**Discourses of Dominance:
Saskatchewan Adult Basic
Education Curriculum
and Aboriginal Learners**

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By

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Abstract

The intention of this work is to explore how Aboriginal learners are produced in the Saskatchewan Adult Basic Education (ABE) curriculum. In addition, this study examines the production of instructor identities in the curriculum. This thesis explores the social and historical contexts influencing the production of the ABE curriculum. Current prevailing discourses about Aboriginal people influence the curriculum documents. These discourses construct a grand narrative about Aboriginal people, producing Aboriginal people in particular ways that become acceptable and legitimate ways of thinking about and behaving toward Aboriginal people. This work examines how such a grand narrative functions to uphold dominance and structural inequalities rather than challenge them. The effect of reinforcing the current, particular grand narrative about Aboriginal people is that, rather than challenge dominant ideologies, the new curriculum re-inscribes them. This work employs the methodology of discourse analysis as a means of examining the production of particular identities for Aboriginal learners in ABE and uses deconstruction to explore the ways that the documents betray themselves in relation to their objectives. This thesis provides analysis of the ways that the curriculum documents produce and reproduce Aboriginal people as deficient and requiring change. This work provides analysis of the conflict within the documents between a desire to challenge dominance and the re-inscription of dominance through discursive practices. In addition, this work demonstrates how the ABE curriculum aids in the production of dominant instructor identities, and how such dominant identities assist instructors to define themselves as innocent and helpful. This analysis of the ABE curriculum reveals that while the curriculum aspires to be a proponent of social justice for Aboriginal learners it has many weaknesses in this regard. This work concludes with recommendations for changes to the curriculum and instructor practices, and for further critical analysis.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my children, Oliver, Max, Robben, Sinead, Tanner, Deirdre, and Sean, and to my husband, Declan. All of you have provided me with the inspiration, unconditional love, and abundant understanding to see this work through.

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Introduction

In Saskatchewan, Aboriginal people make up a large number of the learners enrolled in Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs. Yet something is amiss: Aboriginal learners who complete ABE programs have not fared as well as their non-Aboriginal counterparts in being able to participate in the economic and social benefits of society. Partly because of these unequal outcomes, Saskatchewan Learning has undertaken the development of new curriculum for ABE. The new curriculum focuses on Aboriginal content and perspectives in the hope that doing so will help alleviate the unequal outcomes. It is necessary to analyze the new curriculum for indications of how it does or does not achieve its own objective of improving the chances for equality for Aboriginal people. The focus of this thesis is on the discursive practices of the curriculum documents and how Aboriginal people are constructed and affected by such practices.

This study begins by outlining my own position in relation to the work I undertake, in keeping with the practice of many post-structural theorists. By situating oneself within the research, a researcher employing post-structural theory attempts to distance herself from the "truth claims" of objectivity commonly associated with scientific traditions. Such truth claims assume that absolute objectivity is possible and preferable. Claims of scientific objectivity are bound up in power relations that are obscured by the claim to impartiality. Objectivity in the positivist tradition has functioned as "a conquering gaze from nowhere" (Haraway, 1991, p. 188) and the positioning

of the researcher in the research is an attempt to alleviate decontextualized authority. Instead, the researcher acknowledges that truth claims are misleading and that all researchers operate from a perspective that is situated and subjective. In this post-positivist tradition researchers offer "interpretations…a certain spin we have put on the data…inviting people to weigh our interpretation, judge whether it has been soundly arrived at and is plausible…and decide whether it has application to their interests and concerns" (Crotty, 1998, p. 41). I describe the position from which I approach this work as one that involves my identification as a Métis woman concerned with social justice and education who finds herself deeply implicated in the production of the new ABE curriculum.

In this thesis, post-structural theory guides the discourse analysis of the curriculum documents. This particular theoretical position considers the ways that language, knowledge, and power operate to construct meanings and constitute material effects in the world. Important to this approach is demonstrating the constructed nature of the world through various discursive practices that guide and shape the way we think about, talk about, and represent subjects and topics so they become common sense and taken for granted. All discursive practices have consequences and effects. The objective of discourse analysis is to examine and reveal ways that language and social practices operate as mechanisms of power that are productive of identities and social relations.

After the introductory chapter, this thesis is presented in three parts. Beginning in Chapter 2, this work examines certain "common-sense" discourses about Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan. Discursive practices related to representations of Aboriginal people are examined by analyzing a demographics report that Saskatchewan Learning has used, and continues to use, in planning educational policy and direction for ABE in the province. This chapter provides analysis of discursive practices within the demographics report that contribute to particular constructions of Aboriginal people as problematic, from the perspective of employment rates and education levels, as well as from the perspective of projected provincial demographics. The opportunity to frame the problem in a way that locates Aboriginal people as problematic and avoids analysis of dominance and historical inequality is one that can only arise from a position of dominance and privilege. The discourses that produce Aboriginal people in particular ways and which contribute to a discourse of Aboriginal people as deficient is established within the demographics reports. The influence of such discourses is to create and sustain a particular "grand narrative" of deficiency about Aboriginal people. The term grand narrative, originally coined by Lyotard (1979), is defined "to mean a narrative 'with a legitimating function'-- legitimating an entire life and all the actions in it, an entire culture (PE 2-10; Correspondence 31)" (Schultz, 1998, p. 1). In this thesis I use the term grand narrative to mean the general discourse that has become part of a common sense, normative way of thinking and talking about Aboriginal

people. The grand narrative functions as a legitimating tool for particular ways of thinking, behaving, and representing. The grand narrative of deficiency that I refer to in this thesis represents what have become accepted, taken-for-granted "truths" about Aboriginal people – "accepted" to the extent that they are rarely, if ever, questioned. Such a grand narrative appears in several documents of Saskatchewan Learning. The curriculum documents are the latest of the documents produced by Saskatchewan Learning that are evidence of this grand narrative discourse.

Chapter 3 explores the incorporation and reinforcement of the grand narrative of Aboriginal deficiency into the discourse of the new ABE curriculum documents. The curriculum documents establish a discourse of deficiency about Aboriginal people that operates alongside other similar discourses prevalent in this social and historical context. Each discourse reinforces and re-inscribes the others in such a way that a discourse that problematizes Aboriginal people and locates sources of deficiency within individual Aboriginal learners becomes common sense ways of thinking about, talking about, and acting toward Aboriginal people. Furthermore, this chapter explores the significant production in the curriculum of Aboriginal adult learners as "other." The construction of racially dominant identities for instructors produces Aboriginal adult learners as "other" and establishes Aboriginal learners as the "cultural other" who comes under scrutiny.

In addition, chapter 3 examines how a curriculum that prefers to focus on cultural respect and inclusion largely overlooks issues of power. An

exclusive focus on "diversity," "culture," and "inclusion" has the effect of avoiding analyses of dominance and structural inequalities. Such a curriculum intends to develop a "feel good" scenario for those who encounter it based on the implied message that a curriculum that provides opportunities for inclusion and cultural respect will somehow lead to solutions to problems of structural inequality. In this way, attention is successfully diverted from critical analysis of structures and systems of dominance. This study provides some analysis of how the curriculum supports particular interpretations of the problem that contributes to high enrolments of Aboriginal learners in ABE.

Further, chapter 3 examines the production of dominant and innocent instructor identities. The curriculum guides display the need to over-justify the inclusion of Aboriginal content and perspectives, revealing the assumed racially dominant identity and anticipated hostility of the intended readers and users of the documents.

In chapter 4 the tensions inherent in the language of the curriculum documents are revealed and examined as a means of showing how the texts work in such a way that they are at odds with themselves. The curriculum documents rely heavily on the use of the language and rhetoric of social justice, reflecting theoretical perspectives of Freire (1970) and Mezirow (1990) as well as calling for the use of transformative pedagogy. In doing so, I argue that, to a large degree the incorporation of the language of social justice proves little more than an ability by Saskatchewan Learning to use

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language that appears to be innovative and responsive to Aboriginal needs and desires. The shift by Saskatchewan Learning from a singular focus on employment outcomes to a more liberal inclusion of individual and community development reflects the ability of the department to adapt to the concerns of the day, at least by way of the language used. At the same time, the documents never lose focus of a primary concern for preparing learners for participation in a capitalist economic system – a system that remains largely unchallenged as one that will serve the needs of a disposable population as well as maintain boundaries important to the maintenance of dominance. Ironically, the result is the re-inscription of dominant structures and social and economic inequalities through the process of education.

In addition, chapter 4 explores the ways in which the curriculum documents reveal their own internal tensions between a desire to promote social justice and a belief in notions congruent with positivist traditions of objectivity and truth claims. The reinforcement of such notions as neutrality and objectivity in education provides quiet support for the hierarchical structures that can be associated with structuralism. Structuralism runs counter to a theoretical position of social justice in that structuralism relies on binary oppositions that fall into a hierarchical mode and as a result marginalize because of the stratification and ordering inherent in such binaries. A concern for social justice, on the other hand, eschews such binaries because of the power relations inherent in them. Instead, a social

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justice approach attempts to deconstruct such binaries. Furthermore, the

curriculum guides consistently fail to challenge or provide alternatives to

dominant ideologies. The documents address, at times, individual and

systemic power relations, but overall fail to address ideologies that support

personal and systemic power relations.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by presenting implications and

recommendations based on the findings of the analysis. The

recommendations relate to the practices of instructors and the task at hand

in negotiating between the contradictory designs of the curriculum. In

addition, this work concludes by recommending further evaluation, analysis,

and revision to the curriculum documents.

Chapter 1

1.1 Background to the Problem

When Saskatchewan Learning undertook an evaluation of the ABE system in 1999, it became apparent that the "outcomes" for Aboriginal ABE learners were markedly different from those for non-Aboriginal ABE learners. The *Summary Report of the Basic Education Program Evaluation*(1999) states:

> Among 254 Aboriginal people enrolled the number employed [after completing a course] was 83 (33%) and the number unemployed is 171 (67%). For the non-Aboriginal group of 318 the number employed was 172 (54%) and the number unemployed was 146 (46%)" (Vol. 1, p.12).

These differential outcomes resulted in some specific recommendations by Saskatchewan Learning following the release of the report. Namely, recommendations included an articulated commitment of support by Saskatchewan Learning to Aboriginal institutions delivering ABE, as well as a recommendation to develop strategies to strengthen labour force attachment or "progress to further training" for Aboriginal people.

Moreover, the provincial curriculum for the ABE level courses came under scrutiny because of the evaluation. At about the same time as the evaluation was taking place, the mainstream institutions were expressing the

need for some kind of "Native Studies" or "culturally relevant" curriculum, based on the high percentage of Aboriginal learners in ABE programs provincially (60%). This factor, coupled with the outcome of the evaluation that suggested the system was not particularly effective for Aboriginal learners, prompted the department of Saskatchewan Learning responsible for ABE (formerly Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training) to act on the recommendation to create new curriculum.

The creation of new ABE curriculum has brought to the fore some issues around curriculum development itself. The construction of knowledge both within, and through the effects of the curriculum is of primary concern to this work. The discourse of the curriculum is not only indicative of social practices and structures of power, but also constructs social practices and structures of power. The curriculum as discourse is a powerful tool in the shaping of social, political, and economic conditions. Whose interests are served by the curriculum, and the ways meanings are constructed become critical points of inquiry. My concern with the redesign of the ABE curriculum has been how to subvert the practices of hegemony prevalent in the standard school curriculum. The term hegemony is defined by Gramsci (1971) as "political power that flows from intellectual and moral leadership, authority or consensus as distinguished from armed force" (Hainsworth, 2000, p. 1). MacLaren (1998) defines hegemony, as

The maintenance of dominance not by the sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social

structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the

school, the mass media, the political system, and the family (MacLaren,

1998, in Boler & Zembylas, 2003, p. 111).

In this thesis I use the term hegemony to mean those practices and

assumptions that exist within, and are reinforced through, the curriculum,

that support and reinforce white, middle-class dominance and privilege.

Curriculum often acts as a vehicle for the reproduction and distribution of

dominant ideologies.

In addition to concerns with curricular hegemony, the practices of

racially dominant instructors are an important focus of inquiry. The

discourse of the curriculum produces identities for ABE instructors and has

consequences for their practice as well. Dominance and innocence

characterize the practices (whether consciously or not) of traditionally trained

teachers versed in current methods of education. The mechanism of the

education system achieves the transmission, reinforcement, and support of

dominance. This study explores who the discourse establishes as "helper"

and who it constructs as requiring "help."

The creation of the new curriculum has been a slow and arduous

process and is one that is far from complete. However, the beginnings of

new curriculum for ABE include, at the time of the writing of this thesis, a

curriculum planning and foundations document entitled *Basic Education

Redesign Phase 1: Planning and Foundations* (2002), and two of five

curriculum guides for Communications and Social Sciences. The curriculum

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planning and foundations document articulates the curriculum philosophy intended to guide the work of the curriculum writers and advisory groups as well as guiding the delivery of all basic education programs and services.

According to the curriculum planning and foundations document the new curriculum is to be grounded in principles of adult education, and on a philosophy of respect, inclusion, equality, and recognition of the value of diversity and the harmfulness of dominant hegemony. Within the framework lies the basis for the practice of the new curricula – transformative learning approaches. The approaches or the practices that occur in real classrooms between real instructors and learners are what will ultimately matter in the implementation of the new curricula. My concern is whether the new curriculum documents establish a substantially different foundation upon which meaningful change can be built.

1.2 The Problem

As noted above, the intention of the new ABE curriculum documents is equity and inclusion for Aboriginal learners. The documents contain an articulated concern for social justice issues. For instance, the planning and foundations document cites "equitable" as one of eight guiding principles intended to guide the "philosophy, approaches and practices" in ABE. The document defines "equitable" in the following way:

Basic education is inclusive in nature and is respectful of cultural, economic, social, and educational diversity. All people are treated

and viewed in an equitable manner (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 7).

Similarly, the guiding principles deal with Aboriginal inclusion, cited as the principle of "respectful of Aboriginal cultures." This principle includes the following description:

> The diverse experiences, knowledge and cultures of Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan is recognized, respected, and incorporated into basic education development, design, and delivery (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 7).

In addition to these examples, the documents consistently refer to being inclusive, respectful, and accepting of Aboriginal perspectives, and make liberal use of language of empowerment and transformation associated with social justice concerns.

The documents are themselves simultaneously a product, an extension, and a re-creation of the larger social and academic discourses on adult education, ABE, adult learners, Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal education. The documents produce and re-produce common discourses about these topics within Saskatchewan and within Canadian society as a whole. The focus of this work is on what the discourse produces and reproduces as prevailing notions about ABE learners and Aboriginal people.

In addition, I have an interest in deconstructing the meanings about Aboriginal learners and ABE through curriculum content and pedagogy. Transformative education is amongst the goals of the new curriculum.

Transformative education is defined in the Communications curriculum guide (2004) as an "orientation" that "focuses on personal and social change" through processes of challenging assumptions, values, belief systems, and biases, and then moves this new level of consciousness into action to effect social change (pp. 11-12). I cannot determine if the curriculum will indeed inspire such practices, but my analysis reveals ways that the discourse of the documents supports or undermines such goals. The objective is to reveal how the discourse produces Aboriginal learners, both through what it includes and excludes as legitimate knowledge, as well as how it reinforces prevailing knowledge and meanings about Aboriginal people, within the system of ABE and adult education and within the larger social structures of Saskatchewan and Canadian society.

1.3 Documents Analyzed

The following lists the documents produced to-date in the curriculum redesign process and are the documents available for analysis. In addition, the *Saskatchewan Labour Market Trends Report* (2000), a special demographics report from Sask Trends Monitor, is listed, as it is relevant to this work:

> *Basic Education Redesign Phase 1: Planning and Foundations* (2002) (referred to in this thesis as the curriculum planning and foundations document);

Basic Education Level Three: Communications Curriculum Guide

(2004) (referred to as the Communications curriculum guide);

Basic Education Level Three: Social Sciences Curriculum Guide

(2004) (referred to as the Social Sciences curriculum guide); and

Saskatchewan Labour Market Trends Report (2000) (referred to as

the demographics report).

The boundaries of the discourse analysis conducted include a

thorough analysis of the curriculum planning and foundations document.

This document is the basis for the development of the curriculum and

represents the foundation upon which to build the new curriculum. As such,

I stress the importance of this particular document, in that it is positioned as

the foundational document, complete with a vision for ABE, guiding

principles, and a philosophical framework upon which rests the entire basis

of the new curriculum. Secondly, authority to direct the work of curriculum

development as well as the delivery of the new curriculum is established in

this document. It reads,

> This document *is to be used to guide the design, development and*
>
> *delivery of basic education* programs and services. *All activities will*
>
> *be congruent* with the philosophy and framework that have been
>
> articulated (emphasis added, p. 4).

These directive statements are the most strongly worded of the document in

that they do not merely suggest or imply that a certain direction should be

taken, but rather insist that readers and implementers *necessarily* use the

document as a guide for development and delivery of ABE. As such, the planning and foundations document is an important one in this analysis.

In addition, this analysis focuses on two common sections that appear in the Communications curriculum guide and the Social Sciences curriculum guide. These two common sections, which are thirty-four pages long, introduce the curriculum philosophy and describe, in some detail, the foundations of the curriculum and of transformative learning. This analysis also involves parts of the curriculum guides beyond these two common sections in order to examine the ways that the philosophy and foundational objectives are put into practice in the curriculum.

Further, I conduct discourse analysis on selected sections of the demographics report because I believe this report is important in establishing generally accepted knowledge within the Saskatchewan Learning unit responsible for ABE, about the demographics of the province and about Aboriginal people in the province. This generally accepted knowledge has had an impact on the direction and development of ABE curriculum.

The basis for the selection of these documents for analysis is that they are associated with the powerful and influential institution of Saskatchewan Learning. As curriculum documents, they represent what can be seen as the knowledge that is sanctioned as valid, valuable, legitimate, and important. The documents also construct the knowledge that is "credentialized" in the system, presenting what it is deemed necessary to know in order to achieve a basic standard of education. The documents are

assumed by most of those who will use them, to represent certain truths. The origin of the documents, that is, within Saskatchewan Learning, the context they were produced in, as well as the contexts they will be used in, relates the material to wider social practices (Taylor, 2001, p. 25).

1.4 Relevance of the Analysis

In this thesis, I analyze the new ABE curriculum documents utilizing theory and methods developed by post-structuralists such as Foucault and Derrida that facilitate a critical and close reading of the particular discourse of the curriculum. The fact that the curriculum documents are new and have been produced in a climate of concern for social justice makes this topic one of relevance for the field of ABE, particularly as it relates to Aboriginal learners. If shifts toward a more socially just world are to become more likely, then it is important to uncover prevailing assumptions that support dominant power structures within the curriculum documents and their underlying philosophy. As Burr (1995) notes, the purpose of discourse analysis lies in "how useful it may be in understanding and perhaps eventually doing something about" (p. 171) the issues revealed in the analysis. It is necessary to move beyond simply questioning dominant power structures and to move toward an understanding of how they become a part of the normal, everyday, acceptable thought process of most Canadians, even in situations that advocate for social justice.

I am certain of the usefulness of such an analysis based on two observations. The first is that there has not been any opportunity for critical reflection of the curriculum documents that have been produced so far. Rather, there has been much more of a focus on keeping to the timelines of the BE Redesign Task Team's "work plan." The timelines of the work plan do not allow for the type of time and effort required to reflect critically on what has been produced. This analysis provides an opportunity to reflect on the work that has been completed to-date. As such, it has the opportunity not only to help us understand the effects of the discourse of the curriculum, but also perhaps to "[do] something about" (Burr, 1995, p. 171) opening possibilities for critical analysis in the practice of the curriculum.

Secondly, such an analysis is necessary simply by merit of the arguments contained within the curriculum itself. The curriculum promotes a shift in focus from transmission learning approaches to transformative approaches. The principles of transformative learning necessarily require that the curriculum itself be available and open to critical reflection. As a member of the task team that helped produce these documents, it is my obligation to apply such critical analysis.

