and said] 'they're very similar to the refugee camps.' They were really able to get the correct information and were able to understand where Aboriginal People are coming from historically. So I think that was real positive ... just for them to understand that Canada may be progressive but in our history this is what has been done.

Third Generation Asian Service Provider

Gaertner et al. [1999] have noted that “the development of a common in-group identity does not necessarily require that each group forsake its less inclusive group identity completely” (184). It is possible for persons to maintain hyphenated or dual identities (Esses et al. 2001). So, an inner city Aboriginal resident can still identify herself as a First Nation person, who - like her Sudanese neighbour – is a single mom, who has felt the effect of colonization. One focus group participant confidently said: “you don't have to subvert who you are ... you begin to see the similarities and the differences.”

It is crucial that programs target adults as well as children and youth. Given the widespread poverty that exists in the core area of Winnipeg, if these programs are to be accessible they need to be offered free of charge and child care must be provided for single parents.

Recommendation # 5: Raise Awareness amongst Service Providers through Intra-Agency

Meetings

Even before events target inner city residents, service providers themselves need to be informed about the history and current conditions of *both* minority groups. Data from this case study revealed that, due to the fragmentation of social services along group lines, service providers who work with refugees are somewhat unaware of existing programming for Aboriginals, and vice versa. For instance, one high-level Caucasian public servant admitted:

I don't know enough about what they [Aboriginals] get ... but I think there are some that would be very similar ... they [Aboriginals] have transitional housing here for people; they can connect with sort of host type programs, I think, when they come here. But I don't know enough about ... the programs ...

Organizing inter-agency meetings once every two months could be a plausible way for service providers who work in isolation from one another to share concerns and strategize how to resolve emerging community issues. If service providers are themselves unaware of existing racial dynamics, they will be ill-prepared to work with clients to bridge relations.

Recommendation # 6: Incorporate Cross-Cultural Activities within the Educational System

Although schools can be the site of fights and disagreements, they can (if principals and teachers take an active approach) “play an important part in bringing families together.” At schools, teachers can help students to focus on the larger structural picture, including the effects of colonization, laws and policies that have had various effects on different ethno-racial groups (as quoted in Mindiola et al., 2002: 25-26). Educators need to be trained and permitted to incorporate engaging activities into the school curriculum. One inner city high school teacher whom we interviewed encouraged his students to participate in a cross-cultural physical game called ‘crossing the line.’ The activity was effective in making his African and Aboriginal students realize that they shared an important commonality:

I mean you have, when you have a refugee kid from Africa and an Aboriginal walks across the line at the same time, and realize [they] both face discrimination based on the colour of their skin, that’s when you start to build really strong connections.

Recommendation # 7: The Need for Continuous Government Support

Organizations at the local community level have a vital role to play in improving inter-group relations; it is important that they receive governmental support. Local agencies need to be adequately funded over *the long term*, since anti-racism activities ought to be consistent and repeated on a regular basis, if they are to be effective:

[It's about] consistent opportunities ... so that it's not happening one time here, one time next year type-thing ... so that if it's on a regular ... or even try to build it in, as much as we can, *within our own programs*; I think that will make a difference for the future. It is a long process just to build those relationships ... but I think if agencies can have that as part of their mandate and service delivery, I think it will go a long way [emphasis mine].

Service Provider working with Refugee Newcomers

Third Generation Asian

The quote above is in line with what a participant at one of the data validation focus groups firmly said: that it is not necessary to introduce new and costly programs to bridge inter-group relations. Anti-racist activities can be incorporated into existing programs; this is not only cost-effective, but more efficient from an organizational standpoint.

Through advisory committees, Aboriginal and refugee community members should have power to influence the course of programs from the planning to the delivery and evaluation stages. This is particularly important for the inner city Aboriginal community, which – as pointed in this report – is resentful and distrustful of mainstream society and its institutions:

But the first thing and I'll stress it: Aboriginal people, the first thing they value the most is relationships. So you have to build relationships before anything gets done. If you don't build a relationship things are not going to succeed, you know ... Do it in a way that values the cultural values ... and bring in the elders ... to guide that entire process ...

