MOTHERWORK: SUBSISTENCE LEARNING

by

Rosanna M. Barg

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Adult Education, Community Development
and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the
University of Toronto

MOTHERWORK: SUBSISTENCE LEARNING
Rosanna M. Barg, Doctor of Education, 2001
Department of Adult Education, Community Development
and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the
University of Toronto

ABSTRACT

This study examines the lived experience and learning of motherwork through art-informed inquiry. The central argument is that the lived experience of motherwork is a site of knowledge creation, where subsistence-oriented work, learning and personal transformations take place.

An important part of adult education links learning to change and transformation for individuals as well as for society. Personal transformation often begins with a disorienting dilemma, which subsequently evolves. In order to effect change in society, many adult educators recognize that the goals of transformation are embodied in the day-to-day lives of people who challenge existing oppressive societal systems. Therefore, this study explores the links between personal agency in lived experience and public effectiveness.

Women who provide primary care to children were invited to tell stories of significant turning point moments of change that took place within their work as mothers. In order to maintain the wholeness of the women's experience, capture their intensity and appeal to the emotions of readers, findings are represented in art-informed ways that include poetic narrative, reflective poetry and short stories.

Collectively, women identified the development and maintenance of relationships with their children as key to their learning. The focus of their work centres on ethical principles and practices that include reciprocity, democracy and

mutual respect. Further, some of the women reported that it was the life-affirming work of caring for, and advocating on behalf of children who faced life's struggles, that nudged them to develop increased self-trust, learn to take action and fight for justice.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank all the people who contributed to the completion of this work. First, to Dr. Budd Hall, my supervisor, for your ongoing faith in my ability, for nudging me further and further towards reclaiming the closeted poet within me, and for leading me when I wanted to be led, and otherwise, setting me free. Sincere thanks also to my committee members, Drs. Helen Lenskyj and Daniel Schugurensky, who, by asking many questions and seeking definition, urged me to develop greater clarity and continuity. Thank you also to Dr. Mechtild Hart for inspiring me, first with your writing, which became a major source for my research, and then for participating in my work as an external examiner.

Much appreciation goes also to my family; Rob and our three children, for your understanding, encouragement and support. In many ways, you became the 'material' of this study, and I thank each of you for taking the risk of entrusting that part of yourselves to me.

And thank you also, to my many friends, colleagues and mentors, too numerous to mention by name, for listening, discussing, encouraging, reading, critiquing, providing moral and economic support, editing and finally, for celebrating with me, the completion of this work, which marks for me, a new beginning.

Dedication

This work is dedicated
to two special women....

To my mother Mary,
for showing me
what it is to be
an organic intellectual,
ever observant, wise...
learning from life...
and from whom I first learned
what it means to live
a life-affirming,
subsistence-oriented lifestyle.

And to my daughter Michelle,
who gave me my first opportunity
to practise mothering...
for valuing my efforts
through many mistakes...
and who taught me
to love life
with childlike zest
to be playful, optimistic and euphoric,
in spite of life's many struggles.

Table of Contents

Some of the poems in this thesis
have appeared in other publications,
in slightly varied versions.

Preface

Identity and Location

As I prepared to do this project,
I pondered my identity
and location.

How did I come to this place...
this earth
the beliefs I hold
this learning....

I still see myself,
(not infrequently,
and especially
in unknown circumstances...)

as a scared little Reinland girl
from the Mennonite village
struggling to find her way
in this foreign land....

However,
many other identities
have brought me here.

On the one hand,
I am an educator
an Adlerian
an optician
a researcher
a learner.

On the other hand,
I am a woman
a feminist
a lover
a mother....

I am also white, heterosexual
married, middle class
and suburban...

a veritable member of dominant culture...

struggling
to look at the world
from a critical perspective...

struggling
to find a way
to help make the world
a better place...

struggling
to see
ways in which my own life...
my practices and perspectives
contribute
to maintaining a world
that is so unjust....

As a worker
I earn a good income
in the development of
educational processes and programs
currently, for fire service workers
within Ontario.

And so with all those
seemingly paradoxical identities
tucked firmly into my existence,

I would like to
present to you,

a glimpse into
the hopes and dreams...
that brought me here...
and resulted in this academic work...

(and as it is spring
and I am a gardener)
I will present this story poem from
the metaphoric perspective
of a garden.