1.5 My Involvement and Interest in the Redesign Process

Taylor (2001) notes that research conducted using discourse analysis will ultimately be making "some kind of epistemological claim[s]" (p. 11) about the language patterns uncovered. In the positivist tradition, research

results occupy epistemological positions that include the assumption that the knowledge gained is "generalizable to other contexts because it is universal" (Taylor, 2001, p. 11). This tradition ascribes to the notion that knowledge produced by research can be "value-free and objective" (Taylor, 2001, p. 11). In contrast to this claim, Said (1978) notes the fallacy of ascribing a notion of "truth" to that which is "objective." He states,

> The general liberal consensus that 'true' knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not 'true' knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced. No one is helped in understanding this today when the adjective 'political' is used as a label to discredit any work for daring to violate the protocol of pretended suprapolitical objectivity (Said, 1978, p. 10).

In this section, I offer my own background and position in relation to the topic. My intention is to demonstrate my own particular perspective on the topic - to offer my interpretation of the data based on my unique position in the world.

By documenting my own position in my research, I am identifying with and operating from a post-positivist, post-structural position, which Taylor (2001) notes places itself in contrast to the positivist tradition. Instead of claims of objectivity, post-positivism and post-structuralism concede that all vantage points to an understanding of a topic are necessarily partial. This tradition suggests the result of research will be a version of truth or an

interpretation that is situated and located and partial (Taylor, 2001, p. 11).

Taylor notes the premises of this tradition inevitably lead to an understanding

of partial perspective. One of these premises is that no single truth is

possible due to the nature of people who have varying viewpoints and

perspectives. Taylor draws on the work of Said (1978) noting,

> Any account of a social phenomenon or situation inevitably reflects
>
> the observer/researcher's partial understanding and special interest.
>
> To claim it as pure knowledge or truth would therefore be to deny the
>
> diversity of viewpoints and experiences of other people who are
>
> involved (p. 12).

Taylor further notes that the epistemological claims within post-structuralism

are that "knowledge obtained by research is **partial**, **situated**… and

relative" (p. 12).

Taylor (2001) also suggests that the research and researcher are not

separate and that the identity of the researcher is relevant in several ways.

Namely, it influences the selection of the research project in that the

research project is likely to be in tune with the researcher's "personal

interests, sympathies and political beliefs" (p. 17) and the researcher is likely

to have personal links to the topic. However, Taylor also notes that within

the post-structural tradition this is not viewed "negatively as a bias but as a

position to be acknowledged" (p. 17).

It is important to question whether new curriculum and new

instructional and pedagogical approaches are the answers to changing the

system to make it more amenable to Aboriginal learners. These are the legitimate concerns I have with the new curriculum as an administrator in the ABE system for a Métis educational institution, as a Métis person concerned with the education of Métis people in this province, and as a citizen of this province with an interest in the future of my children. I have done a fair bit of thinking and writing about the ABE system for Aboriginal adult learners and about my hopes for curriculum redesign. I have found my self deeply invested in the production of new ABE curriculum.

The concept of curricular hegemony is one I have been concerned with for a number of years. Curriculum development and dissemination are productive of hegemony. Any knowledge produced within a society is, by its very nature and locus of development, socially constructed. As such, curricular knowledge, also subject to the same social construction, cannot be viewed as "objective," neutral, or race, class or gender-free, as we are sometimes meant to believe it is. Instead, curricular knowledge plays a significant role in influencing, shaping, and producing structures of society. Curriculum helps in the production, reproduction, and maintenance of social constructions of power and inequality.

Connell (1993) writes on curricular knowledge noting,

Knowledge itself is social. The organization of knowledge that we are familiar with in school curricula was created by particular social processes, by particular people with particular points of view (p. 30).

Likewise, Banks (1993) reflects similar sentiments, stating that the "knowledge people create is heavily influenced by their interpretations of their experiences and their positions within particular social, economic, and political systems and structures of a society" (p. 5). Connell further notes that knowledge is never simply knowledge (p. 30). The social environment in which this knowledge is produced is necessarily linked to larger social structures. Far from being produced as simple, unencumbered, "objective," knowledge, knowledge itself is a production and re-production of the social structures and systems surrounding it.

Connell (1993) acknowledges that, in addition to the social production of curricular knowledge are the social effects that such knowledge produces. Connell writes:

> Social division and social power shape the production and distribution of knowledge… [and] the reciprocal is also true: the way knowledge is organized has social consequences. The curriculum produces social *effects*, not incidentally, but through its very nature as an organization of knowledge (p. 34).

Connell refers to the consequences of curriculum in the following terms:

> Mainstream curricula is hegemonic in schools in the sense that (a) it marginalizes other ways of organizing knowledge, (b) it is integrated with the structure of power in educational institutions, and (c) it occupies the high cultural ground, defining most people's common-sense views of what learning ought to be…mainstream curriculum is

hegemonic in the society at large in the sense that it is part of the

cultural and practical underpinning of the ascendancy of particular

social groups-capitalists and professionals, men, Anglos (p. 38).

Curriculum presented for use in Saskatchewan classrooms, from the

elementary through to the adult systems, represents particular selections of

knowledge and concepts that tend to reinforce mainstream dominance and,

thereby, necessarily omit alternative knowledge and concepts. Material

selected for inclusion in officially sanctioned curriculum, presented as

knowledge that is valid and valued, has the effect of reinforcing dominant

relations. In this Canadian context, that is, in a country built through

colonization and still functioning on the structures, systems and ideologies of

colonialism, the curriculum is an agent of social production and reproduction.

The curriculum produces, reproduces, and maintains dominance by

selectively presenting particular knowledge as valid, valuable, and legitimate.

I have been involved in the process of the ABE curriculum redesign

from as early as the Basic Education Evaluation (1999) initiative referred to

in the background section of this thesis. In my enthusiasm for the

possibilities of new curriculum, I requested appointment as the

representative from my institution to the Basic Education (BE) Redesign

Task Team, the body set up by Saskatchewan Learning to direct the design,

development, and implementation of the new Saskatchewan ABE

curriculum. Once appointed to the task team, I began culling readings that I

thought would be suitable for the other task team members to consider. I

chose readings on multicultural curriculum reform and on hegemony in the curriculum, namely Banks (1993) and Connell (1993). My reasons for choosing these readings were first, because I was familiar with them and in agreement with their positions; and second, because I wanted to present some ideas that were compelling enough to encourage other members of the task team to think differently about the opportunities for curriculum development that were before us.

Ultimately, I did not share copies of these documents directly with the other task team members. Instead, I began a dialogue with the person hired as the BE Redesign project manager. The role of the project manager was to conceptualize the development of the new curriculum and then develop the basis for it, as well as determine the framework and structure of ABE for the province, with the input and direction of the task team - no small task. Shortly after the project manager was hired, I initiated contact with her and began discussing the ideas about curriculum reform that I had identified. We exchanged articles to read and had many lengthy conversations. The problems arose with how to move theoretical understandings about curriculum as a source of knowledge linked to power distribution into curriculum documents that would subvert the tendency and practices of hegemony and be meaningful to those who would use them for practice in the field. As this thesis will demonstrate, maintaining a consistent theoretical basis and putting theoretical understandings of social justice into practice in the curriculum documents remains problematic.

Initially, I served on the task team for over a year as a regular part of my job duties. Following this, I maintained my commitment to the task team for about eight months into a maternity leave, attending meetings with a new baby and reviewing documents on the fly. I felt strongly about the importance of curriculum development and was reluctant to relinquish my position on the task team. I believed I could make a difference in the outcome of the curriculum documents. I wanted to be involved because I had an agenda: I thought I could be influential in making the new curriculum less hegemonic. I did not want to let the project go and risk not having that voice in the curriculum development. However, I finally came to realize that I could no longer effectively meet my obligations as a member of the task team given the other roles and responsibilities in my life. Therefore, at the time that other changes were occurring within the task team structure and membership, I made a decision that it was an opportune time for me to remove myself. I found a replacement from my institution and withdrew from the task team.

Although I have left the task team, I have not lost interest in the project. Despite my efforts to walk away, the documents and the important work of the development of the new curriculum are compelling. I maintain such an interest because I see discourse as powerful and consequential. The curriculum documents are influential to practices in ABE, and have material consequences for Aboriginal learners in ABE programs. It is the

thought of the consequences of the curriculum that motivate my continued interest in the ABE curriculum development project.

As stated above, I ascribe to the notion that objectivity and neutrality in the analysis of the curriculum are impossible and any claims I might make in this vein would be disingenuous. I have stakes in this work that extend to my prevailing concern about hegemonic curriculum and its effects on Aboriginal learners. Furthermore, I am bound to this work through my own involvement in the production of the documents in the first place and in coming to understand how difficult it is to subvert hegemony from within the system.

1.6 Post-Structural Theory

This section presents the theory and methodology used in the examination of the new ABE curriculum documents. One way of approaching the on-going problem of hegemony in the curriculum, and the production of identities for Aboriginal learners is through the application of discourse analysis to the curriculum documents as a way to bring awareness to the problem. This is the approach I take in this thesis.

1.6.1 Foucault

The work of Foucault, a pre-eminent and influential post-structural theorist, and his insights about the relationships between power, knowledge,

and discourse inform the direction taken in this work. In particular, I refer to Foucault's *Power/Knowledge* (1977). The authors I have drawn on to support my understanding of Foucault's insights specifically, and post-structural theory generally, are Burr (1995), Hall (2001), Taylor (2001), Fairclough (2001), Meyer (2001), Mills (2003), Van Dijk (2001), and Wetherell (2001).

One of the key questions I encountered in deciding to conduct discourse analysis is to understand exactly what is meant by "discourse." Foucault's notion of discourse is described by Hall (2001a) as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (p. 72). Discourse that represents "knowledge" about a particular topic is also discourse that is favoured as legitimate at a given time and within a given context. Of interest to this research are the legitimized discourses about Aboriginal people within the province and within ABE and Saskatchewan Learning.

Based on the notions of discourse provided by Foucault and others, one can surmise that it is within discourse that we can locate historically specific meanings about a particular topic or concept. It is also possible to analyze the discourse for the prevailing normative notions about the topic and people discussed, in this case, ABE for Aboriginal learners. Through the particular and specific discourse about a topic, we can reveal how the discourse regulates ideas about the topic and/or subjects. In other words,

the discourse establishes what is acceptable to "say" and "think" about the topic and/or subjects (Hall, 2001a, p. 73). In addition to this function of control, the discourse gives the topic/subjects meaning and produces our knowledge about the topic. Hall (2001a) quotes from his earlier work, noting that these meanings "'shape and influence what we do – our conduct - all practices have a discursive aspect'" (p. 72). As such, discourse is productive of social practice and meanings.

As noted earlier, a number of writers in the field of discourse analysis raise the question of what exactly "discourse" means. Burr (1995) offers the following ideas in an attempt to describe or define what discourse is. She writes:

> The things that people say or write, then, can be thought of as instances of discourses; as occasions where particular discourses are given the opportunity to construct an event in this way rather than that.…A discourse about an object is said to manifest itself in texts – in speech, say a conversation or an interview, in written material such as novels, newspaper articles or letters, in visual images like magazine advertisements or films, or even in 'meanings' embodied in clothes people wear or the way they do their hair. In fact, anything that can be 'read' for meaning can be thought of as being a manifestation of one or more discourses and can be referred to as a 'text' (pp. 50-51).

Since the objective is to discover how discourses construct meaning and how social practices are brought to bear through discourse, then this broad definition of discourse serves that purpose well.

Another key feature of the post-structural theory of discourse is that it produces meaning through its power as a constructor of knowledge. The post-structural position is that discourse is an active agent in the construction of meaning. As such, discourse has consequential, material effects in the world and for subjects affected by discourse. Hall (2001a) argues that the idea that things and actions "only take on meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse, is at the heart of the **constructionist theory of meaning and representation**" (p. 73). Taylor (2001) echoes this sentiment in her discussion about language, stating that language "is not a neutral information-carrying vehicle, as the transmission model of communication would imply. Rather, language is **constitutive**: it is the site where meanings are created and changed" (p. 6). The knowledge we produce at a particular historical moment, within a particular social context, about particular subjects or topics influences the actions we take in relation to that topic or subject. As such, the discourse, and the knowledge produced by that discourse, is "applied in the real world, has real effects, and in that sense at least 'becomes true'" (Hall, 2001a, p. 76).

In addition to recognizing the constitutive qualities of discourse, Boler and Zembylas (2003) remind us that the power attached to discourse is not only oppressive:

From Foucault's point of view, discourse is a form of power that
circulates in the social and political terrain and can attach to strategies
of domination as well as to those of resistance (Sawicki 1991).
Consequently, from a Foucaultian perspective, no discourse is
inherently liberating or oppressive (p. 120).

Discourse is important for the ways that it produces material effects and
consequences. A perspective that sees it merely as wielding oppressive
power is discouraged. However, with this in mind, a cautionary note may be
sounded, in that there is a real tendency, even within Foucault's own work,
to see power functioning primarily in its oppressive form as a tool for the re-
inscription of dominance "and does not focus very much on the productive
mechanisms of power" (Mills, 2003, p. 124). This discrepancy points to the
difficulty sometimes of reconciling theory with practice. While it is one thing
to have a theoretical understanding of discourse producing not only
oppressive but also productive power relations, it may be difficult to sustain
this consideration when employing the theoretical understandings in a critical
analysis such as this one. This examination of the new ABE curriculum
documents attempts to keep this difficulty in mind as it proceeds.

1.7 Method of Discourse Analysis

Just as the term "discourse" is the subject of some discrepancy, as
noted above, likewise the phrase "discourse analysis" can also be difficult.
Taylor (2001) writes of discourse analysis that it is "best understood as a

field of research rather than a single practice" (p. 5). While discourse analysis allies itself with the work of Foucault, this is not necessarily always the case. Several approaches to discourse analysis do not require the grounding of Foucaultian, or even post-structural, theory in order to proceed. One example is conversation analysis, which falls more within the structuralist tradition.

Several practices within the field of discourse analysis clearly draw on the ideas of Foucault. As Taylor (2001) notes, the application of discourse analysis that "draws attention to the social nature and historical origins of the world 'out there' which is generally taken for granted" rests on the basic assumption that "the language available to people enables and constrains not only their expression of certain ideas but also what they do" (p. 9).

Burr (1995) concurs with Taylor on the point that discourse analysis is more of an approach than a method. Burr (1995) makes this distinction based on the assertion that discourse analysis "is unlike the majority of existing traditional methods of social scientific enquiry, since it is not possible to describe it adequately in 'recipe-type' terms" (p. 163). Burr (1995) goes on to note that any guidelines that do exist for conducting discourse analysis are unable to be particularly specific due to the "nature of discourse analysis itself [as] subjective and interpretive" (p. 163). The term "discourse analysis," then, refers to a number of practices of analyzing discourses distinguished mainly by the adherence of the researcher to theoretical traditions that uphold language as a constituent of social and material

conditions and that understand change as a product, at least partially, of language.

As I have stated, in the case of this work, the post-structural ideas presented by Foucaultian scholars about power, knowledge and discourse will underpin the examination and analysis of the curriculum documents produced by the ABE redesign process. This theoretical orientation will guide the discourse analysis. The approach of discourse analysis is a means of examining the documents with the purpose of analyzing prevalent discourses in ABE. It proves useful in exploring how such discourses produce instructors, learners, and knowledge in ABE.

1.7.1 Derrida and Deconstruction

In addition to utilizing ideas from Foucault, this thesis utilizes insights provided by Derrida regarding the deconstruction of texts. The influence of Derrida on this analysis is to examine the texts with the objective of "revealing how they contain 'hidden' internal contradictions, and making the absent or repressed meanings present for the reader, showing how we are led by the text into accepting the assumptions it contains" (Burr, 1995, p. 165). What is available in English about Derrida's ideas is applicable and useful to the discourse analysis of the ABE curriculum documents. This thesis incorporates Derrida's insights. Specifically, I refer to Derrida's (1997), *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* as a source for a number of important concepts relevant to deconstruction. The commentary and editorial notes by

Caputo, provided in the same volume, are useful in elucidating and expanding on the insights revealed by Derrida. In addition, Derrida's (1970) *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* provides insights into the ways that post-structural thought operates and to the application of deconstruction**.**

Coming from a post-structural standpoint, the discourse analysis undertaken involves exploring the implications of the language of the documents. It examines how the discourse regulates and constrains both the ABE learners and the instructors.

Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the historical context of discursive practices about Aboriginal people in ABE within the department of Saskatchewan Learning. Discursive practices made available to Saskatchewan Learning, particularly through reports about Saskatchewan demographics, contribute to the establishment of a particular grand narrative about Aboriginal people as deficient that gets subsumed into the discourses of Saskatchewan Learning, and in particular into the new ABE curriculum documents.

2.2 Saskatchewan Demographic Reports

Hall (2001a) notes that in the discourse about topics certain elements are typically present. One of those elements is the establishment of "rules" that "prescribe certain ways of talking about these topics and exclude other ways – which govern what is 'sayable' or 'thinkable' about [the topic] at a particular historical moment" (p. 73). The general discourse about Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan Learning represents "common sense" ways of talking and thinking about Aboriginal people. I will argue that these common sense ways of viewing Aboriginal people become part of a grand narrative

about Aboriginal people, uncritically applied as the truth about the way things are. Such a grand narrative represents legitimized discourses about Aboriginal people. It is necessary to reveal and analyze what this general discourse establishes as taken-for-granted knowledge about Aboriginal people in order to provide some clarity as to how the curriculum documents have incorporated such normative notions and how that discourse re-produces Aboriginal adult learners in acceptable legitimized ways according to the discourse of the day. The use of and reliance on an overarching grand narrative about Aboriginal people in both the demographics report and the new ABE curriculum demonstrates how a grand narrative of Aboriginal people works in a circular, self-sustaining way.

Based on Foucaultian theory, language is situated historically and socially in a particular context. The task of contextualizing the discourse of the documents within the larger social discourse is an important one. The prevailing discourse about Aboriginal people in general has informed common sense notions about Aboriginal people, producing Aboriginal people in certain ways. One of the documents that provide a particular grand narrative about Aboriginal people is the demographics report referred to earlier. This report has had a considerable impact on the development of thought and policy within Saskatchewan Learning and the ABE system. The ways Aboriginal people are produced in this document affects the production of Aboriginal adult learners in the curriculum documents. The analysis of the

demographics report is a key starting point and foundation for the analysis of the curriculum documents.[1]

In order to understand the new ABE curriculum it is important to understand some of what was taking place in Saskatchewan Learning prior to the decision to "redesign" the ABE curriculum. Saskatchewan Learning developed a particular way of talking about and thinking about Aboriginal people as deficient in relation to the labour force, that is, as non-participants. The following section provides an analysis of the discourse that has influenced the development of the new ABE curriculum.

As noted earlier, a major influence on the thinking and judgments within Saskatchewan Learning that has affected the new ABE curriculum are traceable to a concern for the shifting demographics of the province and the implicit impact of these shifting demographics on the labour market and on employment. Demographic information and demographic forecasts into the future became available both to the government and to the wider, more public domain, in a couple of key reports. The first of these reports, published in 1997, is the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) report entitled *Saskatchewan and Aboriginal Peoples in the 21st Century* (1997). The second report, which is the focus of this analysis because it has been the more influential, in terms of developments within Saskatchewan Learning, is the *Saskatchewan Labour Market Trends Report*, published in 2000. This report is referred to in this thesis as the demographics report.

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[1] Within this thesis it will appear that the documents analysed have been given agency. Without wishing to reify the documents I have ascribed an active role to them in order to show that they work to bring effects on the reader.

These reports make a couple of general claims regarding the demographics of the province and Aboriginal peoples. The essence of the claims within these reports are that the general population of the province is an aging population while, at the same time, the Aboriginal population specifically is a young, growing population, with a birth rate approximately two times that of the general population. The implications are that a replacement labour force will be required, due to the aging general population and declining birthrates of the general population, and that the booming Aboriginal population, which has been under-utilized in the labour market, can provide for the labour force shortages forecast by the decrease in the general population.

The FSIN report (1997), published before the demographics report (2000), seems to have provided the "heads up" to government about shifting demographics in the province. It takes an economic position with respect to the projected demographics and calls for the engagement by business, industry, and government with Aboriginal people in order to locate areas of mutual advantage. The report characterizes the "problem" in terms of economics, stating the following:

> The aggregate and regional economic analysis have illustrated an important economic problem for Saskatchewan over the next 50 years. The status quo scenario shows an Aboriginal population that is growing rapidly while employment for Aboriginal people continues to grow at the current rate, which is less than population growth. The

results are 1) increasing unemployment in the Aboriginal communities

over the next 50 years, 2) decreasing average personal incomes, and

3) more reliance on governments for assistance. The main impact on

non-Aboriginal people is the increasing tax burden required to finance

government assistance to unemployed Aboriginal people (p. 78).