Aboriginal Service Provider

In Winnipeg, the short supply of public housing units fosters perceptions of competition, and is a source of anti-newcomer attitudes amongst some Aboriginals. Thus, it is important for governments to build more public housing structures and to provide subsidies to inner city residents so that they can afford to rent units in the private rental market.

Recommendation #8: the Role of Researchers and Universities

The academia has a role to play in fostering amicable community relations. As one respondent in this case study suggested, “Institutions like higher education should do their research and identify the areas.” It is by empirically examining the causes, processes and dynamics of inter-group prejudice and distrust that (as a community) we are better equipped to initiate change.

Recommendation # 9: Enter into a Frank Dialogue

Ultimately, the root causes of distant group relations in Winnipeg need to be examined. As a nation, we need to confront issues about Canadian history and Aboriginal poverty. John Ralston Saul argues that “the big missing conversation in Canada is the one between Aboriginals and new Canadians,” the latter being 19th century colonial settlers (Rea 2008). In his latest book, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada*, Saul argues that Canada was built over its first centuries on a conversation between Aboriginal Peoples and immigrants. Saul contends that our ties to the Aboriginal Peoples are far stronger than our ties to the European. We are a nation

heavily influenced and shaped by Aboriginal ideas of egalitarianism, a desire to resolve conflict with negotiation over violence and a commitment to maintaining a balance between the individual and the group. In order to make our country work, we have to find ways to put this conversation back at the centre of Canadian affairs (The Chan Centre 2009).

Recommendation # 10: Combat the Structural Causes of Aboriginal Poverty

In Winnipeg, as elsewhere in Canada, the dominant powerful group in society must focus on the structural problems that impede many urban Aboriginals from becoming functioning members of society. Policy makers can actively target and reduce Aboriginal poverty so that newcomers and mainstream Winnipeggers do not evaluate Aboriginals in stereotypical ways. Absent of this, the problem of distant inter-group relations tends to be defined as a race problem rather than as a problem of class and unequal distribution (Bentacur 2005: 165):

We have to ensure that communities are formulated by ensuring everybody receives enough [resources] to survive. We don't right now, so it keeps people poor; it keeps [people] uneasy. So there's larger, larger things need to happen.

To eradicate the negative stereotypes that exist, a *long term* commitment to provide Aboriginals with more educational opportunities is needed. Governments can introduce educational initiatives and subsidies to Native high school students. Free university summer institutes that prepare disadvantaged high school students for college level work can be offered (Israel et al.,

2001). And free access to post-secondary education is, as we heard throughout the interviews, a ‘must’ if Aboriginal people are to become empowered.

The structural causes of distant inter-group relations need to be examined and addressed. Part of the solution is to focus on newcomers’ relations with Aboriginals but equally important, attention needs to be paid to the way mainstream society views Aboriginals. This requires that the state and mainstream population reduce inner city poverty, provide access to education and shift the ways they view and interact with the Aboriginal community. One Native community leader expressed:

But again ... not just African people need [education]. Canadians that have been here for 150 years need it! I mean that’s the kind of the fallacy that we’re working on here, eh? It’s not something that is ... just for the newcomers that are arriving now just because they’re brown. I mean everybody needs it because it’s not a problem with the newcomers and Aboriginal People; that’s not the problem.

Aboriginal People will also benefit in the long term if they de-construct their victimized identity and channel their frustration into meeting feasible, modern-day objectives. One female Aboriginal project participant expressed: “you can only be a victim for as long as you choose to ...” Her view is in line with Amartya Sen’s, the prolific writer and winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics:

To lead a life in which resentment against an imposed inferiority from past history comes to dominate one's priorities today cannot but be unfair to oneself. It can also vastly deflect attention from other objectives that those emerging from past colonies have reason to value and pursue in a contemporary world. (Sen 2006: 89)

The above proposed policy recommendations function at the micro and macro levels. Some recommendations could be enacted within the short term, while more structural solutions will clearly require more time. Nonetheless, in order for meaningful change to come about, all stakeholders will benefit if they work in good faith, continually complementing each other. A multi-pronged approach, where all players from the local to the national level can negotiate ideas, rules and responsibilities, is more likely – in the long run - to be effective in bridging relations. Only then will all the actors at the table (Aboriginals, newcomers, and the mainstream) be able to *trust* and work *in earnest* with one another.