Invested in Progress

I spent many years
wanting to get out of that village...
away from the simplicity of our lives...

away from tilling the soil
preparing the land
planting the seeds
and nurturing them
into existence....

I leaped over centuries,
from subsistence-oriented roots
to embrace the world
as others saw it...

reading masculinist history books,
absorbing the mainstream view of things...
learning, along with society...

to devalue and despise myself,
as a woman
from agricultural,
lower class beginnings....

I was invested in progress...
and progress meant

buying more things,
becoming modern...
becoming university educated...
speaking without an accent...

not looking Mennonite
(that was really big...).

I learned to become urban
... drive on freeways
to define work
as some obscure thing
that happens
far away from villages,
in high rise office towers....

And I learned to dispose of things
many things...
paper plates, paper cups...
plastic bags...
shrink wrapped packaging...
contact lenses...
traditions....

In essence,
throwing away...
my humble beginnings.

Nature's Persistence

And then, kerpow!
One day
I found myself to be
the mother of three....

This became
a moment of reckoning
for me.

It began my struggle for continuity
where the wholesomeness
of my heritage
took on new meaning...

where my hopes for the future,
my greatest fears
and my proudest moments

collided

into one big kamikaze moment ...

that began for me
the process of change...
that has culminated in this work
that I am
entrusting
to each of you.

An Enduring Winter

How does one pass on
to children,
a world that is hopeful
with ethics and values
that are worth believing in?

How does one do the work of
basic human care,
the work of necessity

when we have tried so hard
to break free
from that very work...

only to find
that we have invested ourselves
as a species,
in earth's destruction?

How does one plant seeds of hope
in the fruitful gardens
of children's lives...

when we have contaminated
the very richness
of its soil?

One could be downright disheartened
at these moments...

regretful...
recognizing the foolishness...
of having embraced modernity
with such vigor.

It could become one of those
the 'glass is half empty' moments...
that one experiences
late in spring, sometimes...

long past the time when
any reasonable winter
should have ended....

Nature's Hopefulness

But, like the hope
that comes with each new tulip bulb
poking its head boldly,
out of the ground...

each new robin
that builds a nest...

promising an end to winter...

those three lives
with budding bodies

prodded me
to search for hope...
new knowledge...
new meaning....

These were three
energetic lives
that deserved a future ...

to see the sun...
to grow to maturity
in a world that promotes
life,
health
and vigor....

Subsistence Gardening (in a Modern Setting)

This was the moment
I began to learn
anew
the valuable lessons
of my humble beginnings...

that in spite of the restrictive practices
I had struggled
so hard to escape...

there was an internal integrity
in the lives of my forebears
who lived in harmony
with the earth
and nature's processes.

I had experienced
a certain
"knowing wholesomeness"

and somewhere deep inside,
I knew what I needed to learn
to nurture the children
in my garden....

This time, my learning had new meaning...
I had purpose....
I wanted to adapt and change
and become responsive
to the development of these children

to provide them with the sunshine
food and water
that would promote their growth...
and nurture both
their bodies
and spirits.

The Single-Mindedness of Nature

So you see, in a sense,
I didn't really choose
to study motherwork....

The seeds had been planted
and motherwork
as a site of learning,
chose me...

and with much struggle
I heeded that call...

Research, analysis
and poetic process
became the tools
with which I tilled the soil
and nurtured my garden
into existence....

And, with a mind of its own...
as all good gardens have...

this work came also,
to look at the lives of
other mother gardeners...

to honour
this subsistence-oriented work
that many women have done...
often silently...
over centuries..

Gardening as Life-Affirming Work

Is this work rigorous,
I have been asked?

Let me tell you my thoughts on rigor.

I looked up rigor
in my trusty dictionary...

'stiffness, it said
and unyielding...
does not bend,
even under extreme pressure

associated with rigor mortis'

death....

God, no,
that's not the kind of rigor
I wanted....

I wanted my work to be life-affirming
to evoke emotions

to be playful
yet sincere,

to be evocative
yet imaginative....

To be exhaustive, yes
(as is possible)
and thorough...

but to be relevant to
life's flexibility,
it's nature and growth....

The Importance of Gardening

Why is such work important
(you ask)?

If, as I understand it,
one of the goals of inquiry
is to make some meaning
out of the rich
complexities of the human condition...

does it not follow
that it is important
to study also
the richness of women's lives
as they struggle and learn
to nurture all future generations?