While the underlying intention of such a forecast and the language of the

above statement may be to force "the powers that be" to take notice, it

promotes an alarmist tone concerning Aboriginal population growth. Such a

tone then may become a part of the general repertoire of government

departments and institutions compelled to "deal with" this "problem" of

Aboriginal people, who do not pay income tax and who, through an increase

in population, become a tax burden.

　　　　While I have raised the FSIN report here, I have done so in order to

demonstrate the development of particular trends in how government

departments think about and talk about Aboriginal people. I will not provide

any further analysis or discussion of the FSIN report because shortly

following its release Saskatchewan Learning commissioned a similar report

for its own uses. It is this report that I focus on because it is critical to

developments in thinking within Saskatchewan Learning regarding "the

Aboriginal problem."

2.2.1 The Privilege of Framing the Problem

As noted above, a couple of years following the FSIN report, Saskatchewan Learning commissioned the demographics report. In this report, the problems of increasing Aboriginal population, high Aboriginal unemployment, and low education levels are constructed. The framing of the problem and the power to construct the problem in the first place reveals a privileged position on the part of the report and its readers. The problem is based on a perspective of dominance and is presented as primarily an Aboriginal problem of high birth rates, low employment rates and low education attainment. By framing the problem in these particular ways, the discourse diverts attention away from questions or analyses of systemic inequalities. An example of the subtle way that the report presents the problem and diverts attention from questions that are important to ask is the way that the report presents Aboriginal people as needing to be engaged in the labour market rather than presenting employers as the ones who need to engage with Aboriginal people. The emphasis on Aboriginal people and Aboriginal employment rates and Aboriginal education levels leaves questions of dominant structures and systems out of the equation. The report neatly sidesteps any consideration of systemic discrimination and its corollary aspect of over-privileging of white people. Instead, the problem falls squarely on Aboriginal people and the focus is on how to improve or fix

Aboriginal people to make "them" more amenable to existing structures and systems.

Saskatchewan Learning is clearly pursuing "official" practices aimed at Aboriginal employment in the new curriculum, in that employment outcomes are important for the department. However, there is little or no recognition of the problem of the often subtle, sometimes fierce, resistance to Aboriginal participation in the labour market. The question is why is *this* not taken up as a worthy problem. Historical processes provide some insight. For example, Carter (1986) documents the resistance mounted by white farmers to Aboriginal participation in farming in the late 1800's. As Aboriginal farmers began to compete with them in the marketplace, white farmers argued that Aboriginal farmers were gaining unfair advantages through the meagre provisions provided for under government policy. Such an argument completely ignored the difficult and differential conditions that Aboriginal farmers persevered under, and the many privileges that the white farmers enjoyed in comparison (pp. 461-462).

A similar argument of "unfairness" has persisted in current discourses related to Aboriginal people and employment. A backlash against employment equity or affirmative action programs and policies has become increasingly evident in the social and political discourse. This backlash employs similar arguments as those illustrated by Carter; that is, that equity programs provide unfair advantages, while similarly ignoring the over-privileging that affords unearned advantages to white people based on race

alone. The problems presented in the demographics documents leave these issues unacknowledged. Instead, it is clear that there are official policies and programs within Saskatchewan Learning that call for increased Aboriginal employment while at the same time Aboriginal people face perceptions that they are in competition for jobs considered the "right" of non-Aboriginals, and accrue discrimination. Such historical inequities in the labour market are alluded to by the demographics reports. It is clearly acknowledged that Aboriginal people have faced discriminatory and exclusionary systems, structures and practices; yet, the focus of the reports remains on a simplistic relationship between shifting provincial demographics, Aboriginal labour force "participation" rates, and education levels. The focus on these apparent causes and effects (e.g., low education leads to low employment rates) allows a focus on solutions that at once blame Aboriginal people for the effects of systemic and structural discrimination of past and present and make invisible the dominant discourse of resistance to Aboriginal participation.

The report informs its readers that the problem lies within Aboriginal people and suggests that the solution lies in education. The report states, "The current low participation rates for the Registered Indian population can be almost entirely attributed to the low levels of formal education" (p. 71). The problem, as summed up here, is that Aboriginal people have low levels of formal education, which leads to high unemployment. Empirical data support this interpretation of the problem in the form of a bar graph that

ostensibly depicts the link between employment and education. The reference to data, the use of the language and tools of science, and the use of technical terms and images is a means by which to bolster the claims made by the report and to encourage readers of the report to believe in its authority. The use of the devices and language of science allows the report to evade any examination or mention of the implication of social structures and dominance in the problem because the language of science is privileged and suggestive of authority. The problem remains simply a matter of Aboriginal achievement levels. The implication is that an improvement in education levels in the Aboriginal population will result in a corresponding rise in the employment rate. The report effectively identifies the symptoms as the problem rather than as the effects of an unidentified, unaddressed problem. For instance, an education system that is not receptive to Aboriginal people or, likewise, an employment system that is similarly exclusive.

Returning to the bar graph that is presented as evidence of the correlation between low education and low employment, this evidence is worthy of examination (see Appendix A). There is a conflict between what the report claims the graph represents and an analysis of what it reveals. The description in the report states that the graph shows "the strong relationship between levels of formal education and employment" (p. 71). However, examination of the graph reveals the un-sustainability of the report's claims that low levels of formal education correlate directly to low

levels of employment. In fact, upon scrutiny the graph depicts a scenario

that challenges, rather than upholds, the belief that higher education alone

ensures employment. The graph shows first that, of the non-Aboriginal

population 15 and older, 58% have at least a grade 12. The employment

rate for the non-Aboriginal population is 65%. Therefore, according to the

graph, a lower percent of that population has achieved at least grade 12

(58%) than has gained employment (65%).   The graph supports a claim that

lower education levels are not especially problematic for the non-Aboriginal

population as they relate to employment rates.

In comparison, the graph shows the Aboriginal population as having

41% with at least grade 12 and 38 % employed. The Aboriginal scenario is

the opposite of the non-Aboriginal scenario in that a higher percent of the

Aboriginal population has achieved at least grade 12 (41%) than has gained

employment (38%).   What the graph really depicts is a differential structure

for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people when it comes to levels of formal

education and employment rates. An analysis of the graph reveals that it

challenges, rather than supports, the belief that higher education alone

ensures employability. The graph depicts a situation different from that

described in the document. Yet the document overlooks the incongruence

between what it depicts graphically and reports textually. The document

ignores the implications within its own evidence of structural inequality and

systemic over-privileging of the non-Aboriginal population, diverting our

attention instead to a scenario that constructs Aboriginal people as problematic and in need of remedy by more education.

By constructing the problem in these terms, the document directs the readers' attention to problems and solutions that appear to have relatively simple explanations. The cause and effect relationship between education and employment constructs a simplistic scenario that can then be "dealt with." It constructs a scenario that continues to allow the dominant helper to help the Aboriginal other. But this help is in fact disingenuous, in that it does not strive to fully incorporate the other, but rather to maintain the relationship of dominance in which the identities of helper and helped will ultimately be maintained, so relations that affirm superiority and inferiority are re-inscribed.

2.2.2 Demographic Report as Discursive Practice

The results of the demographics report have driven the types of discourses that those at Saskatchewan Learning engage in. The discourses prevalent in the demographics report that construct Aboriginal people as having deficits are reproduced and re-inscribed within subsequent discourses of the department. In addition, department reports reference the demographics report as an important and legitimate source of information. The influence and citation of the demographics report within the department is evident in numerous subsequent documents and reports of Saskatchewan Learning. Examples of such publications and reports include the *Saskatchewan Training Strategy Final Report* (2000) and *Planning for the*

needs of Saskatchewan Learners, Employers, and Communities (2002), the

sector strategic plan. The demographics report, then, can be seen to be an

important and influential document in Saskatchewan Learning – one that

influences the direction and actions taken by the department.

Given the influence of the demographics report in Saskatchewan

Learning, it is not surprising to see it referenced in the curriculum planning

and foundations document. There is both indirect and direct evidence of the

influence of the demographics report in the curriculum documents. For

instance, the planning and foundations document contains a lengthy footnote

that appears in connection with the definition of the term "Aboriginal" and

segues into providing information about Saskatchewan demographics (p. 8).

This reference to the demographics report establishes that the report is

useful to the government department that commissioned it. The referencing

of the report illustrates its importance as a contributing piece of knowledge to

the thinking and practices within Saskatchewan Learning and in relation to

the process of redesigning the ABE curriculum.

Hall (2001b) notes that the accumulation of meanings occurs when

discourses cross one another, when one discourse or text is "read," not as a

single text, but in conjunction with other texts that also influence it. Hall

makes specific reference to images, but his comments are applicable to

other types of discourse as well. He states that,

> Images do not carry meaning or 'signify' on their own. They
>
> accumulate meanings, or play off their meanings against one another,

across a variety of texts and media. Each image carries its own, specific meaning. But at the broader level of how 'difference' and 'otherness' is being represented in a particular culture at any one moment, we can see similar representational practices and figures being repeated, with variations, from one text or site of representation to another. This accumulation of meanings across different texts, where one image refers to another or has its meaning altered by being 'read' in the context of other images, is called inter-textuality. We may describe the whole repertoire of imagery and visual effects through which 'difference' is represented at any one historical moment as a *regime of representation* (p. 328).

The demographics report that preceded the curriculum heavily influences the "regime of representation" that constructs Aboriginal learners as deficient within the curriculum documents.

In relation to the demographics discourse of Aboriginal deficiency, which can be seen to be an increasingly widespread and common sense discourse within Saskatchewan Learning and within adult education, I offer a personal example of how discourse produces knowledge that becomes common sense and subsequently affects interactions between people. The demographics report presents the Aboriginal population as having very high birth rates. The report also constructs Aboriginal women as particularly "fertile," stating "fertility rates…for Saskatchewan Indian women…are substantially higher than for the non-Indian population" (p. 47). The report

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cites these rates as approximately twice the rate as those for non-Aboriginal women. Social practices attest to the achievement of identity construction for "the Aboriginal woman," a clear example of the effects of discourse in the lives of Aboriginal people. The effect I experienced was to have someone address me in a meeting by making specific reference to the "common sense" knowledge of the increasing Aboriginal population, noting that I was obviously "doing my part" with a nod toward my newborn baby whom I had brought to the meeting with me. The remark was a joke that everyone in attendance was able to share in due to our shared understanding of the "grand narrative" or regime of representation that depicts Aboriginal women in particular and accepted ways. Those particular representations include the suggestion that Aboriginal women are especially sexual and indiscriminate procreators. Similar practices are ongoing in the lives of Aboriginal people. Just as in this situation, where I too laughed and participated in the joke, it is often the case that both dominant group members and those from marginal groups will participate in "consensual social practices" that are based on taken-for-granted truths (Boler & Zembylas, 2003, p. 111). As Boler and Zembylas (2003) point out, "no one escapes hegemony" (p. 115).

As is clear from the above example, one of the effects of the demographics report is that it establishes a grand narrative of an Aboriginal population explosion and of Aboriginal people as (provisionally) the Saskatchewan workforce of the future. The corollary to this grand narrative

has to do with education; that is, Aboriginal people can become the workforce of the future for the province if they attain certain levels of education. The report reinforces and reproduces general knowledge regarding "low levels of formal education" attainment by Aboriginal people (Sask Trends Monitor, 2000, p. 71). The references to low levels of education attainment presume this is standard knowledge shared by readers of the report. The shaping of the grand narrative of Aboriginal deficiency provides a convenient focus on Aboriginal people that allows dominance and historical considerations to remain unexamined.

The demographics report sets the tone for Saskatchewan Learning. It provides credible and legitimate notions for use within the department. By breaking out the population forecast for the "Registered Indian" population, and the labour force participation rates for the "Registered Indian" population, and treating those areas as discrete areas of concern, and in comparison with non-Aboriginal rates, the report is not only suggesting, but establishing, a specific area for Saskatchewan Learning to focus its attention. The report makes available to Saskatchewan Learning a discourse about Aboriginal people that becomes a part of the "regime of representation" (Hall, 2001b, p. 328) available to the department, and on which future action may be based. In the choice to create certain representations, the report necessarily leaves out other possibilities for analysis. For instance, the author of the report could have made a decision to pin-point a different problem, such as the "low fertility" rates of the general

population, or the systemic and historically documented barriers to "labour force participation" faced by Aboriginal people. While the low birthrate of the general population is mentioned, it is not problematized in the same way that Aboriginal people are focused on. One wonders what drives the identification of the problem. The focus of the report, while it had the potential to be on a number of other areas, falls squarely on the "problem" of Aboriginal labour force participation rates, creating a discourse that is subsequently found circulating more and more widely within the thought milieu of Saskatchewan Learning.

The Aboriginal focus of the demographics report constructs Aboriginal people as problematic, in that "participation rates" in the labour force are low, at only 44% compared to 67% for the non-Aboriginal population. The use of the term "participation rates" suggests that participation is a matter of *choice* on the part of the "participant." The connotation is that choices are available about whether or not to participate. The result is an assumption that the "Registered Indian" population *chooses* not to participate in employment at the same rate that the general population. The implication of choice simplifies complex historical and social relationships between Aboriginal peoples and dominant white society, as they relate to opportunities for education and employment.   White Privilege and dominance are important in understanding the reported "participation rates"; however, the report presents information in such a way that suggests personal choice and

perhaps other personal attributes on the part of Aboriginal people are responsible for "lack of participation" in the labour force.

Again, Carter (1986) provides an analysis of the historical situation of Cree people and agricultural policies on the prairies in the late 1800s that proves useful in examining the notions of labour force participation. The demographics discourse outlined above has had an impact on the direction taken by Saskatchewan Learning in terms of the development of various strategies to strengthen connections between Aboriginal people and employment. One of these strategies is the development of new ABE curriculum that focuses on Aboriginal perspectives. This particular strategy serves further to legitimize the connection between employment rates and education attainment. However, the incorporation of an official focus by Saskatchewan Learning on employment as a desired outcome for Aboriginal learners conflicts with historical and current practices that limit Aboriginal employment. Carter carefully and meticulously chronicles the historical resistance by dominant society to participation by Aboriginal people in the economy and the labour force. Carter notes, "Aboriginal farmers were inclined to become commercial farmers…The fact that they did not had to do with government policy and intent, not with Aboriginal choice and inability" (p. 445). Carter documents specific policies intended to keep Aboriginal farmers out of the economic system and disallow them from becoming competition for white farmers.

With such a history of resistance to Aboriginal participation in the economic and social life of the nation, in which Aboriginal farmers were "denied access to… opportunities and resources" (Carter, 1986, p. 449), and were subjected to policies of "deliberate arrested development" (Carter, 1986, p. 463), the question remains: how does the official policy and aim of increasing Aboriginal employment today fit with historical practices of resistance to Aboriginal participation? The implication of "choice" in Aboriginal participation in the labour force puts the focus and the onus on Aboriginal people and avoids an examination of past practices that have denied such a choice to Aboriginal people. It implies that equal opportunities have been available for Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people alike, but that Aboriginal people have chosen not to accept or embrace those opportunities to the same degree as the non-Aboriginal population. Carter's work helps to illustrate that the depiction of "choice" is false and that, in fact, historical official policy has made that choice for Aboriginal people.

The other assumption made in the documents is that it is possible to ignore and conveniently forget about this history of resistance to Aboriginal participation. It assumes a new focus on inclusion and labour force participation can supplant this history now that the dominant population can see the economic benefits for themselves of officially including Aboriginal people. It assumes that no reference to this history is required: an assumption that allows the practices of dominance to continue unexamined and simultaneously places the problem within Aboriginal people and

establishes government institutions as benevolent helpers working diligently

to fix the problem. Instead, what is required is a public accounting of how

historically, government policy and action has served to implement and

sustain resistance to and exclusion of Aboriginal people. An accounting of,

or even an acknowledgement of, the past is required, yet conspicuously

absent within the documents. The work of Willinsky (1998) is informative in

the context of accounting for past injustices as a means of moving forward in

any intention of social justice. Willinsky (1998) argues it is important and

necessary to understand that "challenging the structuring of [racial]

differences requires equally public acts of refusing their original and intended

meanings" (p. 5). Such a challenge is never mounted. Instead the

documents ignore all reference to the past and place the locus of the

problem on the deficiencies of Aboriginal people themselves.

2.2.3 The Blending of Technical and Emotional Discursive Practices

The language of the demographics report is presented as purposely

technical and rational, lending the impression that its evidence is grounded

in empirical research and, as such, represents authoritative "facts." For

instance, the report employs such terms and phrases as demographics,

statistics, forecasts, mortality rates, data, and calculations, as well as

utilizing many figures, graphs, and charts throughout the document. The use

of "official" technical language and images intends to lend credibility and

authority to the information presented based on the privileged position of

technical, rational discourse in this western context. The employment of

such official language has the effect of making the report and its findings

difficult to dispute. At the same time that the technical language is utilized as

a legitimizing tool, there is also a generous inclusion in the report of more

"subjective," value-laden words and phrases which are intended to have an

emotional effect on readers. For instance, at the same time that the report

presents data in quantifiable terms such as percentages or numbers, it also

presents information in terms like "substant ial difference" rather than, for

instance, "50% difference." The mixing and switching between these types

of discourses, that is, the technical discourse that is intended to be taken as

"factual" and authoritative, and the more "subjective" discourse that is

intended to elicit emotions, results in the document being read as a

technical, logical, legitimate, and objective piece of information while at the

same time subtly reinforcing value judgements through the periodic

interjection of subjective discourse.

A further way that the report presents Aboriginal people relates to my

earlier comments regarding the tone of the report that presents the changing

demographics of the province as alarming. The presentation of "facts" about

Aboriginal birth rates makes Aboriginal people appear to be the creators of

an unbridled population explosion. The report suggests that non-Aboriginal

society may find itself plagued in economic and social terms, by such a

phenomenon. The increasing Aboriginal population is a potential "menace"

to the non-Aboriginal population. The alarming implications are stated in

such terms as the "urgency" of "dealing with" the "labour supply issue" (p. 72) and the "unavoidable decline" (p. 76) of the labour force. The use of technical language that conveys "facts" and "truths," combined with certain subjective interjections that serve the purpose of adding an emotional element to the document, creates a discourse underpinned by a sense of fear, urgency, and unavoidable crisis. The emphasis and re-emphasis in the report on the fact that the Registered Indian population will grow significantly contains an underlying emotional message that promotes fear. Fear, that is, of a rampant uncontrollable population explosion in the Aboriginal community and fear of the changing "look" (p. 65) of the labour force that may result in a challenge to white authority and privilege. This discourse is subsumed into the ABE redesign process.

Recognizing that the discourses overlap and contain an inter-textuality with one another that includes this discourse of panic and alarm, certain questions arise. How much is Saskatchewan Learning's push for Aboriginal ABE learners' participation in employment an effect of the fear perpetrated by the demographics report? Moreover, how much is the preoccupation with preparing Aboriginal learners for employment also a desire to control and prescribe parameters for Aboriginal people? If fear is a driving factor in the process of striving for employability for Aboriginal people, then that same fear may well be striving to contain the perceived threat through the education system, which, as Freire (1970) would note, is a major strategy in the arsenal of the oppressor (p. 11). The discrete desire of

dominance is not to assimilate or "empower" marginalized groups. It may appear that the dominant would like to remake everyone in their own image, but rather the objective is to contain those who are marginal as inferior.

Schick (2000) provides insights into the fear incited by the possible shifting of boundaries between who is marginal and who is central. Citing Fanon (1963), Schick notes that for the "colonialist" the biggest threat comes in the form of the "other" acting and performing competently in roles reserved under colonialism for the colonialist. She states, "Fanon describes the terror initiated by colonised people when they perform perfectly those functions which the dominant group imagines it performs as distinguishing features of its dominance" (p. 94). The demographics report might appear to be establishing its desire to remake Aboriginal people in the image of the dominant group (making "them" more like "us"), but instead the effect is an attempt, based on fear, to re-inscribe boundaries between dominant "helpers" and Aboriginal people "as the one[s] cared for" (Noddings, 1984, cited in Schick, 2000, p. 94). Schick further notes the fear and resistance to the possibility that parameters may shift between who is defined as the helper and who is the helped. She states,

> It is not simply one's redundancy as a group which appals…. Rather, what is shocking is the discovery that dominance is neither innate nor an automatic entitlement; and further that racial superiority is a social construction dependent upon those whom one has named other (p. 94).