Part Seven: Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to find preliminary answers the following questions: How can we characterize the attitudes and interactions between Aboriginals and African refugees in the inner city of Winnipeg? How much do in-group members know of the similar experiences and current situation of out-group members? How often and in what types of places do group members interact? What programs and policies can be put in place to enhance community relations?

Interviews with service providers (and to a lesser extent inner city residents and community leaders) revealed that in general, Aboriginal and refugee residents of Winnipeg's core area are 'more strangers than neighbours.' Interactions between group members are passing and impersonal and they transpire in public places, such as inner city parks, public housing units and shopping malls. Connections amongst inner city residents are hindered by low English levels, inter-group mistrust and a system of service delivery that is often divided along group lines. Study participants spoke about the severe lack of knowledge amongst the two community groups. While some respondents pointed to existing negative perceptions of the 'other' group, as well as feelings of inter-group competition, other participants spoke about how being visible minorities and victims of colonization can bring the two groups together.

Despite the generally distant relations, an encouraging finding is that on the few occasions where Aboriginals and refugees associated by attending programs in community-based organizations, relations among them improved. This is especially the case when service providers act as "cultural brokers," take a pro-active stance to connect diverse clients, and make them realize that

they share more in common than previously thought. To ensure that newcomers and Aboriginals begin to form more meaningful community-level connections, local organizations require long-term and sustainable funds. Refugees need to be exposed to professionally successful Aboriginals, and service providers serving both communities should be given an opportunity to meet and discuss emerging race relations issues. Ultimately, however, structural realities such as Aboriginal poverty and low levels of education need to be examined, so that mainstream and new Canadians alike do not evaluate Aboriginals in harmful and unconstructive ways.

The 2006 census reported more than 200 different ethnic groups in Canada; it also highlighted how the visible minority population in the country had surpassed the five million mark (Statistics Canada 2008, “2006 Census: Ethnic origin...”). From 1996 to 2006, the national Aboriginal population grew by 45 per cent, nearly six times faster than the non-Aboriginal population. Winnipeg is the nation’s city with the largest share of the urban Aboriginal population. Meanwhile immigration to Manitoba is increasing at a rapid pace. Bearing in mind these remarkable demographic trends and Winnipeg’s increasingly multi-ethnic composition, we cannot afford to overlook the way Aboriginal and newcomer communities view and interact with one another. I conclude with three different quotes that speculate about the future of inter-minority group relations. While the first quote is unmistakably alarming, the second and third demonstrate the potential for community engagement, openness, and optimism.

As a collective community, we have a role to play in determining which of the two scenarios below is realized:

- “There will be change no doubt – if there isn’t we’re in for big trouble.”

African Service Provider

OR....

- “Boy, we have the potential to really plant seeds and nurture relationships...”

Caucasian Service Provider

- “We make a beautiful garden.”

Aboriginal Elder – Confronting Racism Workshop

November 2007

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Appendix I: Tables

Table 1.0 - Immigration to Manitoba from African Countries: 1997-2006

Year	Total Numbers	% of Refugees
1997	146	47%
1998	140	53%
1999	244	58%
2000	489	64%
2001	482	64%
2002	472	70%
2003	884	82%
2004	893	77%
2005	792	69%
2006	893	70%

Source: Simbandumwe, L. (2007). "Building Collaborative Relationships with African Canadian Communities in Winnipeg." Winnipeg United Way Winnipeg, 1-33.