I do not pretend
that the women who joined me
in this study
speak on behalf
of women-as-a-group...

These moms were only a few...
primarily middle class
(albeit with a broad range of incomes)
struggling to find their way
learning, changing and transforming
through the practice of motherwork.

These women
were bursting with stories.
They debated which
of their many stories
would provide
the greatest insight

into their experience,
learning, knowing and change....

Other women volunteered to join me
and men... several men...

because they found
the experience of parenting
so profoundly
life changing...
and had stories worth telling....

Yes, this work is important...
it is important for men
it is important for women
... for children.

And even though this study is small
in light of the overwhelmingly big picture,
it is significant, too...
for educators
for society
for the future of life itself....

And by telling even a few of these stories,
I wanted to affirm life's movement
and to hold the interest
of readers, listeners
and audiences...

to provoke them
into considering the experiences
of their own lives
in new ways...

and perhaps to see
the lives of their parents
and children

with some new glimpse
of insight
or meaning....

Pathways through the Garden

There were many pathways
through the garden....
It was difficult,
to know, sometimes...
which path to take...

I struggled briefly on the pathway
of social accounting
imagining that I could contribute
to assigning an economic value
to this work....

Then, a historical analysis would have been useful...
or more feminist approaches...
those grounded more firmly in
anti-racism...
or Marxism perhaps....

While I looked down these pathways,
the path
that ultimately,
I took began with me...

with my origins
the richness of my heritage...
and my personal experiences
of learning, living
and transformations....

I used narrative life history
and story-telling
to explore my pathway....

From there, I moved onward
to examine
moments of transformation and learning
in the lives of the women
who joined me....

I used a collaborative approach
involving the women
as much as possible
in the analysis of their own stories
nudging them...
I think (and hope)
to further knowing....

My journey
took me, also
to art-informed analyses,
to the use of aesthetic form...

to poetry...
which has long been
a way in which women's
experiences
of oppression
and subordination
have been given voice....

Come With Me (into my Garden)

So I was becoming the good mother...

practising what women are supposed to do
long-suffering silence...
enduring love...
self-sacrifice....

And then one day...

There was this
moment
of conflict:

A good mother
protects her children
from harm....

A good woman
does not challenge
social structures....

Does she
(Barg, 2001, p. 118)?

I knew, from that moment...
more learning was needed..
learning how to overcome
my well-rehearsed silence...

learning to speak up...
to speak out
to shout from the roof tops

the things that I believe in....

Come With Me (into the Gardens of Others)

Without hesitation,
the women invited me in....

They shared with me
the most precious
and intimate parts of their lives
as mother gardeners...

of how
they began their gardening work
learning without a guidebook
to nurture life...
to stand up for themselves
to fight for their lives
and the lives of their children....

Anna, in learning to let go
of her expectations
of being a supermom, said:

(I had to let go of)
the myth of the perfect mother
who does everything right...

I had to learn to let go...
let them make choices...
I had to learn to focus on the relationship.

Carla, in struggling with
issues of reciprocity
confessed:

I've become more patient....
I've learned to say
"I love you" more.

Kate held me in awe,
when, in her search for congruent living,
she stepped out of the

patriarchally prescripted definition
of how she should live,
and learned:

...be true to yourself
and in the end
you will have the reassurance that:

"This is really what I am,
this is who I am
and I feel it to the core."

Rita is blossoming,
as we speak, into a new being....

She describes herself now
as a fighter,
who would like to tell her story
to other women
so they can feel supported
by her experiences....

Rita said (about her son):

"Fight for him,
fight tooth and nail
fight the system, tooth and nail....
Do everything you can!
Don't sit back and take it!

Because they'll walk all over you."

Harvesting and Preserving (for Long Winters Ahead)

The gardens are being laid to rest...
this season's crops
have been gathered
the soil turned over,
lying now
in fallow....

The stories have been preserved
taken on new shapes...
new color...
new texture...

like the wheat that will become our bread
the jam that will amuse us
and the preserves that will nourish us

through next winter's drudgery....

And so you see...
I have come full circle
as a mother
and researcher.

I have revisited
my origins
to claim, with renewed vigor
the value of my humble beginnings...

the learning that was grounded in those
subsistence-oriented ways...

and found ways in which
this life-affirming work continues
among mother-gardeners
and subsistence nurturers
everywhere....