Language and terms that produce an undercurrent of fear and anxiety bolster particular representation of Aboriginal people as problematic and deficient in the demographics report. The effect of this emotional representation is to incite a re-commitment to the maintenance of well-established boundaries between helper and helped identities.

While this chapter has established how the reporting of provincial demographics has led to particular constructions of Aboriginal people within Saskatchewan Learning and how those constructions become common, legitimized ways of thinking, talking about, and behaving in regard to Aboriginal people, the next chapter begins to focus specifically on the curriculum documents produced within the unique culture of Saskatchewan Learning.

Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins the analysis of the new ABE curriculum documents. This analysis focuses on the production of instructors as dominant and innocent through their enactment of the curriculum. The production of dominant instructor identities is examined and the presumed hostility of this curriculum audience is demonstrated. In addition, the analysis focuses on how the discourse constructs Aboriginal learners and the ways in which this production allies itself with the established grand narrative about Aboriginal people as deficient. The effect is to reinforce particular discourses about Aboriginal people as common sense ideas that avoid scrutiny because they "fit" with what we "know."

3.2 The Establishment of Dominant Instructor Identities

The curriculum documents identify their intended audience both explicitly and implicitly. The documents construct the assumed audience, also referred to here as the addressee, in a multitude of ways that play into a number of existing discourses as well as re-creating a number of possible discourses.

The curriculum establishes the addressee as the instructors of ABE. The instructors are addressed in such a manner that a unified "we" is established. The language of the documents suggests that "we as instructors" do and know certain things. One of the things "we" know is who "our" learners are. For example, the curriculum guide notes that the advisory committee shared an understanding about "our roles as Basic Education instructors" (p. 2). More specifically, the curriculum documents identify the addressee as *racially dominant* instructor by way of a number of implicit and explicit messages within the documents. The following examples illustrate the production of the instructor as racially dominant.

A subtext of race and dominance runs throughout the curriculum that, although never explicitly discussed or elaborated on, is implied and assumed throughout. For instance, in relation to the addressee of the curriculum, there is a point in the discourse where it becomes clear that the curriculum produces the instructor as racially dominant. This establishes the instructor as occupying a position not only of racial dominance but also of dominant helper. In accounting for the challenges diversity can pose, the curriculum guides imply that the instructor is, or likely may be, racially dominant. Consider the following statement in the context of a discussion about the need to learn how to "negotiate across cultures" and develop "Cross-cultural competence" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 3):

We need to approach new relationships in a humble manner, recognizing and admitting to ourselves when we lack experience and

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comfort in working with others. Then we, like all adult learners, must

choose to move towards social action by committing ourselves to

learning more about others (p. 3).

Just who are the "others" referred to in this passage? I would suggest that

this section, in conjunction with the section that follows it directly, entitled

Aboriginal Perspectives, suggests that the "other" referred to in the passage

is the Aboriginal other. Support for this assumption is also found in St. Denis

and Schick (2003), who note,

In this Canadian prairie context, it is Aboriginal peoples who form the

greatest critical mass to challenge normative practices of dominant

white culture. *The cultural other* is typically understood to be

Aboriginal peoples even though other visible minority groups also

make the area their home (p. 56).

In establishing the other as the Aboriginal learner, the discourse sets the

expectation that the audience of the documents is likely made up of racially

dominant instructors.

Within the curriculum, certain language suggests the hierarchical

positioning of instructors in relation to learners and subtly reinforces the

dominance of the instructor. For instance, the language of ownership

appears in the documents when learners are referred to, in relation to

instructors, as "their learners" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p.

2), and classrooms are referred to as "our classrooms" (Saskatchewan

Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 2). The following quote from the curriculum

guides clearly reflects the positions of learners and instructors who will

engage with the new curriculum:

> Those who hold dominant positions come to understand the
>
> complexity of inequality and are able to examine their own position in
>
> relation to social justice issues. The dominant, who support
>
> transformation, must provide opportunities for dominated group
>
> members (their learners) to take power, to speak out (Saskatchewan
>
> Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 12).

Clearly, the discursive practices that place instructors in dominant positions

to learners, and that were previously only alluded to in the curriculum guides,

here establish these roles in earnest.

This occurs despite the express intention of the curriculum to

recognize the diversity of instructors. The guides explicitly state, "we

[instructors] represent multiple ethnic, classed, and gendered identities"

(Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 2). In this statement, the

identities of instructors are broken down into ethnicity, class, and gender

while the identities of the learners are broken down into race, age,

community locale and personal roles: "learners are immigrants…urban

Aboriginals…mature men…and…Caucasian women" (p. 2). I question why

the documents choose ethnicity as an identity marker for instructors, rather

than race, which is clear and present for the learners. This suggests that the

curriculum considers racial identity important only as it relates to learners.

The difference between race and ethnicity is that race tends to be associated

with particular physical characteristics, making race a visible marker of identity. Ethnicity, on the other hand, tends to be more about association with a particular group based on origin of birth rather than on physical characteristics. As such, ethnicity is a *choice* available to instructors in a way that is unavailable to learners in their "raced" categories (Sleeter, 1993, p. 161).

Such a distinction suggests a view of instructors as more likely to be ethnically defined (self-identified by choice) rather than racially defined (identified and categorized by others – an imposition). The curriculum excludes race as an identifying factor for instructors, suggesting that instructors belong to the racially dominant classification of "white" that allows them the privilege of the invisibility of white as a racial category. The curriculum assumes that the instructors it addresses are white racially dominant instructors, even though the document expresses a desire for the reader to consider the diversity of instructors. The definition of instructors based on ethnicity and the definition of learners based on race serves to reinforce a discourse of dominance that positions instructors as racially dominant and learners as belonging to a "raced" category. Racial identity is significant for only one group – the learners.

The curriculum guides note that the visible diversity in classrooms is easy to recognize (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 2) – a reference to the racialization of the learners. The guide then goes on to note that, despite the visible markers of race, diversity extends beyond the visible.

This is at once a reference to race, in the first place, and then a subtle dismissal of its consideration. No more mention is made of the race of learners. In this way, instructors note race as a visible marker available for use as a means of identifying difference, and then dismiss considerations of race. How race matters is never addressed in the curriculum.

In contrast, the diversity of instructors is addressed; however, there is no mention of race. This suggests a sort of regulatory gaze on the part of instructors that is one way in scope. The gaze is able to look outward and note visible markers of race for the purposes of classifying and labelling, such as "urban Aboriginals," or "Caucasian women" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 2). However, the same gaze is incapable of turning inward, suggesting that the curriculum does not subject the instructor to the same classification or labelling process as learners. In addition, the curriculum does not provide scrutiny of race and racialization as constructed concepts that re-inscribe difference and serve the purposes of dominance.

3.2.1 Transmission Approaches and the Production of Instructor Identities

Despite the apparent good intentions of the new curriculum to subvert dominant hegemony and create inclusive education for Aboriginal learners, ABE has a long history with which to contend. It is a history of mainstream curriculum development and classroom practices that reinforce dominance. The usual or taken-for-granted way of thinking about and practicing ABE

renders these practices and developments largely invisible. This section discusses factors that contribute to the difficulty of creating new curriculum and practices that are substantially different.

Based on Freire's (1970) description of the usual forms of education as merely a process of transmission, in which teachers "fill" students with information, resulting in acceptance of dominant structures (pp. 57-60), a parallel can be drawn between this type of transmission education and that which we see practiced in schools. Education based on transmission involves an established "authority" (an instructor or a teacher) transmitting knowledge to passive pupils. Standard education assumes its knowledge is the "correct" and requisite knowledge important for learners to possess. The learner is successful by demonstrating the ability to collect, store and reproduce all of the necessary "deposits" of knowledge made by the teacher. Freire refers to this model of education as the "banking concept" (p. 58) of education. Freire argues that the teacher-student relationship in a transmission/banking model is in itself oppressive, for as the teacher sets him/herself up as the possessor of all the knowledge, the students then are possessors of very little. This model of education assumes the ignorance of the students in respect to the knowledge deemed necessary for them to acquire, and encourages the teacher to position her/himself at the top of the knowledge/power/authority hierarchy. The practice serves to reinforce the structures and workings of oppressive systems of society (Freire, 1970, pp. 58-59).

Most adult learners, particularly ABE learners - that is, those who have "failed" to attain high school credentials and have returned to formal education to obtain such credentials – have also likely experienced predominantly a transmission approach to education. These ABE learners were compelled to abandon traditional classrooms; what makes us believe that the same transmission approach to education will be useful to them as adult learners? In this vein, it is unconscionable for adult education institutions to continue dissatisfactory practices of education first begun in learners' youth – traditional transmission practices. What could such a method possibly offer adults when it has already left so much to be desired in what it has offered children? One must wonder why adult-learning programs would want to emulate such a practice. Yet, it is the banking concept of education that has typically prevailed in Saskatchewan's ABE classrooms. Even in those situations when individual teachers believe they are committed to transformative practices, such practices are found to be difficult to enact, and the commitment difficult to sustain. Schick (2000) demonstrates this phenomenon in her work about pre-service teachers, which I address further in this section. While individual instructors may commit to, and possibly practice methods other than transmission, these instructors are the exception. The general practice in ABE classrooms is to reproduce the practices of the elementary and secondary system.   Such practices prevail for reasons outlined in the following paragraphs.

A number of factors contribute to the continued practice of transmission education in adult education institutions. First, most instructors of ABE in Saskatchewan have been trained as teachers for the K-12 system. In this province at least, most institutions providing ABE courses hire instructors based on the credential of a Bachelor of Education degree. These instructors train to be traditional teachers. Secondly, those who teach most often do so by modelling their own experiences with education. After all, how is it that we know what a teacher does if it is not through our own observations over many years as students? These factors lead to a perpetuation of the "usual" ways of approaching education, which encourages the likelihood of strong carry-overs from the elementary and secondary system to the adult system. In this way, teaching approaches remain remarkably consistent from the first school encounter through to the adult "remedial" experience.

Schick (2000) explores the idea that teachers learn what it means to be a teacher based on their own experiences as learners. These experiences not only provide teachers with a model for their own teaching, but also suggest that the decision to become a teacher is part of a larger system of privilege and dominance already well entrenched within schools. Schick notes that pre-service teachers have a difficult time articulating their reasons for becoming teachers but that those reasons are bound up with the desire to share with children the good experiences they themselves have had with education. In this revelation lies the likelihood that those whose

experiences were positive are most likely those who were privileged in the education system. Schick notes that,

> While no participants declare that they view their entry into teaching as a chance to defend and disseminate the values of the dominant culture, many desire to teach because of their own positive educational experiences…their assumptions about what teachers will do, who the students will be, and participants' suitability for the job suggest that public education is in no danger of disrupting its long term effects of social reproduction (p. 91).

Transmission approaches to education rely heavily on unequal power relationships which take the form of hierarchies and which occur in individual classrooms, in schools, and in overall systems of education. Just as education systems are models of stratified power relations, with directors of education, deputy directors, superintendents, and so on, likewise schools reflect a clear hierarchical structure with principals, assistant principals, senior and junior teaching staff, support staff, and so on. Given this structure, it is no surprise that classrooms continue the tradition of the hierarchy. In the traditional classroom, the teacher is at the top of the hierarchy, as the possessor of knowledge and as the authoritative voice. Simultaneous with this role as the possessor of all the knowledge is the teacher-role as the authority, not only authoritative in knowledge, but also as the one in control over the classroom and its inhabitants. Teacher pre-

occupation with classroom discipline and with the control of unruly students may suggest that the hierarchy is not firmly in place. However, in this clearly established power structure the teacher may appeal to higher orders of the hierarchy for reinforcement. For example, the teacher may send a disruptive to the principal. The same opportunity for reference to a higher authority is not so easily available to the student. The teacher clearly occupies the position of dominance while the students are subjects to be managed.   In addition, the student body is not homogeneous either, representing its own hierarchy of those who are privileged by the system, those who are marginal to it, and those who fall somewhere in between.

The power stratification of the classroom is no accident. Teachers learn to position themselves as dominant as a matter of course in their training to become teachers. Schick (2000) has documented the attitudes and behaviours of dominance prevalent in pre-service teachers and how this dominance carries through to teaching practices, increasing the likelihood of mirroring, in classrooms, the structural dominance of the larger society, and as a result, making the practice of liberatory education more difficult. Traditionally trained racially dominant teachers, whose place in dominance has been questioned rarely, if ever, are ideally positioned to maintain the interests of dominance. Practices of transmission education maintain these interests effectively, which serves to reinforce dominance and oppression. Schick asks significant questions, such as how does teachers' awareness, or lack of awareness, about their racialized status (meaning, for the majority,

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their understanding of "white" as a racial identity and how whiteness maintains itself as an unmarked, unnamed dominant normative position) affect their interest in anti-racist education, and "how do attempts to maintain dominant, secure identities on the part of white students and their teachers complicate students' engagement with oppositional pedagogies?" (p. 84). Schick perceives that white pre-service teachers are largely resistant to anti-racist work and fail to learn or embrace oppositional pedagogy due to a strong impulse to maintain their own dominant status (p. 85).

The pre-service teachers in Schick's (2000) study express their good intentions and desire to be helpful and useful in the area of education for Aboriginal children. Some frame their participation in cross-cultural training as opportunity to enhance their effectiveness as teachers of Aboriginal students, thereby gaining an intellectual awareness about racism and its effects. Yet, the pre-service teachers were ultimately unwilling to relinquish their own positions of dominance. It was imperative for these teacher-candidates to maintain their positions of dominance in order to maintain their identities as benevolent and well-meaning helpers. The pre-service teachers' willingness to engage with oppositional pedagogy did not extend to the point of questioning their own positions within dominance, positions that allow them to identify as the "helper" and thus remain in dominant positions as a part of what is meant to appear as the natural order of things.

Fellows and Razack (1998) who scrutinize the ways that "competing marginalities" (p. 335) divide feminist efforts and work against feminist

solidarity explore a related issue. They note that women refuse to confront the hierarchies that exist among them and the ways in which women act as oppressors of one another. Fellows and Razack describe as the "race to innocence" (p. 335) the denial of the subordination of other women along with the belief that one's own claims to subordination are the most important. In the melee to establish one's own claims of subordination as the most important and worthy of feminist effort, women inevitably reproduce the struggle for dominance (Fellows and Razack, 1998, p. 336). Paradoxically, feminists compete for positions of dominance as a means of protecting their own interests within the margins.

Such a phenomenon of "competing marginalities" bears some similarity to that of the pre-service teachers outlined above, in which they were eager to view themselves as helpful, understanding, and well-intentioned, while at the same time requiring their positions in dominance to be sustained in order to maintain their helpful (dominant) positions. Fellows and Razack (1998) note that "women challenged about their domination respond by calling attention to their own subordination…the idea [being] that if a woman is subordinate herself, she cannot then be implicated in the subordination of others" (p. 339). In the case of the pre-service teachers, they assert their desire to contribute, to make a difference, to "help," as a means of deflecting attention from their own positions as dominant. Additionally, in some cases, Schick (2000) notes the explicit attempts of the pre-service teachers to draw parallels between their own lives, based on

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working-class economic status, and the lives of minority children, as a means of calling attention to their own subordination that would then leave them free of culpability in positions of dominance (p. 86). The effect of such a strategy is that relations of dominance are further mystified.

3.2.2 A Hostile Audience

Another aspect of the presumed audience of the curriculum documents is that it is potentially hostile. The justifications made within the documents suggest addressor anxiety about the focus on Aboriginal content and perspectives. The curriculum guides outline several justifications for the consideration of Aboriginal perspectives, qualifying earlier statements about the uniqueness and diversity of learners, in which it was noted that,

> Instructors recognize the visible diversities in our classrooms.
> Learners are immigrants, they are urban Aboriginals, they are mature
> men seeking new work skills or retraining, and they are Caucasian
> women seeking to enter the workforce for the first time
> (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 2).

In attempting to justify the focus on Aboriginal perspectives the guides note,

> While all learners are unique, special mention is made of the growing
> population of adult Aboriginal learners in our province. About 61% of
> Basic Education Learners are Aboriginal (Saskatchewan Learning,
> 2002). _Therefore_, curriculum content and instructional practices and
> approaches need to be inclusive of Aboriginal peoples' experiences

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and knowledge. *For these reasons*, Aboriginal perspectives and

Aboriginal education are discussed throughout this curriculum

(emphasis added, Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 3).

The justification for the inclusion of Aboriginal content is supported by

statistical "facts" intended to be persuasive based on the nature of their truth

claims as a part of the much-valued scientific tradition. The persuasiveness

of this argument hinges on the number of Aboriginal learners and the fact

that Aboriginal learners are the majority of learners in the system. This

argument justifies and legitimates the inclusion of content related to the

"Other" to a potentially hostile, racially dominant audience, as well as

supporting a perspective that Aboriginal content is only important for

Aboriginal people.

Furthermore, the curriculum upholds dominant and innocent instructor

identities. The documents assume Instructors are racially dominant, as

discussed earlier in this work. St. Denis and Schick (2003) note that "For

those in positions of institutional superiority and advantage, one typically

participates by helping others; in turn, helping others is proof of superiority"

(p. 65). The way that "whiteness operates as an unspoken norm obscures

how it is considered not only normative, but also superior" (St. Denis and

Schick, 2003, p. 65). The ability to maintain an unnamed, unmarked racial

category signals the privilege of whiteness to be not only oblivious to race

but also innocent in the production or reproduction of dominance. It allows

instructors to position themselves as helpers to the other without the

obligation of recognizing that "the notion of innocence and goodness depends on the marginalization of the *other*" (St. Denis and Schick, 2003, p. 65). The production of instructors in the curriculum documents as un-raced, that is, as falling within a racial category that need not be named, denies the importance of racial identities and maintains the innocent position of instructors. "Unmarked dominance remains invisible, and inequality is explained as a product of cultural difference" (St. Denis and Schick, 2003, p. 66).

Even though the curriculum documents clearly anticipate resistance from the instructors who will read and use the documents, it does not articulate the resistance as that coming from non-Aboriginal learners or instructors. Rather, when the curriculum guides do address resistance, it attributes resistance to those Aboriginal learners who have experienced cultural loss. The curriculum states, "Being inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives is not necessarily easy, for some will resist and even challenge its importance or relevance" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 4). The curriculum guide to this point seems to be referring to resistance from racially dominant learners or instructors. However, it turns out this is not the case. The guide notes that many Aboriginal people have experienced cultural loss resulting in their disconnection from Aboriginal culture despite their visible appearance as Aboriginal. The guide also notes resistance as the denial of Aboriginal identity by some who will not "respect or participate in discussions that focus their attention on their identity"

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(Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 4). The resistance and hostility toward the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives and content is shifted onto those Aboriginal learners who are not cultural enough to appreciate such a curriculum. The effect is to foreshadow the failure of the curriculum's objectives of including Aboriginal perspectives based on the resistance and unwillingness of Aboriginal people themselves.

3.3 Discourse of Deficiency

ABE is a discourse of deficiency in that the system relies on learners as deficient for its purpose – upgrading to certain high school equivalencies, whether those are grade 10 (ABE 10) or grade 12 (Adult 12). In this section, I provide analysis of how this discourse of deficiency constructs Aboriginal learners as those in need of help, and reaffirms the role of instructors as "helpers." An institutional regulatory gaze that is superior and judgemental reinforces identities of deficiency and thereby reinforces helper/helped identities. The effect of such discourse is to ensure that the critical analytical gaze does not come to rest on structural and systemic causes of inequality, but rather remains on individuals.

The curriculum guides structure an imagined learner, for the benefit of the reader, from the instructors' "intimate insights into the lives of individuals with whom they work" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 2). This "composite sketch" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 2) of a learner is as follows:

Megan is a young mother of two from a nearby First Nation. She is apprehensive about meeting with you [instructor] today, but states, "I want to be more than a welfare mother to my children. I want them to see me and not be ashamed." She explains that she had her first child while still in high school and that she never really returned to school since then. Megan has tried Basic Education before but issues associated with childcare, money, and pressure from her partner led to her decision to quit. She has registered this year because she says, "I'm ready to learn this time. I want to find out what I can do now that I'm on my own" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 2).