Table 2.0 - Professional Background of Service Providers Interviewed

<p>Supervisor/Executive Director of community organization</p>	<p>Front Line Worker of community organization (daily contact with clients)</p>
<p>5 (38.5%)</p>	<p>8 (61.5%)</p>

* Note: Percentages above are based on the total number of service providers interviewed, R= 13

Appendix II: Consent Form

Hello. You are invited to participate in a study that is linked to a larger project called “Transforming Aboriginal and inner city communities in Manitoba.” This is a Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded project that examines the potential of community development for solving the complex problems that face Manitoba’s multi-ethnic inner city communities. Dr. Parvin Ghorayshi from the University of Winnipeg (Sociology Department) is heading the Diaspora portion of the project; she will be the supervisor for this study.

The project that you are invited to participate in will focus on the relations between newcomers and Aboriginals in the inner city of Winnipeg. We want to know what members of both groups think of each other and how they interact in their neighbourhoods. Are attitudes between members of both groups positive, negative or neutral? Why? How are attitudes manifested in real life? What strategies or policies can be implemented to *enhance* relations?

I will be carrying out approximately 25 interviews with social service providers, community leaders and Aboriginal & newcomer respondents. I will also conduct data validation focus groups. If you give me permission, this interview will be tape recorded and then transcribed; once all the data is gathered, your thoughts and ideas will be compiled into a comprehensive analysis.

Your participation involves taking part in an interview. The interview will be tape recorded to allow the researchers to listen carefully to what each one of you has to say. All the recordings and transcripts will be kept securely locked away in a safe place at the University of Winnipeg until completion of the overall project in 2012. After that, the tapes will be destroyed. Only I, Lucia Madariaga-Vignudo and my advisor, Dr. Parvin Ghorayshi will have access to the data. I want you to know that this interview will be strictly confidential. This means that **your name will not be mentioned** in any written report.

While I know your name and contact information (you are not anonymous to me) I will be extra careful in safeguarding this information. This means that I will separate your identity from your responses in a secure computer database. All data will be electronically stored on a computer. The files will be security protected (i.e. a password will be required to access files). As a study participant you will be assigned a specific number and your transcript will be identified by that number, instead of your name.

The study will take place from January-August 2008. Your participation is highly appreciated and voluntary. If you have any questions or concerns at any time during the duration of the study you are encouraged to contact me, Lucia Madariaga-Vignudo at luciamadariaga@yahoo.com or at 783-4117. You can also contact this project’s supervisor, Dr. Parvin Ghorayshi at p.ghorayshi@uwinnipeg.ca or Kerry Murkin, Program Officer for the University of Winnipeg’s

Senate Committee on Ethics in Human Research and Scholarship at k.murkin@uwinnipeg.ca or at 786-9058.

I think you have a lot of valuable information to offer and I would like to ask you some questions. This interview should last approximately 60 minutes. No anticipated risks to you will result from taking part in this project. This study will be beneficial because it will make known what relationships are like between community members, and importantly how these relationships can be improved.

So, I promise that the following conditions will be met:

- Your name ***will not*** be used for any part of this study's reports.
- The data will be used to complete my Master of Arts (M.A.) thesis. As well, the research team will use the data –without referring to specific individuals – to develop reports and policies related to the larger project on “Transforming Aboriginal and inner city communities in Manitoba.”
- Your participation in this project is voluntary. You can stop participating at any point and for any reason, without negative consequence.
- You have the right to refuse to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with.

[Applicable only to respondents who were inner city residents]: There is a \$25.00 honorarium for your time spent during this interview.

Before starting, do you have any questions or concerns about the research project as a whole, or about the interview that we are about to do?

Do you grant permission to be audio-recorded?

Yes _____ No _____

I agree to these terms:

Name of Participant (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I agree to these terms:

Name of the Researcher (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix III: Interview Guides

Interview Guide with Service Providers

Note: This interview guide is written to be used with a service provider who works with the Aboriginal community. The *same* questions were asked to service providers working with refugees, with the exception of minor word changes.

Background information of respondents and the clients they serve

- Please tell me your name and the organization that you work for.
- What type of work you do within this organization?
- How many months or years have you worked here?
- How frequent is your contact with Aboriginals that live in the inner city?
- In general, what is the level of education of the Aboriginal clients that you serve?
- In general, what is the socio-economic situation of the Aboriginal clients that you serve?