The stories have taken on
lives of their own...
preserved as new entities....

There, I hope they become

precious treasures
of the future
that bring light and life
to bleak winter seasons ahead....

There, I hope they will inspire others

to do further research...
to take those other pathways
through the garden
and study
motherwork learning...
this way and that...
from every imaginable angle...

until motherwork
is recognized
throughout the world...

as a rich site of learning
and knowledge creation...
with life-changing potential....

There, I hope these stories
will contribute
to the experience that
the glass may not be emptying,
but is being filled...

instead...
with hope.

Chapter One: Motherwork Learning

I don't think I'll ever be finished mothering them!
- Anna

An Introduction

This study is the outcome of more than twenty years of living and learning as an adult, a woman and a mother. In reflecting on my life, I discovered, without a doubt, that the learning that shaped and impacted my adult life most significantly was grounded in the lived experience of motherwork.

I am a storyteller, storywriter and poet. In doing the work of mothering over many years, I often used creative writing as a way of processing and making meaning out of my experiences. As a result, I chose to do a qualitative, art-informed study, that centres around significant life experiences of women who have worked as mothers, from an adult learning perspective.

This study examines the lived experience and learning of motherwork through art-informed inquiry that includes women's storytelling. By representing the women's stories in poetic and short story form, and through further qualitative inquiry, this study contributes to the knowledge creation and discourse regarding the lived experience and learning within the work of mothering.

The Burning Bush

This is what I learned
from the burning bush
I planted:
'lovingly sheltered
under the apple tree
in my sacred garden.

Every autumn I see other bushes
aflame with colour and
blazing with desire....

My lovely bush stays green:
the odd leaf touched
with a bit of plum,
still lovingly held
in the arms of the tree;
protected from taking the risks of life
that would set it free
to spring into glorious colour
all of its own.

The Burning Bush represents my thoughts, processes and experiences as they intersected around my work as a mother of teenage children, and the work of gardening. I learned much about life from gardening, as I learned much about life and about myself from my children. As a major part of this study focuses on poetry as a way of making meaning, my own reflective poetry will be interspersed sporadically throughout this work.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section examines the historic, sociological and economic significance of this study, and posits that there is, within the learning and work of mothering, an inherent hopefulness that can contribute to the future of life itself. Research questions are also outlined. Section two describes the methodology that I developed to conduct this study. This includes a description of my theoretical approach, my own participation as a researcher and subject of self-inquiry, and the use and significance of art-informed inquiry and representation within this work.

Background

The work that is required to nurture and sustain life is primarily carried out by women throughout the world (Mies, 1986, Waring, 1988, 1996). At the same time, patriarchal society has subordinated women, institutionalized motherhood

and mandated that only mothers can do this work, because it is seen as "natural" for them as women (Rich, 1986a, Miles, 1996b, Ortner, 1974).

Yet, mothering is clearly work (Mies, 1986, Waring, 1988), it is life-affirming subsistence work (Hart, 1992, 1995) and it is learned work (Ruddick, 1989, Price, 1988). In fact, according to Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986), in a study of women's learning, the "mothers usually named childbearing or child rearing" (p. 200) among their most significant adult learning experiences. However, the learning of mothering, as a way of knowing, is overlooked and rarely considered by educational theorists (Hart, 1992).

What is Motherwork?

According to Irigaray (1990/1993), our language reflects the values of our society. She says that in our male-identified society, "whatever has been valourized has been masculine in gender, whatever devalorized, feminine" (p. 68). In the face of this engendered language, feminists claim that the work they do as mothers is firstly work, and secondly, work of value, in terms of the social and economic contributions that are made. Therefore, the word "motherwork" has developed within feminist literature as a reclaiming of women's reproductive and mothering work as work of value (Miles, 1996b, Rosenberg, 1987).

Motherwork is rigorous. It is work that requires continuous decision-making, choices and judgments. The decisions of those who provide primary care to children are made in regard to well-being in the realms of spirituality, nutrition, aesthetics, education, physiology, psychology and emotions over a twenty-four hour day, seven-day week period, spanning many years (Oakley, 1979). Ruddick

(1989) describes motherwork as the provision of care, preservative love, protection and training of children by women and occasionally, but to a lesser extent by men. (There is considerable evidence that nurturing and care-giving by men is increasing in several segments of society (Laqueur, 1992, Paradkar, 2000). Although I want to acknowledge and affirm this development, I will focus this study on the work of women, in order to honour the care-giving role for which they have taken primary responsibility throughout history.)