This description suggests that one can expect the learners of ABE to be predominantly young Aboriginal women, single mothers, on welfare, poor, shameful, high school dropouts with the experience of teen pregnancy, and potentially in, or having the experience of, abusive or controlling relationships. The learner is one who clearly has many "problems."

The congruency between this description and the common-sense discourses established by the demographics report are noteworthy. In both descriptions the Aboriginal woman is at once not only a high school drop out, but also conforms to the expectation that she will have "substantially higher" fertility rates than the non-Aboriginal population, "especially in the younger age group" (Sask Trends Monitor, 2000, p. 47). The curriculum reflects and reinforces the discourses of high fertility and low education. Rather than

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placing emphasis on inadequate resources, the scrutiny is on her 'poor' choices. The common-sense discourse of problematic and deficient Aboriginal people, and in this case Aboriginal women specifically, is legitimized by this description.

The discourse has the effect of locating the deficiency, or the "problem" within the individual learner. It psychologizes and individualizes what are the effects of structural inequality. The reference to the shamefulness of the individual reflects that an institutional "regulatory gaze" has been turned inward, and that "objectifying techniques" of the institutions that have defined this woman as shameful have been internalized (Schaafsma, 1998, pp. 270-271). Schaafsma (1998) provides insights that are useful to this study. He writes about the phenomenon of learners internalizing the regulatory gaze of institutions in reference to his work with a high school student in a writing class. Schaafsma illustrates how the student he worked with had internalized "the regulatory gaze/objectifying techniques of the institutions that ha[d] repeatedly identified her as 'bad'" (pp. 270-271), rather than examining inadequate supports and resources that likely produced her as a non-candidate for a grade 12 education in the first place. The notion of learners producing self-identities from those imposed by the institutions that objectify and categorize them is useful in the consideration of how institutional authority operates to create meaning. Boler and Zembylas (2003) also elaborate on Foucault's analysis of "technologies of the self" (p. 120), noting that "the self – rather than being a taken for granted or pre-given

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identity – is produced through a variety of discourses, languages shaped by authoritative communities and voices" (p. 120).

The production of identities for Aboriginal adult learners through regulatory, objectifying techniques is evident in the curriculum documents. The learner described in the documents is clearly under the institutional regulatory gaze. Her identity derives not only by the discourse of the curriculum, but also by the instructors operating in the institutions and by the institutions themselves. Undoubtedly the description of the learner's desire to "be more than a welfare mother" so she will not have to feel ashamed is based on the type of stories heard by many instructors. This example demonstrates the efficiency of the internalized regulatory gaze, perpetuated by authoritative voices, that defines individuals as shameful and deficient. The learner's self-identification with the prescribed identity only lends further credibility to the discourse. The use of this technique illustrates one way that Aboriginal learners are held accountable for structural inequality.

The individualization and problematization of Aboriginal learners directs thinking toward individual solutions and how to help solve these problems through character development. The effect is, first, that the instructor is reinforced into her/his dominant role as innocent helper and, second, the gaze shifts away (as if it were ever on) the social, political, and economic systems that support and reinforce systemic and structural inequalities. The impetus to question the structural inequalities that are at the source of individual situations of learners never arises. Finally, the effect

is that the same regulatory techniques that objectify the learner and define

her as deficient are not only validated, but also presented as legitimate and

unquestionable, normalizing and naturalizing inequality. The discourse

accomplishes affirmation of the discourses that establish the learner as

deficient and that continue the grand narrative of deficiency about Aboriginal

people in general. The internalization and repetition of such objectifying

techniques allows instructors to construct and reconstruct the Aboriginal

learner as naturally deficient and in need of help.

3.3.1 Production of Aboriginal People and Culture

In this section, I provide some analysis of the use of culture

throughout the curriculum documents. The use of the term culture is

established as important within the curriculum documents, reflecting an

approach advocating culturally relevant education for Aboriginal learners in

the new curriculum. Such an approach establishes cultural pride and

awareness as simple solutions to systemic inequality. Furthermore, it blames

Aboriginal people for the effects of colonization in that they have "failed" as

the keepers of their culture, rather than being presented with contradictory

messages promoting first assimilation and then cultural revitalization. The

promotion of cultural awareness and revitalization helps divert attention

away from the effects of racialization and racism. Instead, it collapses

issues of race under the heading of "culture" rendering race paradoxically

invisible. The convenient use of culture allows for an explanation of

difference whereby the dominant can ascribe inequalities to cultural differences.

One of the recurring themes in the curriculum documents is the use of the term "culture" as a means of attempting to include Aboriginal content and perspectives. The planning and foundations document invokes culture and the need to be respectful of culture. For example the "Guiding Principles" articulating the principles that are to guide the "philosophy, approaches and practices" (p. 7) in ABE suggests the eight guiding principles, include references to being "respectful of cultural …diversity," respecting the "interrelationship of …cultures," and recognizing, respecting, and incorporating into ABE the "cultures of Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan" (p. 7). This focus on culture persists throughout the document, but is particularly prominent in three key sections of the document. These sections are the guiding principles, the vision for ABE, and the curriculum philosophy. These sections are key, in that they set the parameters for the focus to be taken in the new ABE curriculum. The heavy emphasis on culture continues throughout the curriculum guides, as evidenced in the social sciences curriculum guide, where one of the three units of the guide focuses on culture and identity. The focus on culture and the requirement that students study at least one Aboriginal culture, attest to the importance attributed to a cultural focus.

St. Denis (2004) illustrates that the cultural relevance or cultural revitalization discourse in education has taken precedence over all other

concerns in Aboriginal education in a way that supplants systemic problems, such as poverty and racism. The new ABE curriculum is evidence of the employment of the cultural relevance approach as the means to address Aboriginal education within the provincial ABE system. The incorporation of culturally relevant education suggests the acceptability of this approach in a common sense sort of way as the suitable and appropriate approach to Aboriginal education, which has the effect of leaving out other explanations and other responses such as poverty and racism. There is no evidence that this approach has received any sort of critical analysis. St. Denis notes,

> As a form of fundamentalism, cultural restoration and revitalization encourages Aboriginal people to assert their authenticity and to accept cultural nationalism and cultural pride as solutions to systemic inequality; ironically, this helps keep racial domination intact (p. 36).

At the same time that there is a heavy emphasis on culture and the need for cultural respect and cultural inclusion, the curriculum ironically produces Aboriginal adult learners as being alienated from their culture. The new ABE documents focus on culture in a way that at once insists on culturally relevant education for Aboriginal learners and suggests the inappropriateness of such an approach due to the loss of culture many Aboriginal learners have experienced. Such a focus on culture is inadequate in part because it essentializes. It reduces Aboriginal people to a supposed cultural essence or finds them lacking and responsible for "cultural loss," a term that implies certain carelessness on the part of Aboriginal people. In

addition, it takes the focus off White Privilege and Racism. The cultural loss approach becomes another way that Aboriginal people are constructed as deficient.

For example, in the section of the curriculum guides that deals specifically with resistance, this resistance is pinned onto Aboriginal learners who don't know their own culture, establishing the anticipated failure of the curriculum as the fault and the problem of Aboriginal people in advance. The curriculum guides note that,

> Being inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives is not necessarily easy, for some will resist and even challenge its importance or relevance. Instructors need to be aware of attitudes and beliefs that have resulted from our shared history.
>
> - We cannot assume that all Aboriginal people have an understanding of their cultural heritage. The "Sixties-Scoop", the child welfare system, incarceration, residential schooling and other forms of systemic separation resulted in many individuals who visibly appear Aboriginal but who have few connections with Aboriginal communities.
> - Some Aboriginal people have learned to ignore/dismiss their own identity. They will not respect or participate in discussions that focus their attention on their identity (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 4).

The references to the loss of culture and denial of Aboriginal identity in the curriculum guides appear without a framing that would allow them to be more fully understood. Further explanation, such as that provided by St. Denis (2004) in an analysis of cultural revitalization in Aboriginal education, may help to make the contradiction of the above statements with the curricular focus on culture, less damaging for Aboriginal learners and identities. For example, St. Denis notes that Aboriginal people have experienced a history of first being told to ignore Aboriginal culture with the promise that speaking English and accepting white values and norms would result in acceptance and the invitation to participate in dominant white society. Subsequently, Aboriginal people have had the 'assimilation rug' pulled out from under them, being told that the answer lies in cultural revitalization as a response to systemic exclusion (pp. 39-41). St. Denis writes,

> In a strategy of cultural revitalization, these efforts to resist racial exclusion would come back to haunt Aboriginal people who had lost their languages and were no longer familiar with their historical cultural practices and customs. In these respects, a strategy of cultural revitalization holds Aboriginal parents and grandparents accountable for colonization and responsible for their own downfall as a people (p. 41).

Examination of the contradictory nature of the historical colonial impact on Aboriginal peoples and cultures and the ways that these impacts manifest

themselves today are required in the curriculum documents. Such an

accounting is required in order to avoid constructing Aboriginal people in

ways that reinforce the holding of Aboriginal people themselves as

accountable and responsible for colonization and in order to avoid the denial

of history and social change (St. Denis, 2004, p. 43).

A focus on Aboriginal culture in ABE helps avoid an examination of

the effects of racialization and racism. Issues of race are subsumed under

the "culture" heading and, as such, are assumed to be dealt with. An

appropriate term to describe the inclusion of Aboriginal learners may not be

culture, given the curriculum documents' own recognition that Aboriginal

culture may or may not be known or available to Aboriginal learners. In the

curriculum documents culture appears as a stand-in for race. The

assumption is that instructors will respond to visual markers of race by

identifying "culture" as a source of difference. St. Denis (2004) notes that a

focus in Aboriginal education on cultural revitalization

> helps to distract and minimize the effects of racialization and racial
>
> discrimination in Aboriginal education (St. Denis 2002). In fact, "there
>
> is little research on the role racial prejudice plays as a barrier in the
>
> Indian educational experience. Quite often, the racial prejudice
>
> encountered by students is simply included under the rather generic
>
> label of 'cultural conflict' (Huffman 1991: 1; see also St. Denis and
>
> Hampton 2002) (p. 44).

Schick and St. Denis (2003) address what they refer to as a popular ideological assumption borne by racially dominant student teachers that "race doesn't matter (culture does)" (p. 61). They note the reluctance of student teachers to address issues of race and racialization, and that they prefer to talk about cultural differences (p. 62). The focus on cultural difference allows the student teachers referred to by Schick and St. Denis to view the problem as residing within the cultural other. The problem of culture means that a solution lies in the adaptability of the cultural other to find ways to "fit in" (p. 62).

In much the same way, the use of the term culture throughout the curriculum documents, particularly the planning and foundations document, is as a means of collapsing race into culture. The collapsing of race into the culture context allows users of the curriculum to assume race is covered under the culture heading and can be ignored. Race becomes invisible, as St. Denis and Schick (2003) note,

This strategy of denying that race matters supports differences of power reflected in historic, social, political, and economic practices. *Race* is a social and historical category produced through power relations and necessary for the construction of difference – difference that is frequently explained in dominant discourses as "innate inferiority/superiority" (Ng, 1993; Omi & Winant, 1998). This denial of unequal power normalizes and makes invisible both historical and current relations of inequality. Without naming relations of inequality

based on *race*, racial inequality is assumed to be an explanation for

disadvantage (p. 62).

By shifting the focus onto culture, race and racialization become invisible,

unaddressed issues that leave "students to wonder how in the world these

differences took on the considerable significance they still hold" (Willinsky,

1998, p. 5).

The planning and foundations document displays its reluctance to

discuss issues of race in its extensive use of the term culture and in the

conspicuous and nearly complete absence of reference to race in the entire

document. Furthermore, the curriculum guides mention the visible markers

of race while simultaneously subsuming them into a cultural context. The

curriculum notes that instructors may encounter "individuals who visibly

appear Aboriginal but who have few connections with Aboriginal

communities" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 4). This

statement sends the messages that race is important for use by instructors

as an identity marker and that instructors link and interchange race and

culture in their practice. The incongruence between what is seen (race) and

what is known/understood/practiced (culture) is left to the deciphering of the

individual instructor, simplifying issues of race by collapsing them into

discussions of culture.

Such examples of the subsuming of race into culture are throughout

the curriculum guides. For instance, in the social sciences curriculum guide

"culture" consistently substitutes for race. The first learning outcome for Unit

1 states, "Learners will develop an understanding of how membership in their culture shapes their identity and worldview" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 54). In this unit, learners explore a culture different from their own (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 57). Activities for this unit include defining concepts such as "*cultural unity*" and "*cultural diversity*" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 57). Another suggested activity depicts the substitution of culture for race:

> Brainstorm a list of different groups of people: Rich People, Lawyers, Old People, Japanese, Black People, Dentists, Alcoholics, Children, etc.; decide as a class whether the group is a victim of Overt Discrimination, Subtle Discrimination, or No Discrimination; discuss ways that groups are discriminated against and what are some of the root causes, such as lack of exposure to other cultures, lack of knowledge about other cultures and lack of experience with other cultures (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 62).

In this example, "different groups of people" get transformed into "other cultures" as the assignment progresses. Culture becomes a stand-in for race and class, and race assumes a paradoxical position as, at once, a visible marker and an invisible unaddressed issue.

The significance that has been made of race and racial differences which has led us to continue to understand the world in such a way that these differences are defining and paramount and largely taken-for-granted, is carried over into the new ABE curriculum in the way that culture has taken

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the place of race but continues to function in largely the same way. When race becomes subsumed into culture then "cultural differences" becomes the handy common-sense explanation for inequality.

3.3.2 Constructing the Other

Hall (2001a) notes that within the discourse about a particular topic there are,

> Subjects who in some way personify the discourse – the madman, the hysterical woman, the criminal, the deviant, the sexually perverse person; with the attributes we would expect these subjects to have, given the way knowledge about the topic was constructed at the time (p. 73).

The "subject" personifying the discourse in the case of this work is the Aboriginal adult learner. The curriculum documents specifically identify this subject with a portrait drawn as a "composite sketch of a student constructed from their lived experience" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004a and 2004b, p. 2). The curriculum guide presents the ABE learner almost incidentally as First Nations; however, the representation of the ABE learner as Aboriginal is in no way accidental. In addition to being Aboriginal, the imagined learner of the curriculum, is also someone who has many "difficulties" and "problems." These problems, defined by others and imposed upon the learner, require some sort of remedy. It is the assumed "job" of the teacher

or instructor seeking to enact the curriculum to "help" the learner overcome these problems. In doing so, the learner will then make "progress."

Buoyed by the general knowledge about Aboriginal people from such sources as the demographics report, the curriculum document's representation of "the" Aboriginal adult learner represents authoritative knowledge about the subject. Within the discourse, the Aboriginal adult learner has assumed her essential identity. In fact, this is the essential identity of the ABE learner in general – one of the assumed elements of the ABE learner is that she is Aboriginal. The curriculum documents clearly identify, and produce as knowledge (knowable), the subjects (Aboriginal adult learners) and their attributes. These subjects personify the discourse, like Foucault's madman (Hall, 2001a, p. 73). According to Hall (2001a) this is one of the elements necessary in the discourse about a particular topic. The discourse available within the particular contexts of the province, the department of Saskatchewan Learning and the institutions responsible for ABE serve to construct the identity of the Aboriginal adult learner.

The discourse within the curriculum, then, establishes for instructors and administrators what is acceptable in defining subjects and what is acceptable as discourse about the subjects and about the topic of ABE. The document establishes what is "sayable" and "thinkable" about the topic at this particular moment in history (Hall, 2001a, p. 73). An additional element that Hall (2001a) presents for looking at discourse about a topic is that of the

practices that become part of an acceptable set of actions in relation to the subjects. Hall notes:

 [There are certain] practices within institutions for dealing with the

 subjects – medical treatment for the insane, punishment regimes for

 the guilty, moral discipline for the sexually deviant – whose conduct is

 being regulated and organized according to those ideas (pp. 73-74).

These current discourses represent what is the authoritative knowledge about a topic; that is, the "truth" at this historical moment. This knowledge or truth regulates social practices (Hall, 2001a, p. 74). In the case of ABE, the institutions providing ABE training establish practices to deal with ABE learners according to the ideas about those learners produced by the discourse. In this way, the discourse operates as a means of producing knowledge about subjects that has the power to create certain meaningful material practices regarding the subjects. The behaviour and actions of the institutional representatives, the subjects themselves, the regulating bodies, and the general public are influenced by the prevailing discourse about ABE learners and Aboriginal people. This work aims to reveal the assumptions that the discourse constructs and the way these assumptions affect social practices.

The curriculum establishes the beneficiaries of the curriculum as "other," personified as Aboriginal adult learners. This "othering" is achieved through a process of, first, assuming the dominance, racially and socially, of the instructors, who are the readers of the document. Second, the

documents establish the other with certain language in the documents. The curriculum planning and foundations document uses such words as, "invite," "recognize," "reflect," "respect," "incorporate," and "include." This suggests that some groups, or subjects, as a matter of course, are already included, don't need to be invited, are naturally and without question recognized, and have their values and beliefs acknowledged, while other groups are marginal and do not receive the same automatic benefits and privileges. The subtle suggestion is that the dominant readers of the document need reminding to keep these "other" groups in mind. Only the "others" require naming and particular identification as such. The dominant instructors require no specific naming of their position in that it is assumed the normative position and therefore requires no particular identification.

The curricular discourse produces difference in such a way that it is naturalized rather than analyzed as a constructed concept systemically reinforced through institutionalized practices and processes of education. Difference is naturalized through the assumption of racially dominant instructors, through the production of an "Aboriginal Other" in need of "help," through the assumption of resistance to Aboriginal curriculum, and through the racialized practices that are inspired and reproduced by the curriculum. Dominance is produced through difference in that marginalized "others" are required to keep dominance intact. Dominant identities rely on their relationship with marginal identities in order to establish dominant identities as "normal" and marginal identities as "deviant." In this way difference is a

construction that functions to uphold dominance in that difference is necessary in establishing dominant identities as normative (St. Denis and Schick, 2004, p. 59; Baez, 2003, p. 6). Rather than taking differences for granted and responding to them as though they are real rather than constructed, the curriculum documents need to examine the social and historical processes that create difference and how difference serves the interests of dominance and how "such processes and their effects become entrenched in our social institutions" (Baez, 2003, p. 7).

Concerning difference, I present this example of how the curriculum has the opportunity to approach this concept from a critical perspective, yet fails to deliver on its radical almost-promise. A suggested activity in the social sciences curriculum proposes that learners and instructors "examine how 'difference' is viewed in Saskatchewan society" (p.61). This is only the first part of the activity and suggests a sceptical view of the term "difference" and suggests (promises) the analysis of the concept of difference as a part of the assignment. This promise, suggested by the positioning of the term "difference" within quotation marks, is nullified by the adjoining questions. The entire activity reads: "Examine how 'difference' is viewed in Saskatchewan society; reflect on the question 'Are attitudes changing?'; write an opinion and provide examples to support viewpoint" (pp. 61-62). What the question in its entirety reveals is an assumption that dominance resides in the mythical white norm of society and that difference is a naturally occurring fact. It implies that difference is simply a matter of attitude. It does

not ask how difference has been achieved, nor does it ask about the effects. At a place in the curriculum where there could be an analysis of the concept of "difference", it is unfortunate and disappointing that no such analysis is forthcoming. The effect is that an activity which suggests it may reveal a radical interpretation of "difference" falls flat and becomes little more than a mere exercise that assumes the dominance of one group and the marginality of others.

3.3.3 Binary Oppositions

The use of binary oppositions in dominant discursive practices is a tool in upholding dominant ideology. Lorde (1984) offers the following:

Much of Western European history conditions just (sic) to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, Superior/inferior. In a society where the good is defined in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need , there must always be some group of people who, through systematized oppression, can be made to feel surplus, to occupy the place of the dehumanized inferior (Lorde, 1984, in Boler and Zembylas, 2003, pp. 121-122).

Boler and Zembylas (2003) continue, "Lorde emphasizes the ways in which binary oppositions lay the foundation for constructions of what counts as normal, or as highly valued, versus what counts as deviant and less valued" (p. 122).