Social Alienation & and Group Position

- I'd like to ask you a little bit about what it's like to be an Aboriginal living in the inner city of Winnipeg. From your perspective, do Aboriginal residents of the inner city feel alienated? If not, why? If yes, why do you think this is?
- Do you think Aboriginal People like living in the inner city? [Depending on answer]: Why might this be the case? Is there an attachment to the area?
- [If applicable] Do Aboriginal People tend to move outside of the inner city after some years of moving to Winnipeg from reserves?
- From your perspective, do Aboriginal clients have a sense of control over their own lives? How so?
- Do you think Canadian society owes Aboriginals a better chance in life than they currently have? [Follow-up] Why?
- Do the Aboriginal clients that you work with feel that the government has provided them with a fair opportunity to get ahead in life? [Follow up, if applicable] Can you elaborate a little bit more on this thought?

- How about you? Do you feel that the different levels of government in Canada [municipal, provincial and federal levels] have provided Aboriginals with a fair [adequate] opportunity to get ahead in life?
- Do Aboriginal People believe they have a lot of opportunities to succeed in Canadian society? Can you please elaborate? Do you feel this is the case?
- How do you see the relations between Aboriginal Peoples and mainstream society?
- Would you say refugees and Aboriginals encounter equal degrees of racism and discrimination, or would you say one group is more discriminated by society than the other? [Follow up] Why do you think X group is more discriminated?
- [If Applicable] The alienation that Aboriginal Peoples experience: how would it be different from the type of alienation that newcomer refugees experience? Can you please elaborate on that?

Questions regarding inter-group attitudes

- The inner city seems to be an area of Winnipeg with a lot of diversity. I understand that in the past five years there have been a lot of refugees coming into this area; and there are a lot of Aboriginal Peoples living in these neighbourhoods as well. From your experience working with Aboriginal clients, what do they think of refugees? [Follow-up if applicable] Would you say, generally speaking, Aboriginals have a positive, negative or neutral attitude towards newcomer refugees?
- Why do you think Aboriginals have such views of immigrants and refugees?
- Do you think Aboriginal residents of the inner city feel that the inner city is changing because of the new presence of immigrants and refugees? How might this be?
- Do you think Aboriginal People feel that they are in competition with refugees? [If answer is negative ask: *why*? If answer is positive, keep on probing:] what do you think there is competition over?
- What types of comments or remarks have you heard Aboriginal residents say when speaking about immigrant newcomers, especially refugees?
- In what ways might Aboriginals consider their traditions as well as their lifestyle values to be different from those of immigrants and refugees?
- In various countries, new immigrants have been thought to threaten the culture and language of the native [host] society. Do you think that urban Aboriginals feel their culture, traditions and religions threatened by the presence of refugee newcomers?

- Do you think Aboriginal residents feel that newcomers receive preferential treatment?

Interaction between group members

- From where (what types of sources) do you think Aboriginal People get their information about immigrants and refugees who have come to Manitoba? [Possible answers: television, gossip, personal face-to-face interactions].
- In what type of places or settings in Winnipeg do Aboriginals and refugee newcomers interact? [Possible answers/probes: passing one another on the street; in community centres; in social service agencies; in public housing buildings; in stores; in churches; schools;]
- How would you characterize the interactions in these settings? [Possible answers/probes: fleeting; personal; friendly; overtly antagonistic].
- How would you say the perceptions that Aboriginals have of immigrants/refugees influence their interactions with them? [possible probes: physical avoidance]
- Is there maybe a perception amongst Aboriginal People that immigrants and refugees demand too much from government? Or that they have gotten more than they deserve?
- From what you've observed or heard, do Aboriginals have intimate partners or friends that are immigrants/refugees from other countries? What are these relationships like?
- Do you think newcomers and urban Aboriginals have things in common? What would *you* say they have in common? [Possible answers: both groups are 'migrants' to the city; if refugees = persecution/oppression by the 'state'; low socio-economic standing; cultures different from mainstream Canadians']
- The things that you've just told me Aboriginals and immigrants/refugees have in common: do you think the average Aboriginal person living in the inner city knows about them?
- Do you think Aboriginals know about the situation of refugees, such as why they migrated to Canada? [I.e. b/c facing persecution in country of origin].
- From your perspective, are Aboriginals who come to Winnipeg from northern rural communities also, in some type of way, newcomers or immigrants to the city? How so?
- How might the strategies that Aboriginals adopt to settle in the city be different or similar from those that newcomer immigrants from other countries adopt?
- Do you feel that there are sufficient services to help Aboriginals settle in Winnipeg?