Hall (2001b) notes that the "other" is often represented in such a way that includes binary forms of representation. The presentation of the other occurs as both good/bad, civilized/primitive, and so on. He writes, "people who are in any way significantly different from the majority – 'them' rather than 'us' – are frequently exposed to this *binary* form of representation…they are often required to be *both things at the same time*" (p. 326). The binary opposition, Hall notes, is a rigid and polarized set of opposites that does not allow for interplay between the poles of the opposition. Hall also notes that it is difficult to escape entirely from such binary oppositions. Hall goes on to discuss briefly some of Derrida's ideas in relation to binaries. Hall notes that Derrida deals with binary oppositions by noting the power relationship inherent in such binaries, and that very few binaries are neutral (p. 329). The structure of the binary is such that one of the poles is privileged. Hall writes, "We should really write, **white**/black, **men**/women, **masculine**/feminine, **upper class**/lower class, **British**/alien to capture this power dimension in discourse" (p. 329). Eagleton (1983) elaborates an important insight offered in the work of Derrida, noting that Derrida's notion of deconstruction allows for critical examination of texts to occur where typically structuralism would have left off. That is, where structuralism was satisfied to identify the binary oppositions in a work and show how such thinking was operant in the work, deconstruction makes it a point to move beyond the identification of binaries to show how such binaries, "in order to hold themselves in place, are sometimes betrayed into inverting or

collapsing themselves" (p. 133). Highlighting the betrayal of the text from within itself is the work of deconstruction.

The curriculum documents establish the "other" quite clearly as "Aboriginal" while the dominant principle in the binary is "white." The representation of difference and otherness is significant because within this binary relationship of a "principle" and an "other" lies the reinforcement and re-production of dominance. Rather than challenging dominance, as the curriculum documents express a desire to do, by setting up binary oppositions within the basic structure of the curriculum ("us"/"them" and "principle"/"other") the discourse establishes this structure as acceptable. In turn, the discourse then, in providing an acceptable way of thinking about difference and otherness, also establishes a framework for acceptable actions based on notions of dominance inherent in the binary of principle/other. The discourse establishes what is possible and acceptable as well as setting up constraints for action.

As noted above, "binary oppositions lay the foundation for constructions of what counts as normal, or as highly valued, versus what counts as deviant and less valued" (Boler and Zembylas, 2003, p. 122). In the case of the curriculum, the binary opposition of dominant society/Aboriginal culture exemplifies the foundational basis that privileges the highly valued norm of dominant society over the less valued difference of Aboriginal culture. This binary reflects the grand narrative about Aboriginal people as well. The regime of representation that depicts Aboriginal people

as willing non-participants in the labour market and economic system clearly relies on the binary opposition of participant (in the labour force) as the highly valued normative position, and non-participant (in the labour force) as the less valued and deviant "other." The effect of such binaries is to establish a norm that relegates "others" to positions of inferiority. The curriculum documents utilize a similar binary opposition in the use of categories of employed/unemployed as criteria for the measure of success of learners completing ABE programs. The curriculum legitimates this type of binary thought process through its continued and unexamined use. It reproduces Aboriginal "others" as deviant by association with the unemployed category and through the establishment of the highly valued normative position of "employed." At the same time, there is no effort to dismantle the processes that structure such binaries. There is also no attention given to the fallacy of such a binary – that is, the assumption that Aboriginal people are wilfully *choosing* not to participate in the labour market rather than being excluded. The basis of the binary opposition on this assumption of *choice* leaves the structures and systems that have relegated Aboriginal people to the economic margins unexamined and intact and reinforces the common sense ideology of meritocracy.

Binary oppositions in the curriculum documents establish difference as a naturally occurring "fact." Hall (2001b) writes,

'Difference' is ambivalent. It can be both positive and negative. It is

both necessary for the production of meaning, the formation of

language and culture, for social identities and a subjective sense of

the self as a sexed subject – and at the same time, it is threatening, a

site of danger, of negative feelings, of splitting, hostility and

aggression towards the 'Other' (p. 332).

The notion of biculturalism in the curriculum is a type of binary, suggesting

that only two cultures come under consideration. In the curriculum, the

bicultural reference is clearly to the two cultures of dominant white culture

and Aboriginal culture. It is between these two cultures that the notion of

biculturalism negotiates. As noted above, the problem with setting up

binaries is that one pole is privileged or dominant in the pair, and in the case

of the curriculum's use of the term biculturalism, the pair would be

represented as **dominant white culture**/Aboriginal culture. In this case, it is

necessary for the individual from the Aboriginal culture to "learn to function in

two distinct sociocultural environments: their primary culture, and that of the

dominant mainstream culture of the society in which they live" (Curriculum

planning and foundations document, p. 48). Once again, the binary

establishes the onus on the "cultural other" to adapt in order to be able to

"participate." It seems a simple "choice." There is a certain irony in the

notion of biculturalism as it appears in the curriculum documents.

Biculturalism "implies helping learners to view themselves and their cultural

group in a positive way" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 14). It is

important that "other learners and educational officials (teachers,

administrators, and so on)" assist Aboriginal learners in this endeavour

(Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 14). The focus on the "deficient other"

allows dominant positions and identities to remain intact as they focus

diligently on their roles as "helpers."

The curriculum documents consistently set up the binary opposition of

dominant society/Aboriginal peoples. For instance, the social sciences

curriculum compares Euro-Canadian governance to Aboriginal systems of

governance, encouraging a comparison of one with another and variously

revealing a certain preference for one or the other. For instance, a

suggested activity is to "investigate how Aboriginal leadership is based on

values that may differ from the values of Euro-Canadians" (p. 85). In this

instance the suggestion is that Aboriginal values are being compared to a

normative standard (Euro-Canadian values) and the focus is on establishing

differences. The establishment of lists of differences in such areas as values

may then explain such differences as those based on poverty as simply a

matter of differences in cultural values. The establishment of differences are

necessary and important in establishing the hierarchical positioning of ideas

and beliefs. Such an activity allows learners to rank and classify, a

preoccupation associated with the establishment of dominance.

The establishment of binaries occurs in the curriculum documents

despite the intention of the documents to work toward social justice concerns

and to recognize and offer a counter account to dominance. Even though

there are claims against the establishment of binaries that privilege one part

of the order over another, the result is that such an accounting of the world is

consistently present in the curriculum documents. Part of the result is the continued reliance on binary processes that privilege one pole over the other by simply inverting (at times) the pole that the documents present as the privileged one. For instance, there are a number of occasions in the social sciences curriculum that suggest the Aboriginal pole of the binary is the "preferred" pole. The social sciences curriculum guide notes that the European worldview "favoured competition as opposed to the Aboriginal worldview based on cooperation" (p. 92). The curriculum establishes an obvious binary opposition between the European and Aboriginal worldviews in the context of what *was* traditionally accepted. Placing the binary into the historical past has the effect of neutralizing or sanitizing the European view of power as something that *was*. It establishes the Aboriginal view of cooperation as a preferred way. What is interesting in this example is the continued reliance in the curriculum on binary oppositions and a continued reliance on the same structures that uphold dominance. It is still about power over and not about power with. This approach reveals a continued reliance on the basic thinking of a binary approach and of a hierarchical ordering of the world. In addition, the documents uphold dominance in their overall effect, revealing these inverted binaries as disingenuous.

While this chapter examined the production of identities for instructors and Aboriginal learners, positioning each in particular, identifiable roles, the next chapter explores the ways that the documents create tensions between

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stated theoretical positions and revealed practices that are at odds with the

theory.

Chapter 4

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the ways in which the curriculum documents deconstruct themselves in terms of how conflicting objectives and desires create tensions within the documents that are difficult to reconcile.   The curriculum documents express the desire to promote social justice, using language and ideas associated with social justice concerns.   Yet the curriculum documents do not analyze consistently or adequately the structures of dominance upon which they rely. For instance, the reliance on binary oppositions and a hierarchical order of the world is evident in the curriculum documents despite their attempts to subvert these tendencies. The conflict between attempts to incorporate post-structural theoretical insights into the new curriculum while continuing to rely on ideas from positivism and structuralism results in a text that is ripe for deconstruction.

4.2 Curricular Discourse of Social Justice

First, I want to establish clearly that the new curriculum expresses a desire, both implicitly and, to a lesser degree, explicitly, to promote equality and social justice – it has a definite flavour, a distinct and palpable desire, to

promote social justice. This desire to promote social justice is a part of the tension that surfaces and resurfaces within the documents. The desire to be a champion of social justice along with the underlying subtexts of the documents, are ultimately what provide for the deconstruction of the text from within itself.

While I contend that the new ABE curriculum documents express a concern for social justice, the curriculum planning and foundations document, which is the document that professes to "guide the design, development and delivery" of ABE in Saskatchewan" (p. 4), never actually uses the term "social justice" *per se*. Instead, the document uses the language of social justice to convey the impression that it holds, as one of its over-arching guiding principles, a concern for social justice issues. Many instances of the language of social justice occur throughout the document. Some examples include the language utilized in the document, which echoes that of theorists concerned with social justice, and the use of transformative learning as an intentional strategy in the new curriculum.

In terms of instances in the curriculum planning and foundations document where the language of social justice is used, I offer the following examples. In the section articulating a vision for ABE, the document states that ABE "helps learners to speak with their own voice and enhances individual and community well-being" (p. 5). The notion of the learner "voice" and the importance of the learner as a part of a "community" occur repeatedly throughout the document. Echoes of Freire (1970) resound in the

notion of learners speaking with their own voice. Freire's position is clearly

critical of the education system as "one of the major instruments for the

maintenance of [a] culture of silence" (Freire, 1970, p. 11). Freire writes

about the need for the oppressed to engage in "critical and liberating

dialogue" (Freire, 1970, p. 52) and about the silent, objectified position of

students in the banking concept of education (Freire, 1970, pp. 57-60). One

of the main objectives apparent in Freire's work is that of helping the

oppressed transform themselves and their situations through the breaking of

the silence that binds them to their oppressors and to their situations (Freire,

1970, p. 31).

Freire (1970) also insists upon the complete involvement and

commitment of the oppressed in the struggle for freedom. This involvement

is in terms of the need for the oppressed to be revolutionaries in their own

communities and for the sake of reclaiming their own and others' humanity

(Freire, 1970, pp 52-56). The same sense of participation and struggle for

liberation and "voice" is apparent in the curriculum documents and reflects a

concern and a consideration for issues of social justice. For instance, in the

guiding principles of the planning and foundations document the guiding

principle that states ABE will be "affirming" reflects this concern for social

justice, stating that ABE "reflects the realities of the learners it serves in a

manner that is meaningful and empowering" (p. 7). The reference to

"empowerment" is one that comes from the discourse of social justice. In

addition, the guiding principle that ABE will be "critically reflective and action-

oriented" (p. 7) reflects notions that have their basis in social justice theories, namely, those of critical reflection and social action. In the planning and foundations document, references to learner voice, learner empowerment, and learner involvement and contribution to community repeat at least a dozen times.

One of the major ways that the curriculum documents align themselves with the concerns of social justice is through a repeated reference to transformative learning and by advocating transformative education as one of the main philosophical foundations intended to influence "curriculum design and content,…program design and delivery,…selection and development of resources, and … teaching strategies and approaches" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 14). It is clear that the curriculum planning and foundations document takes issue with the transmission model of education, and in so doing, the document aligns itself with the ideas of Freire (1970), who introduced the notion of the "banking concept" (Freire, 1970, p. 58) of education and its effects as an agent of the oppressor. The curriculum guides outline, in some detail, transformative education theory and practices. The guides reference both Freire (1970) and Mezirow (1990) in the section on transformative education (Social Sciences Curriculum Guide, 2004, pp. 11-12). The following is a quote from the curriculum guides and reflects the curriculum's concern for social justice:

Those who hold dominant positions come to understand the

complexity of inequality and are able to examine their own position in

relation to social justice issues. The dominant, who support

transformation, must provide opportunities for dominated group

members (their learners) to take power, to speak out. The first phase

of change for any dominated person/group will be (re) discovering

their history, developing a sense of self-pride and breaking the

silences that have been imposed upon them (p. 12).

The above examples illustrate how the curriculum documents clearly

align themselves with social justice concerns. Running parallel to this on-

going theme of the curriculum is the objective of employment as a preferred

outcome for all ABE learners, and particularly for Aboriginal ABE learners.

The curriculum documents exhibit the tensions of reconciling the different

philosophical standpoints that underpin them in these two parallel objectives.

4.3 The Language of Acquiescence

The language of the documents expresses a certain intent that can be

considered "progressive" in the sense that "politically correct" language is

employed and "new" (read progressive) ways of thinking about ABE and

learners and desired outcomes are referred to and incorporated. The

concern of the documents with "respecting" and "including" Aboriginal people

is reflective of this heightened sense of which way the political tide is

moving. The use of politically correct terms and of language of social justice

represents the ability first and foremost of Saskatchewan Learning to learn

the language considered to be progressive and acceptable. One of the ways

that the documents accomplish this is through the language used to talk about, and not talk about, employment as a goal for ABE learners. The results of the use of language that wants to incorporate the usual rhetoric and simultaneously professes a desire to promote a new way of thinking are that the documents are conflicted between a desire, on the one hand, to break free from the dominant hegemony that has been shown to render curriculum an agent in the maintenance of dominance, and a continued focuses on the singular employment objective of the past.

It is important to this discussion to understand some of the history of Saskatchewan Learning and how its thinking and discourse has changed over the past few years. Here I make reference to a past department-wide training strategy called the Saskatchewan Training Strategy (STS), which was a three year strategy incorporated from 1997-2000. The STS was the public plan put forward by Saskatchewan Learning (at the time the department was referred to as Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training) to accomplish a number of goals and objectives related to adult education and training and the link between these two areas and employment. The key overarching goal of the STS was really to "bridge" education and training to employment (Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, 1998, p. 12).

I find insights provided by Derrida (1997) to be relevant here. Derrida says that the way he tries to read authors' is as "an analysis which tries to find out how their thinking works or does not work, to find the tensions, the

contradictions, the heterogeneity within their own corpus" (Derrida, 1997, p. 9). The new ABE curriculum documents may be read in a similar way and such tensions can be found in relation to the "politically correct" language incorporated into the documents and the objectives of Saskatchewan Learning. Looking back at the STS, the focus on employment is evident in the documents. That particular focus on employment is also evident in other documents produced during the years the STS was in effect. For instance, a report called *Building Strength, Realizing Potential: An Equity Policy Framework for Saskatchewan's Training System* (1998) focuses almost exclusively on the employment link, stating, "Post-secondary education and training services and programs provide Saskatchewan people with services and programs to help them develop their skills and prepare for employment" (p. 2). This particular document is concerned with "issues and barriers designated group members face in accessing the training they require to get and keep a job" (p. 4). Interestingly, the report references the FSIN demographics report, *Saskatchewan and Aboriginal Peoples in the 21st Century* (1997), as well as a 1997 demographics report that was the precursor to the 2000 demographics report highlighted and discussed in this thesis. The development of the 1998 equity document points to some of the early rationale for later preoccupation with Aboriginal learners, which seems to stem, in part, from this particular desire to train for employment. Later, this discourse of training for employment gets fused with the discourse of

demographics and Aboriginal labour force participation, along with the discourses of social justice, community, inclusion and equity that emerge.

The field of ABE has been particularly critical of the overriding focus on employment articulated in the STS. Those involved in ABE at the institutional level saw the almost singular focus on employment as unacceptable and unrealistic. While the objective of linking training with employment may have been more acceptable with regard to training programs in the "skills training" area (for instance, assessment of sufficient labour market demand prior to training for particular skilled jobs, like welders, youth care workers, or practical nurses), the application of the same criteria to ABE was not well accepted. Instructors, administrators, and literacy workers questioned whether other aspects of peoples' lives, such as quality of life, functional skills, and community participation were not also acceptable goals within ABE.

As time progressed and the STS concluded, the department toned down the rhetoric around linking training to employment in relation to ABE and began to take on new discourses reflective of the concerns of those involved in ABE. The language of community, family, and functional skills began to appear in the repertoire of Saskatchewan Learning. For example, in several documents and reports produced in the years between, and overlapping with, the conclusion of the STS and the writing of the curriculum documents, there is evidence of this shift in the discourse. For instance, the 2002 sector strategic plan for post-secondary education and skills training

reveals the shifting and conflicting discourse that enters the repertoire of the department. This particular report reflects a continued and on-going preoccupation with the link between training and employment. While the report deals primarily with skills training, a particular type of discourse is evident in the document. I refer to it as the "language of acquiescence," in that it attempts to acquiesce or conform to the 'newer,' more 'progressive' language about adult education and learners that has become more common. In the introduction, the document talks about linking training to employment. Then the document qualifies what has been said by stating, "A responsive post-secondary system also has other important objectives, notably preparing people for participation in a democratic society and the pursuit of knowledge in and of itself" (Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, 2002, p. 1). In addition, the title of the report, *Planning for the Needs of Saskatchewan Learners, Employers and Communities* (emphasis added), suggests a shift in thinking about the role of education to include community in a way that was largely absent in the STS documents.

Thus, one can trace back through the documents published by the department over the past several years and find several ways that the discourse has changed to take on a more "progressive" feel. In doing so, I would contend that the department is demonstrating its ability to use language in a more acceptable form while at the same time not changing its fundamental and basic objective of employment. The continued remnants of

the focus on employment are evident in the new ABE curriculum documents.

The result is that the documents are conflicted. On the one hand, they

reveal a desire to be the proponents of social justice. On the other, they

reveal a continued preoccupation with focusing narrowly on moving the

objective of employment forward with little or no regard to how the

establishment of the binary opposition of employed/unemployed (a.k.a.

participant/non-participant) operates to maintain well-established structural

hierarchies and inequalities.

Regardless of the language used in the curriculum documents, it is

clear that the problem remains framed in the same terms that it was in the

demographics report – it is a problem of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal

people are the focus for change. The critical gaze does not rest on other

sources, instead it establishes Aboriginal people as the ones who must

learn, change, and adapt. Nowhere is this clearer than in the section of the

planning and foundations document that espouses the philosophical

foundation of "valuing biculturalism" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 14).

This document quotes Darder (1991):

> Darder (1991) defines biculturalism as a "process wherein individuals
>
> learn to function in two distinct sociocultural environments: their
>
> primary culture and that of the dominant mainstream culture of the
>
> society in which they live" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 14).

Likewise, "biculturalism" is stated to imply "helping learners to view

themselves and their cultural group in a positive way" (Saskatchewan

Learning, 2002, p. 14), suggesting that a solution to inequality lies in Aboriginal people simply developing a positive self-image. It also reinforces the instructor in the role of innocent helper. The message conveyed is that Aboriginal people must learn, change, and adapt. The onus is on Aboriginal people, who are required to take on the responsibility to remedy a history of colonialism that has had the effect of social and economic exclusion for Aboriginal people. The discourse reflects a yearning for Aboriginal people to change, to become "bicultural," to "be more like us," to mediate the ways that social and political differences have been historically highlighted and naturalized. The curriculum documents legitimize a focus on the inadequacy of the "other" and how cultural differences (namely those differences belonging to the "other") are the main problems. The focus for change is squarely on the "other," in that the documents assume cultural differences are the explanation for inequality.

The effect of the use of language and terms that are more socially acceptable, and at the same time maintain a dominant concern for the status quo, is that the discourse of social justice and equality becomes depoliticized. The radical promise inherent in the social justice theory and clearly drawn on for the creation of the curriculum, such as that presented by Freire (1970), falls flat within the curriculum documents. The tension created by the contradictory concerns of the curriculum with, on the one hand, social justice, and on the other, maintenance of status quo relationships, creates a situation which makes the social justice concerns raised within the document

seem like nothing more than a distraction. The curriculum documents

neutralize any threat to dominance that the ideas of social justice may pose

by co-opting them in the curriculum documents. Rather than following

through on the promise of critical reflection and transformation, the

curriculum documents instead employ contradictory objectives and notions in

such a way that ultimately structures of oppression are only further mystified.

I will explore this tension between the two objectives of social justice and

employment further in the next section.

4.4 Tensions within the Curriculum

Derrida (1997) says of deconstruction:

Deconstruction is not a method or some tool that you apply to

something from the outside. Deconstruction is something which

happens and which happens inside; there is a deconstruction at work

within Plato's work, for instance (p. 9).

This suggests a sort of organic quality to any text, to any discourse. The

text, in this description, is a living document, complete with internal conflict

and turmoil, with many possibilities of rupture from within. It is the work of

deconstruction to find the points of conflict and turmoil and disturb them, to

challenge them in such a way that the work becomes un-amenable to itself:

to force the rupture to occur and the contradictions to bubble to the surface.

The deconstruction that occurs in the curriculum documents is

because of the competing and conflicting desires expressed within the

documents. On the one hand, the documents, as discussed in the previous section, support social justice for Aboriginal people. On the other, they are tied to familiar discourses of employment and to structures and strategies that reinforce the use of binary oppositions and uphold hierarchical orderings of the world. In this section, I will examine the ways that the curriculum documents exhibit their internal contradictions between a desire to work toward social justice and a failure to analyze or adequately challenge dominant ideology. This section further explores the incongruence between the social justice concern and the perpetuation of the myth of objectivity that the curriculum enacts through the suggested activities and assignments. Finally, this section examines the grounding of the curriculum in a philosophy that views "difference" as benign rather than critically analyzing the socially constructed nature of "difference" as it relates to issues of power.

4.4.1 Social Justice Concerns and the Promotion of Hierarchies

The curriculum documents include a number of references to Aboriginal content and perspectives, and pay a great deal of attention to issues of a social justice nature. However, even while presenting such information there are instances where the documents undermine such efforts and unwittingly reinforce the status quo. For instance, the social sciences curriculum contains objectives related to the examination of cultures. It sets up learners to examine their own and another culture. At least one of the cultures must be an Aboriginal culture. A comparison of the two cultures is

encouraged. The curriculum ultimately encourages a binary approach to this exploration, comparing one culture (their own) against another, which leads to a hierarchical affirmation of one culture assuming a position of dominance, as is a characteristic of almost all binaries. In addition, it encourages the notion that categories of difference are fixed, knowable, and static. Such hierarchical practices are antithetical to the work of social justice and yet achieve positions of prominence in the curriculum. In addition, the social sciences curriculum encourages linear thought in the form of the development of a timeline that focuses on "pre-contact, contact and post-contact" (p. 58). Such a focus encourages notions of progress and development from "primitive" to "civilized," another form of binary opposition that also reinforces hierarchical thinking.

4.4.2 Social Justice Concerns and the Failure to Provide Adequate Critical Analysis

Another instance of the curriculum undermining its social justice claims occurs in the way that the curriculum consistently fails to provide analyses of social and structural dominance and inequality at opportune moments in the document. It also occurs in the way that the curriculum variably provides information that provides support for dominance and inequality and then information that just nicks the surface of an in-depth analysis. Here are some examples: In the social sciences curriculum, one of the stated objectives is that learners will analyze inter-group relations and

self-assess personal attitudes and behaviours (p. 61). Amongst the activities listed for this objective is examining the "hurt caused by acts of prejudice, discrimination, racism or sexism" (p. 61). This focus locates discrimination in individual acts and attitudes that affect various victims in hurtful ways. Such a focus maintains the examination at the level of the personal and does not require an analysis of the systemic and institutional ways that various forms of discrimination are enacted and reinforced. There is no opportunity to analyze the privilege members of dominant groups enjoy and how dominant groups have a stake in maintaining dominance. The limited focus in the curriculum on examination only of the personal level of discrimination exemplifies a systemic interest in the maintenance of dominance. As St. Denis and Schick (2003) suggest, the representation of power relations by a three point "power triangle" is useful in that the triangle represents the personal, systemic, and ideological levels. "A triangle indicates the interconnections and mutually reinforcing nature of these three points" (St. Denis and Schick, 2003, p. 59). The focus of the curriculum is predominantly on personal and sometimes systemic power relations. The ideological beliefs that support the personal and systemic levels remain intact.

The background notes for the above activity, which are difficult to find in the curriculum guide and difficult to link precisely to this activity, are unhelpful in providing a critical analysis of the ways that discrimination operates, although there is an attempt and a desire to incorporate some

analysis. Yet the messages are contradictory. The instructor notes on prejudice and discrimination note that types of discrimination include "race: membership in one of the biological divisions of the human race distinguished by physical characteristics such as skin colour, hair colour and texture, stature, etc" (Social Sciences Curriculum Guide, 2004, p. 74). The presentation of race here imbues the term with meaning in and of itself. That is, the curriculum presents race as a factual biological concept with inherent meaning rather than as a socially constructed idea, that has its origins in the construction and maintenance of dominance. The effect is to naturalize and biologize the concept of race.

The following section of instructor notes on racism, however, reveals the ways in which the curriculum desires to incorporate an analysis of the category of race, but fails to pull it off.   The notes state "race is a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance [etcetera]" (Social Sciences Curriculum Guide, 2004, p. 75). These notes, which define race as a social construct, have the effect of raising a critical concern but then fail to take the discussion any further. Similarly, the notes quote Shadd (1991), stating "Racism is not something which simply affects its victims in various adverse ways: It also benefits those against whom it is not directed, by affording certain privileges" (Social Sciences Curriculum Guide, 2004, p. 75). Again, the quote introduces this complex idea, but fails to expand upon, describe, or explain it in any meaningful, in-depth way. Unless instructors are previously

familiar with these notions and ideas, they will have a difficult time expanding on and incorporating these notions into their work in the classroom. The curriculum documents offer promises and glimpses of the radical ideas that have shaped and formed some of the thought that has gone into them, however, ultimately, the documents work against themselves. The promotion of an overall reliance on the systems, structures, and beliefs of dominance undermines the desire to promote social justice and to provide analysis of taken-for-granted concepts.

4.4.3 The Myth of Neutrality

The new ABE curriculum guides call for a position that encourages multiple perspectives. The curriculum philosophy of "valuing biculturalism" notes, "biculturalism implies a movement from regarding only one culture or perspective (Anglo-Western European) as having value to equally regarding the cultures of minority groups" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 14). This philosophy suggests it is preferable to present learners with both sides of an issue, that is, to make available multiple perspectives rather than the usual hegemonic perspective. The suggestion is that by making multiple perspectives available, the curriculum will be less hegemonic and the education experienced by learners will be more objective and neutral rather than a typical one-sided account favouring white male perspectives. The curriculum philosophy provides an example of how valuing biculturalism might look in the classroom. It states,

For example, educational organizations that discuss issues from several perspectives (e.g., discussions of history or science concepts reflective of Western and First Nations world views), that honour cultural activities, or that invite elders to provide council demonstrate "equal valuing" of Aboriginal cultures. Validating multiple perspectives provides a more complete account of the events and ideas that have shaped human growth and development (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, pp. 14-15).

While the curriculum reflects the desire to subvert hegemony in this objective, it is unwittingly engaging in a denial of how education operates in a systemic way to reinforce dominant values and ideologies. The implication is that by presenting multiple perspectives learners will encounter neutral or objective education that will allow them to make up their own minds about issues. This approach suggests that the presentation of enough information from a variety of perspectives will result in learners who will be able to make their own decisions about what to believe. The Social Sciences curriculum guide presents a similar position in several instances. For example, in a discussion of the core components of the curriculum, the guide states, "many points of view exist on any given topic. Some individuals may try to convince others to accept their point of view without having examined the viewpoints of others, not understanding the value in hearing multiple perspectives, particularly before making decisions" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 50). Again, the curriculum states, "learners need to be exposed to different

perspectives in order to develop informed opinions about these issues" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 50). The unit provides reflective questions for an instructor to consider at the end: "Have I posed open-ended questions and presented problems for discussion, then guided learners to find their own answers?" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 60). These examples illustrate that the emphasis in the curriculum is on the need for multiple perspectives and assume that by presenting as many perspectives as possible learners will be participating in an objective process of developing "informed opinions." The reliance on notions of objectivity mystifies the inherently political nature of the educational endeavour in the first place.

Boler and Zembylas (2003) write about the myth of a neutral education, noting that "as common as the myth of objective journalism is the myth that education does not have a political agenda" (p. 114). Boler and Zembylas argue that the contrary of this myth is true and that indeed education "explicitly and implicitly, through overt as well as hidden curriculum, shapes and changes individuals to adapt them to dominant cultural values, to the work force needs – in short, that education fundamentally shapes and changes every student" (pp. 114-115). To view education as neutral and non-political is to practice a form of education that deceives itself.

The paragraph following the above quoted section from the curriculum planning and foundations document expresses a desire to see the value-laden nature of education. It states,

When multiple perspectives are valued, learners are invited to examine how cultural assumptions, dynamics of power in society, frames of reference (based on race, class, gender, sexuality, age or ability), and biases influence one's view of the world and what one believes to be true (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 15).

This statement reveals the texts desire to be an agent of social justice; however, it continues to uphold an ideology of objectivity in that expects learners to be able to formulate sensible, logical answers once presented (objectively) with enough information from various perspectives. A more effective strategy may be to explicitly recognize the fallacy of objectivity as a belief system, and encourage a further dialogue that questions the classification of education as political and non-political in the first place. The advice given by Boler and Zembylas (2003) is particularly relevant in relation to the curriculum philosophy. Boler and Zembylas suggest that for instructors "to engage students in sophisticated critiques of difference requires [instructors] unlearning the myth of neutral education" (p. 115). Here Boler and Zembylas are suggesting that educators have some work to do in "unlearning the myth of neutral education." This is in sharp contrast to the curriculum philosophy, which clearly sees the "work" falling to the learners, not the educators. The philosophy talks only about "learners" being

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"invited" to examine how their views of the world have been shaped by various forces. The curriculum invites learners to change, examine, and explore, rather than educators, who need not challenge their own beliefs in objectivity because the curriculum reinforces such beliefs. The curriculum upholds an ideology of objectivity that suggests that presenting enough information from a variety of perspectives will allow anyone to judge and make decisions based on rational and logical processes. It simply validates the huge and potent myth of objectivity.

4.4.4 Curricular Focus on Respect and Inclusion

A curricular focus on "differences" as benign, that is, as simply a "fact" to be acknowledged, respected, and honoured, has the effect of overlooking the ways that differences are constructed as power moves to uphold dominance and how certain differences are crucial to structural and systemic discrimination. In addition to an overriding focus on culture prevalent in the curriculum, as discussed in Chapter 3, there is an over-abundant use in the curriculum documents of terminology of "respecting," "including," and "honouring" cultural differences. To give an example of the proliferation of this type of language, the curriculum planning and foundations document, on one single page, refers to respect five times (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 7).

The documents articulate the notion of respect for cultural diversity repeatedly. Ideas drawn from Boler and Zembylas (2003) prove useful here.

Boler and Zembylas note the close link between liberal individualism and hegemony in the United States. While their discussion focuses specifically on national and cultural experiences in the United States, many of their insights are also applicable to the Canadian context. They note that liberal individualism promotes certain myths – such as those of equal opportunity, and meritocracy - which are upheld through processes of hegemony that make it possible to view the norms of liberal individualism as legitimate and natural ways of thinking and behaving (pp. 110-114). Schick (2000) demonstrates how these ideologies are present in education in a Canadian context, noting the ways that student teachers articulate and argue for their beliefs in equal opportunity and meritocracy (p. 86). Boler and Zembylas note that one of the myths of liberal individualism is "the celebration/tolerance model" (p. 112) which views difference as something benign to be respected and honoured. This view tends to overlook issues of power and fails to recognize that certain differences are linked to the experiences of "systemic institutional, educational, and economic discrimination" (Boler and Zembylas, 2003, pp. 112-113). Thus, the abundant use of the terminology of "respect" for cultural differences in the curriculum guides points to a reliance on the values of liberal individualism in the curriculum.

    The curriculum reveals its desire to believe in "the celebration/tolerance" model of education, in which difference is understood as benign (Boler and Zembylas, 2003, p. 114, see also Donald and Rattansi,

1992). The curriculum's overwhelming desire is to promote "respect" for cultural differences, reflecting its inability to look more closely at the ways that an ideology of difference links to power.   By focussing on respect and inclusion of difference, the curriculum circumvents considerations of how socially and ideologically constructed difference operates as a way of legitimizing unfair, systemic practices that come to be viewed as normal. "Hegemony masks itself as common sense, as natural: 'That's just how things are!' Dominant ideology relies on processes of naturalizing what are in fact culturally constructed values" (Boler and Zembylas, 2003, p. 118).

4.5 Discourse of Justification for Aboriginal Inclusion

        The curriculum documents betray a need to justify, repeatedly, the inclusion of Aboriginal content and perspectives. The need to justify continually Aboriginal perspectives suggests that the curriculum is making certain assumptions about the readers and users of the curriculum. I address some of these assumptions earlier in this thesis, namely that the documents assume the racial dominance of instructors. In addition, the curriculum assumes the hostility and resistance of these racially dominant instructors to the Aboriginal focus of the documents.   The readers are in need of convincing about the value or the necessity for inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives. The effect of justifying the inclusion of Aboriginal content is that it upholds as normative an assumption about what constitutes neutral curriculum and content (white-centered hegemonic curriculum).

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An example of how the documents justify Aboriginal content, and rely on established regimes of representation in order to validate the justification, is in the particular selections from the demographics report included in the curriculum planning and foundations document.   First, the information appears as a footnote to the definition of the term "Aboriginal" and to the specific information that "the term 'Aboriginal' refers to First Nations and Métis peoples. This reflects Saskatchewan demographics…" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 8). The footnote is referenced here ostensibly as a definition for the term "Aboriginal." However, the footnote then segues into an explanation of the demographics of the province, particularly as this information relates to Aboriginal people. It seems to answer the anticipated question of why so much attention is focussed on Aboriginal concerns. Rather than merely providing a definition for the term "Aboriginal," the footnote reflects more of a justification for Aboriginal inclusion than anything else. It notes that , "In 2001, almost 60% of learners in basic education programs were Aboriginal" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 8). This information is not from the demographics report, but rather represents a "standard" piece of knowledge that has become common-sense knowledge for ABE administrators and government bureaucrats.   The repetition of this statistical reference occurs throughout the documents as a justification for the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives. Its basis is on an assumption of "majority rules" that presumably will have some type of

persuasive effect, as well as implying that Aboriginal perspectives are not important in themselves as necessary knowledge for non-Aboriginal people.

The reference that follows, still within the footnote, states, "Demographic trends in Saskatchewan indicate that th e Aboriginal population will increase and the non-Aboriginal population will decrease" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 8). This is a generalized statement from the demographics report and is part of the main message of the demographics report, summed up neatly in the footnote. Again, it functions as a "fact" designed to influence based on its adherence to a similar "majority rules" type of approach. However, here it also functions based on a similar alarmist tone as that present in the demographics report. It begins to take on the connotation of a "problem." Statistical references to the population forecasts for the "registered Indian" population follow:

> The registered Indian population is forecast to represent 16.2 % of the total provincial population in 2013 and 20.2% by 2018. The Indian labour force in 1998 was estimated at 5% of the total provincial labour force. This proportion is projected to rise to 8% in 2008 and 14% in 2018 (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 8).

Here, in the footnote, there is a tone of justifying the focus of the curriculum on Aboriginal concerns, and the use of "data" and "facts" in the privileged language of science, as a means to legitimize the information presented.

The final selection of information for presentation here is that fewer Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan have

completed grade 12: "In 1996, 59% of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan, 15 years and over, had less than Grade 12 compared to 42% for the non-Aboriginal population" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 8). The document does not make the link between all of these bits of statistical data for the reader. It assumes that the reader possesses sufficient "common sense" knowledge of the circulating grand narrative of Aboriginal de ficiency to make connections between the important pieces of information and come to some conclusion. The conclusion may be that the Aboriginal population, which is growing and is needed for the labour force, also needs to achieve a higher level of education in order to become employed, hence the significance of the new curriculum. The implicit message is the same as that of the demographics report: the general population needs the Aboriginal population (economically) and, as such, it is in the dominant interest to focus education efforts on Aboriginal people. The justification for the inclusion of Aboriginal content into the curriculum then becomes one that rationalizes such inclusion based on the objective of requiring Aboriginal people to adapt and change in order to participate in the new order in a way that proves beneficial to dominant interests.

The curriculum documents present the objective of successfully educating Aboriginal people as a vehicle for accomplishing the goal of having Aboriginal people join the workforce and therefore the economy. The message is that education is the key to making this all happen. It is through the vehicle of education that Aboriginal people will become part of the labour

force and pick up the slack created by a dwindling general population. In this message lies the notion that the function of education is to prepare people for participation in the economic system. One of the important ways of doing this is through the teaching of dominant values and ideology. The suggestion is that the acceptance of dominant structures is inevitable in order to fulfill the objective of preparing Aboriginal learners for employment. This underlying requirement for ultimate conformity reinforces hegemony and is at odds with the social justice messages of the curriculum, which advocate for the incorporation of transformative "orientations" or "perspectives." Instead of suggesting transformative learning in the sense that the Communications curriculum guide describes (based on insights from Freire and Mezirow), the curricular discourse that incorporates the grand narrative about Aboriginal people serves to suggest conformity and adherence to hegemony. The curriculum succeeds in evading the stated desire to be a proponent of critical reflection and social justice.

Moreover, the justification for the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives shifts and changes through the documents in what can only be seem as an attempt to make such inclusion more acceptable to the readers and users of the curriculum. In the Social Sciences curriculum guide five core concepts are presented which are to be incorporated into all the units of the subject. One of the core concepts is stated here as "Aboriginal and Multicultural Perspectives" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 50). This section has evolved from part one of the curriculum guides which calls for "*Aboriginal*

Perspectives" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 3, emphasis added) to now calling for "Aboriginal _and Multicultural_ Perspectives" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, p. 50, emphasis added). There are many similarities between the two sections and the later section clearly draws its frame of reference from the section presented in part one of the curriculum guides. Yet a quiet revision has taken place that incorporates _multicultural_ perspectives into Aboriginal perspectives. The revision is a subtle example of continued justification and attempts to garner acceptance for the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives. The language is framed in anticipation of resistance from those claiming dominant identities and adds a multicultural flavour in an attempt to make the inclusion of Aboriginal content more palatable.

This shift suggests a deconstruction of the text from within itself simultaneous with the process of building it. The shift is an amendment, an admission of its own insecurity with its stance, and an undermining of its own belief in itself. Just as the over-justification for Aboriginal perspectives reveals the texts discomfort with itself, this particular crack in the armour serves as a point of deconstruction for the text. It is a place where the text reveals its own disbelief in itself. Furthermore, the apparent necessity of overly justifying Aboriginal content implies the consideration of certain curriculum as neutral, while this particular curriculum, with its social justice agenda and Aboriginal focus, is the one that is political and requires extensive justification. The effect of the over justification is to mask the

political nature of all curriculum, not just that which appears to challenge the status quo.

4.6 Power and Knowledge and How Knowledge is put to Work

A key concept in Foucaultian theory is about the nature of power. Hall (2001a) notes that Foucault advances the idea that power does not necessarily come from "on high," from some authoritative position, such as government or the state. Foucault instead conceptualizes power as circulating and infusing all levels of society. Hall (2001a) writes,

Power relations permeate all levels of social existence and are therefore to be found operating at every site of social life – in the private spheres of the family and sexuality as much as in the public spheres of politics, the economy and the law. What's more, power is not only negative, repressing what it seeks to control. It is also **productive**. It 'doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but…it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be thought of as a productive network which runs through the whole social body' (Foucault, 1970, in Hall, 2001a, p. 77).

Regarding power and knowledge, Hall (2001a) expands on the ideas of Foucault, noting that,

According to Foucault, what we think we 'know' in a particular period about, say, crime has a bearing on how we regulate, control and

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punish criminals. Knowledge does not operate in a void. It is put to

work, through certain technologies and strategies of application, in

specific situations, historical contexts and institutional regimes (p. 76).

As such, what we think we know about the demographics of the Aboriginal

population, about the demographics of the general population, about the

labour market forecasts, about the percent of Aboriginal learners in ABE

programs, about the outcomes for Aboriginal learners from ABE programs,

and about the education levels of Aboriginal people in the province, all

represent the various and intertwined discourses that work together to create

the knowledge that the development of the curriculum is contextualized in.

The result is a curriculum that purports to focus on Aboriginal people and

Aboriginal perspectives, concerns and understandings, and that desires to

be equitable and inclusive. The curriculum is an example of how knowledge

is "put to work" (Hall, 2001a, p. 76) at the level of an institutional regime.

The result is also a curriculum that is divided within itself, that *wants* to take

on the language and ideologies of inclusion, equity, and social justice, but at

the same time, is tied to the official discourse of employment, further

education, and the underlying assumptions of progress and dominance.

Chapter 5

It is the *consequences* of the curriculum that this thesis has been most concerned with. Undoubtedly the new ABE curriculum has consequences – there is no such thing as a neutral curriculum. At best the new curriculum challenges dominant ways of thinking and acting and at worst it perpetuates dominant ideologies that uphold inequality. The new ABE curriculum represents both the best and the worst-case scenarios.