- We've talked about things members of both groups have in common; yet how about the differences between Aboriginals and newcomers? Why might Aboriginals feel that they are different from refugee newcomers?

Recommendations

- According to you, what types of programs or policies would help in encouraging members of both groups (newcomer refugees and Aboriginals) to have more positive relations?
- Which actors [institutions] in society do you think should fund these initiatives, and how should they be carried out?
- Is there anything else that you think we may have missed, that you would like to share with me before we finish this interview?

Appendix III: Interview Guides
Interview Guide with Inner City Residents

Background Information

- Where you born in Canada? [If applicable] which country are you from?
- How old are you?
- How long have you been in Canada for? In Winnipeg?
- Are you going to school here in Winnipeg?
- Are you working anywhere? Are you on social assistance?
- Have you always lived in this part of the city?
- Do you like living in this area of Winnipeg? How do you feel about this area?
- If you had an opportunity would you move to other parts of Winnipeg? Which neighbourhoods would you move into?
- Do you feel you have opportunities here in Canada to get ahead in life? (Work; job; career?)
- [For refugee respondents only]: Are you happy to be here in Canada?
- How do you feel about the people that live in your neighbourhood?
- Do you interact a lot with your neighbours?
- Do you think Canadians are racist towards Aboriginal people? Why? Why not?
- Would you say Canadians are racist towards refugees from Africa?

Questions regarding inter-group attitudes

- As you know there are a lot of Aboriginal people/refugees that live in this part of Winnipeg. What do you think of Aboriginals/refugees? Why do you feel this way?
- When you are just among yourselves, with your friends and family, what do you say about Aboriginals/refugees and other people in your neighbourhood?
- Do you think Aboriginals/refugees work hard?

- Do you think Aboriginals/refugees have a good life in Canada?
- Do you think Aboriginals have more opportunities to succeed in Canadian society than refugee newcomers?
- Do you think your traditions and your cultures are similar to those of Aboriginals/refugees from Africa?
- What types of things do you think you have in common with Aboriginals/refugees?
- Do you think Aboriginals who come to Winnipeg from northern rural communities are also, like refugees, migrants to the city?

Interaction between group members

- [If refugees] Before coming to Canada did you know anything about Aboriginal People here?
- [If applicable] From where/whom did you get this information?
- [If refugees] What was your first impression of Aboriginal People in Winnipeg?
- In what type of places do Aboriginals and refugee interact in Winnipeg?
- Where do you see Aboriginals/refugees in Winnipeg?
- Have you ever had a positive experience with an Aboriginal/refugee person?
- Have you ever had a negative experience with an Aboriginal/refugee person?
- What do you do when you see Aboriginals/refugee newcomers? Do you act differently?
- Do you think Aboriginals/refugee newcomers get too much money from the government?
- Do you think Aboriginals/refugee newcomers get more money than they deserve?
- [If applicable] Do you think Aboriginals know about the situation of refugees, such as why they migrated to Canada? [I.e. b/c facing persecution in country of origin].
- [If applicable] Do you think refugee newcomers know about the history of colonization in Canada, and the effect this has had on Aboriginal Peoples?

Recommendations

- [If applicable] You've mentioned to me that Aboriginals/refugee newcomers have problems. What type of things do you think could improve their lives?
- Is there anything else that you think we may have missed, that you would like to share with me before we finish this interview?