ABE has no easy task in grappling with a history of transmission approaches to education and hegemonic curriculum. The new ABE curriculum has been developed with an understanding of such issues and difficulties. Yet, as this thesis demonstrates, the effects of such a history on ABE linger, despite the good intentions of those involved in the development of the new curriculum. The following sections examine the implications of the analyses provided in this thesis and provide some recommendations.

5.1 Implications

The purpose of undertaking this thesis has been to provide critical analysis of the new Saskatchewan ABE curriculum documents with the specific objective of exploring the ways that the documents might influence or affect Aboriginal learners. The ABE curriculum documents contain a

stated desire to promote social justice and to avoid perpetuating hegemony.

My purposes and the desires of the curriculum are not at odds with one

another. The curricular focus on social justice and on the inclusion of

Aboriginal perspectives as an attempt to remedy curricular hegemony and

serve the needs of Aboriginal adult learners is one of good intentions. It is

not the intent of this thesis to erode or ignore such good intentions. Derrida

(1997) provides useful insight when he discusses justice and the law. These

insights apply to social justice and education. Derrida notes that

> Justice is not the law. Justice is what gives us the impulse, the drive,
>
> or the movement to improve the law, that is, to deconstruct the law.
>
> Without a call for justice we would not have any interest in
>
> deconstructing the law. That is why I said that the condition of
>
> possibility of deconstruction is a call for justice (Derrida, 1997, p. 16).

In this vein, one can also consider the meaning of social justice as it relates

to education and, more specifically, ABE. ABE has been the site of reforms

most recently evidenced by the development of new curriculum. Such

attempts at reform are examples of the deconstruction of ABE. As in

Derrida's analysis of reforms in law, it is the drive for *social justice* that

compels educators to implement educational reforms – to deconstruct

education. The "redesign" of the ABE curriculum is a deconstruction and

critique of ABE education and social justice is the impetus and the drive

behind such a deconstruction.   In the case of the ABE curriculum, "the

condition of possibility of deconstruction [which resides in the creation of new

curriculum] is a call for [social] justice" (Derrida, 1997, p. 16). It is important

not to take for granted such attempts at deconstruction. However, they are

also not the ends of deconstruction, for, as we can see, the text continues to

provide locations for deconstruction from within. The internal ruptures

evident in the new curriculum must be scrutinized tenaciously and without

relent as a means of continuing possibilities for deconstruction and social

justice.

Unequal outcomes for Aboriginal learners who went through the ABE

system provide a reason for the creation of new ABE curriculum. The

government response to its own failure to achieve its goal of creating people

amenable to the work force was to try to find new ways to make Aboriginal

outcomes, as they relate to employment, on par with those of their non-

Aboriginal counterparts. New curriculum was one of the ways it sought to

accomplish this. The new ABE curriculum developers recognized an

opportunity and an obligation to approach curriculum from a perspective that

did not so obviously result in the standard hegemonic fare. The curriculum

developers deserve credit for embracing new ideas, for thinking critically

about curriculum, for including many Aboriginal voices in the development

stages. However, the question remains, Are good intentions enough? I

think the answer to this is both a qualified yes and no. The answer is yes in

the sense that, without good intentions, the struggle for suitable curriculum

and pedagogy in ABE is that much more difficult. As noted above, the

creation of the possibility for deconstructing the curriculum in the first place is

necessary to the pursuit of social justice. The new ABE curriculum has

provided the space for the possibility of deconstruction. However, good

intentions are not enough and may be damaging in that they allow us to

believe that we have the solutions to inequality and social injustice and that

these solutions are bound up with our good intentions and come in the form

of simple, applicable solutions. The subtlety of the discourse that reinforces

dominance is problematic in that it is difficult to locate and even more difficult

to articulate. Clouded by the certainty of good intentions, the risk is that the

curriculum will become merely another tool contributing to the ideology of

dominance rather than challenging it.

Again, insights provided by Derrida (1997) and Caputo (1997) on law

and justice are useful in considerations of curriculum and social justice.

Caputo notes that justice, according to Derrida, is limited to a singular act

and for a particular moment in time. He writes,

> The only thing that can be called "just" is a singular action in a
>
> singular situation, and this is only for the while that it lasts, in the
>
> instance of decision. The warm glow of justice never settles over the
>
> law, the rule, the universal, the "maxim" that can be drawn from the
>
> singular "event," or still less over the person deciding, who can never
>
> say "I am just" (Caputo, 1997, p. 138).

It is a false expectation that the curriculum will apply the broad strokes of

social justice through the vehicle of the written documents. Instances of

social justice are limited, as Derrida suggests, to singular acts at particular

historical moments. It is necessary to create and recreate sites of social justice through the *practice* of education for social justice. It is necessary to apply continually critical reflection and principles of transformative learning in the practice of education in order to avoid believing that "the warm glow" of social justice may settle over ABE.

For Saskatchewan Learning the ultimate measure of success of the curriculum may be whether they achieve the goal of increasing the level of employment for Aboriginal learners who complete ABE. However, implicit in this goal is the expectation that it is up to the "cultural other" to change in order to take advantage of "the good things" ostensibly being offered by the opportunity, at long last, to participate in the labour force. The goal of preparing Aboriginal people for employment is in itself misguided in that it fails to account for structures of dominance and inequality implicated in Aboriginal employment rates in the first place. The narrow employment objective, coupled with the desire of the curriculum to challenge dominance and hegemony, puts the curriculum in the untenable position of being at odds with itself. I am not suggesting that Aboriginal people do not want to participate in the economic system; what I am suggesting is that the objective of changing Aboriginal people to be amenable to employment, along with the pursuit of social justice objectives, which suggest a different focus is in order, are not easily reconciled within the curriculum. The discourse produces and reproduces a deficiency perspective in relation to Aboriginal people and continues to place the onus and the blame on

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Aboriginal people for situations created historically and through processes of colonization. In the dominant discourse about Aboriginal people, the colonizer's world is not the one that must change, nor is it the perspective held by dominance that must change. Instead, the suggestion is clear that it is up to Aboriginal people to embrace "biculturalism" and find ways to "fit in" to dominant structures in order to participate in the economic system. Once again, it is up to Aboriginal people to "walk in two worlds" (Henze & Venett, 1993). [2]

5.2 Recommendations

I make several recommendations based on the discourse analysis conducted in this thesis. The most obvious recommendation involves the practices of instructors in classrooms. As the site where the curriculum is enacted, the classroom is the place where individual instructors are important determinants of how the curriculum is played out. The curriculum

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[2] The idea of biculturalism is examined by Henze & Venett (1993). They note several assumptions inherent in the metaphor of "walking in two worlds" stating that the notion poses a number of problems that could be "dangerously reductive" (p. 119). For instance, one of the assumptions they outline is that biculturalism assumes that there are two distinct and easily identifiable cultures for a person to straddle (p. 119). This assumption is clear in the curriculum planning and foundations document. The document offers a quote from Darder (1991) defining biculturalism as "'a process wherein individuals learn to function in two distinct sociocultural environments: their primary culture and that of the dominant mainstream culture of the society in which they live' (p. 48)" (p. 14). Reliance on this quote for the definition of biculturalism is problematic in that is falls into the assumption that it is possible to easily identify and separate the "two distinct sociocultural environments." The other assumption highlighted by Henze & Venett is that biculturalism will mean the same thing to everyone, which is simply not the case, as they show (p. 123). They write:

> The goal implied in the metaphor– to achieve success in two worlds – becomes idealized, unreachable. The reality of many diverse worlds coalesces to become two idealized worlds, and the implicit assumption that it is possible to "walk" in both sets students up for failure. Ironically, the metaphor becomes a barrier rather than a model of how to live in the world today (p. 123).

is the major text structured to guide the activities in the classroom. The difficulty lies in how instructors are to negotiate between the discourses of the curriculum that uphold dominance and an ideological shift that questions dominant ideologies which function as common sense ideas and practices.

Insights into the relationship between instructor actions and social justice can be drawn from Derrida's (1997) ideas on judgment in law and the difference between what is right according to the code of law, and what is just. Derrida notes,

> You can judge; you can say that, according to the code, such and such a misdeed deserves ten years of imprisonment. That may be a matter of calculation. But the fact that it is rightly calculated does not mean that it is just. A judge, if he [sic] wants to be just, cannot content himself with applying the law. He has to reinvent the law each time. If he wants to be responsible, to make a decision, he has not simply to apply the law, as a coded program, to a given case, but to reinvent in a singular situation a new just relationship; that means that justice cannot be reduced to a calculation of sanctions, punishments, or rewards. That may be right or in agreement with the law, but that is not justice (p. 17).

As with Derrida's example, the application of education, in the form of curriculum, as "calculations" is entirely possible. For instance, the technical aspects of teaching may be incorporated, teachers may learn to conduct lessons, to apply technical teaching methods, but the technical model does

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not consider the issue of social justice. Similar to Derrida's notes about law and justice are curriculum and social justice in that it is entirely possible to do things "rightly" but not "justly." The application of the curriculum in a technically correct manner occurs, but this does not address the notion of what is socially just. It is only through the application of "judgment" that justice can be achieved. Just as Derrida writes that "A judge, if he wants to be just, cannot content himself with applying the law" (p. 17), likewise, an educator, if he/she wants to strive for social justice, cannot be content with merely applying the curriculum in a technically correct fashion. The correct application of the curriculum does not ensure social justice. Approaching education from a perspective of performing correct applications reduces the role of the educator to that of technician. The concern for social justice and the impetus and ability to apply judgment to the technical aspects of the curriculum, are what makes the educator more than a mere technician. It is up to instructors to make judgements about the application of the curriculum, and about the curriculum itself, in order to address social justice concerns.

If the curriculum regulates instructor action, then Derrida's notions of law and justice suggest that instructor actions must also be unregulated in their concern for social justice. The concern for social justice is one aspect the curriculum cannot regulate but that it attempts to regulate anyways. The curriculum planning and foundations document specifically states that its guiding principles are set out in order to guide the "approaches and practices" in ABE (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, p. 7). The curriculum

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attempts to regulate what is perhaps beyond the scope of its control. By certain discourse the curriculum planning and foundations document establishes itself as a regulating, directive discourse, intended to direct to work of the curriculum developers and intending to direct and regulate the actions of instructors. The application of the curriculum, that is, the practices of instructors in relation to the new curriculum and the "other" is the site where social justice may be enacted. It is not enough nor is it adequate to apply the "law," or the curriculum in this case, in a technically correct way, particularly since the curriculum has been shown to subtly uphold structures of inequality. Instead, it is necessary to practice the curriculum anew each time and in each situation, taking into account the particular sites of practice, the contexts for practice, and the fact of the unreliable nature of the written curriculum in the first place in order to stake a claim for social justice. It is impossible to regulate social justice through the textual discourse of the documents: "We do not ensure justice by mere conformity to law" (Caputo, 1997, p. 137) because that law is under a constant process of deconstruction. Likewise, we do not ensure social justice, in the case of the new ABE curriculum, by mere conformity to the curriculum. Having said this, I recognize that a recommendation that places the onus on instructors puts them in the unenviable position of second-guessing the curriculum that is to be their guide. It asks of them to deconstruct actively and consistently the texts that are ostensibly to guide their actions.

Furthermore, such a recommendation also places an onus on instructors to question their own ideological assumptions, a process that neither dominant ideology nor the new curriculum supports. Finding the support to question dominant ideology and challenge common sense practices of oppression is not a simple task and is one for which I have no easy answers. The level of dedication of instructors to this objective will undoubtedly vary greatly. It seems unfair and unrealistic to expect instructors independently to seek out the necessary supports for the practice of anti-oppressive education. Therefore, a fitting recommendation may be for Saskatchewan Learning to explore opportunities to provide such supports.

At the same time that this thesis asks instructors to learn different ways of thinking and talking about how the world is structured, they are also in the roles of mentor and role model for their learners who are equally challenged by such a process. It is critical not to separate the learner from the instructor and vice versa. Instructors have the opportunity to fashion their identities as *learners with* rather than *teachers of* pre-determined content that they are expected to have thought through prior to raising it in the classroom. Cooperative, corresponding learning between instructors and learners means instructors must give up long-held positions of knowledgeable, dominant, innocent, superior helpers. This requires instructors to see how their instructor identities have been fashioned in the

first place and how a variety of discourses uphold them, not the least of which is the curriculum.

Without significant changes to the curriculum guides, the ability of instructors to enact transformative, liberatory education is in serious jeopardy. My greatest anxiety since the inception of the curriculum redesign project has been the fear that the promises of a radical new education program will not materialize and that education will continue in much the same fashion - essentially reproducing the status quo. The results of this inquiry have done little to assuage those fears. The ways individual instructors carry out education in classrooms is something beyond the control of the curriculum. However, the curriculum has the opportunity to act as a powerful tool in shaping the ideas and discourses available to instructors. In this vein, there is still much work required on the curriculum to make it supportive of instructor practices that can begin to challenge hegemony in the classroom and to provide instances of practice of social justice. Such work includes, first and foremost, the development and application of a consistent theoretical basis from which the curriculum can be articulated.

A second recommendation that arises from this research is that on-going evaluation and a commitment to revision of the curriculum documents is necessary if they are to fulfill their revolution ary promise. Such an evaluation would involve taking the research which has been started here and working through the entire curriculum, analyzing the ways in which the

structure of the curriculum, and the basic assumptions that it operates on in many areas, function to uphold an ideology of dominance. Further application of critical discourse analysis to the documents, from the perspective of those in marginal positions, promises to provide insights about how dominance masks itself in order to become invisible and legitimate. The scope of the research conducted in this thesis was limited to a few important sections of the curriculum documents. Further work is required to complete a thorough analysis of the documents from an anti-racist, anti-oppressive perspective.

This thesis makes some specific recommendations for changes at various points. Such recommendations point to the need to more fully expand on those ideas and concepts in the curriculum that support social justice and to revise and edit those areas that have the effect of providing support for dominance and inequality. What is required is the application of consistency throughout the documents to avoid the mixed messages that currently plague them. The documents fail because they do not operate from a single theoretical position. For example, the curriculum guides show evidence that they rely on post-structural theory while at the same time drawing on notions and concepts congruent with structuralism and positivism. Evidence of post-structuralism appears in the acknowledgement that all knowledge, and curricular knowledge by extension, is socially constructed and has social effects (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002, pp. 15-16; Saskatchewan Learning, 2004b, pp. 46-50).

Evidence of structuralism appears in the continued reliance on hierarchical binary oppositions. Likewise, evidence of positivism appears throughout the curriculum documents in the reinforcement of positivistic views of objectivity, for instance. As it stands, the curriculum guid es reflect their own internal conflict over concerns for social justice and the desire to subvert hegemony, on the one hand, and the continued reliance on discourses that produce Aboriginal people as the deficient cultural other in need of change, which has the effect of reproducing dominance. In this way, the text is consistently at odds with itself, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for those utilizing it as their guide to negotiate its contradictions successfully.

In particular, the curriculum needs to address the constructed link between education and employment. This will require a suspension of the overriding concern of Saskatchewan Learning with the employment agenda. It also requires that the grand narrative about Aboriginal people as deficient, and how the new curriculum incorporates such a grand narrative, be deconstructed. The prevailing singular focus on Aboriginal employment avoids discussion of the historical and purposeful exclusion of Aboriginal people and whitewashes the ways these practices are the causes of inequities evident today. The documents fail to accurately identify the problem and instead address only the symptoms (unemployment, low education). The documents construct the "problem" of Aboriginal under-education and under-employment as one attributable to Aboriginal people, presumably due to some kind of character, moral, or value flaw. If this

inadequacy in the curriculum documents is not addressed the documents will be responsible for perpetuating a tradition of holding Aboriginal people responsible for the effects of colonization and historical discrimination.

Other specific recommendations include revisiting those areas of the curriculum documents discussed throughout this thesis in order to address some of the concerns. Specifically, I recommend the following changes:

- Address the over-justification for inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives. The implied expectation of resistance and hostility by racially dominant instructors to the curriculum comes from the expectation that they will see the new curriculum as having an agenda. The curriculum could address this by providing a theoretical accounting of how neutrality and objectivity have become concepts that are assumed to apply to standard curriculum, making curriculum that takes up perspectives other than dominant ones suspect and labelled as "political."

- Identify and remove the prevalent discourse of deficiency about Aboriginal people from the documents. Identify instances of discourse that rely on a grand narrative about Aboriginal people and avoid repeating that grand narrative. Identify where hierarchical structuring is reinforced or maintained and make changes. Address these difficulties directly.

- Critically reassess the assumptions that allow cultural revitalization in adult education to persist as the answer to systemic inequality. The curriculum documents not only rely on the cultural relevance argument, but also implicitly suggest that providing culturally relevant adult education will result in an improvement to the employment outcomes for Aboriginal people, placing the blame for problems, and the onus for change, on Aboriginal people. It is necessary to address this assumption.

- Address issues of race and racialization in the curriculum documents. Specifically locate instances where the documents avoid discussions of race by collapsing race into a focus on culture.

- Examine the ways that the documents construct the "Aboriginal other," as well as the ways that instructor identities are constructed. Make revisions that avoid binary oppositions and hierarchical structuring. Address the desire to achieve this and the difficulty of actually doing so. This requires the curriculum documents to acknowledge their own positions within dominance and their own vulnerability to ideologies of dominance.

- Above all, the creators, writers, promoters, and deliverers of the curriculum need to take up the social justice concerns of

the curriculum with conviction if the curriculum is to achieve its revolutionary goals. Part of this process involves letting go of the employment objective as a recurrent preoccupation within the documents. This does not mean that employment is not an important concern to Aboriginal people, but it is recognition that the simplistic link between education and employment is inadequate and that an analysis of ideological assumptions that uphold dominance, such as that of meritocracy, is required. Part of what is involved here is an examination of how the grand narrative about Aboriginal people has been invisibly incorporated into how we think and behave in adult education.

These specific recommendations do not represent a comprehensive list of changes that would prove beneficial in the curriculum documents. Rather they are instances identified through the research of this thesis that provide opportunities for clarification, re-examination, and further analysis. They represent spaces within the texts where internal ruptures occur and find their way to the surface. They are cracks in the foundation that require attention.

5.3 Conclusion

The analysis provided in this thesis has pointed to the difficulty of incorporating into curriculum theoretical understandings and positions that differ from mainstream, dominant understandings. While development of

the new ABE curriculum was undertaken with the lofty objective of creating curriculum that would avoid legitimation of dominance, and while evidence within the new curriculum documents points to glimmers of this desire being articulated, the curriculum ultimately fails to achieve this objective. Studying the documents over the course of the past year has led me to believe that the main difficulty the curriculum presents is its failure to adhere to a particular theoretical framework that would function to uphold the objective of social justice. The documents show some evidence of being based on a post-structural theoretical framework, that is, one that generates questioning of firmly held beliefs about dominance, power, and structures of society that are hidden beneath the social surface; however, practices within the curriculum documents point to an on-going Western belief in notions congruent with structuralism and positivism. The result is that the texts are riddled with inconsistencies, saying one thing while "doing" another.

The discourse of the documents relies on particular representations of Aboriginal people as deficient and applies these representations to Aboriginal learners. Without questioning the basis for such representations, indeed, without recognizing that such representations are even being made, the documents reinforce constructions of Aboriginal learners as lacking and in need of help. Simultaneously, instructor identities are established as dominant and helpful. This hierarchical structuring serves to reinforce and legitimize social power structures.

The effects of the curriculum on Aboriginal learners are such that Aboriginal identities are produced as deficient and in need of change. The construction of the "problem" locates that problem as residing within Aboriginal people, a situation that deflects attention and scrutiny away from examinations of structural inequalities and historical legacies of colonialism, racism, and prejudice. The effects of such a curriculum are to maintain the legitimation of a grand narrative that produces Aboriginal people as deficient "other."

I am disheartened by the results of the discourse analysis undertaken in this thesis. I had dared to hope for a better result, a result that would indicate that the new curriculum would fulfill the promise of transformative education. However, I am hopeful as well, because through this analysis it is clear to me that there are opportunities for remediation and that those opportunities, many of them identified here, provide a clear focus for future considerations in the Saskatchewan ABE curriculum development process.

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Appendix A

Please refer to the following web link to access the demographics report which contains the bar graph on page 71of that report:

http://www.sasktrends.ca/labour.pdf