Hart (1992) identifies motherwork as work that includes nurture of all people, whether children, adults or seniors. This work, she indicates, is primarily carried out by women as unpaid work, but also includes paid work such as child care, nursing care, eldercare or the teaching of literacy and other education, provided the focus of this work is emancipatory and life-affirming. Waring (1988) also sees motherwork as work that is primarily carried out by women, throughout the world, and broadens it out to include the work of care, protection and preservation of humanity and nature. Waring indicates that the reason women do this work is not because they have been assigned to do it by patriarchal, capitalist society but because it is the work of basic necessity and subsistence, and women do it because it needs to be done. Shiva (1989) speaks of the feminine principle which, when reclaimed and practiced, is the care of everything living including all humans and nature.

I see motherwork in its broadest sense, along with the views of Waring (1988), Shiva (1989) and Hart (1992). I also believe motherwork at its best is very creative work, in that many women who do this work are continuously creating

new responses to ever changing situations that encompass the promotion and sustenance of life. As my purpose in this research study, however, is to explore the lived experience, learning and knowledge creation of women who have contributed to the primary care of children, the definition of motherwork I will use for this study is:

> Motherwork is the work of basic human care that contributes to the reproduction, nurture and sustenance of children within households. It is subsistence work that, when done well, contributes to the quality of life for individuals, families and society. If this work is left undone, this can result in loss of life or the quality of life, which impacts negatively on individuals, families and society.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing feminist discourse that seeks to make visible the still too invisible value of motherwork. I do this by exploring the experience and learning of women who do this valuable and necessary work which continues to be undervalued and unpaid. My view is that motherwork, as it is conceived of and practised within the Western capitalistic version of the nuclear family, is often too much work for any one person. This view is echoed by Merriam and Clark (1991), who indicate that the current double burden of production and reproduction that is placed on mothers requires time "...to do it all – work full time, take care of a husband's needs, keep up a home, raise children, and still see to their own needs" (p. 19). Although Merriam and Clark appear to have overlooked the heterosexist attitude inherent in their statement (the reference to the 'husband's needs' also points to the strong societal position of the "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich, 1986a)), I do agree with them in that current societal attitudes indicate that mothers 'should do it all.'

Ideally, the work of mothering should be a shared social responsibility, so that burden of this work would not fall on individual women (Eichler, 1997, Miles, 1996b). However, if motherwork were to be generalized to the greater society as a social responsibility, it would be necessary to know what this work consists of, how it is experienced and learned, and how it can be shared. My view is that the learning and practice of motherwork, at its best, is of great significance to the future of life and work, and that if this work were to be generalized to the greater society, this could contribute to the sustenance of the earth and to more life-affirming practices for all of life (Ruddick, 1989, Hart, 1992, 1996, 1997). I also believe that while motherwork must be shared as a social responsibility, the learning and practice of motherwork must maintain a woman-identified, life-sustaining focus. This is because "increasing male involvement in child rearing before or apart from real increases in women's power would simply intensify men's control of reproduction and could actually be dangerous to children" (Miles, p. 36).

I have also become increasingly aware and concerned regarding the narrow concept of value, as it is defined in our society. In capitalistic society, views of what constitutes both work and value have been developed on models of profit-based growth (Daly, 1996, Hartsock, 1983, Chancer, 1998). This view is exploitative in terms of both workers (Daly, 1996) and those who are defined as 'non-workers' (Waring, 1988, Mies, 1986). Further, it blatantly disregards the fact that the earth's resources cannot be endlessly exploited for the economic

advantage of a few, at the expense of many (Daly, 1996, Waring, 1988, Mies, 1986).

In this economic climate, technology is replacing much of the 'work' that was formerly done by 'workers' and continues to do so at an unprecedented rate (Rifkin, 1995, Ekins, 1986, Aronowitz & Cutler, 1998, Chancer, 1998). Economists are predicting that the world of work, as we have known it, is rapidly disappearing. This will have a significant impact on our society, leaving workers to scramble and compete for the few remaining highly paid and highly technocratic jobs of the future (Rifkin, 1995, Daly, 1996, Aronowitz & Cutler, 1998). Yet contemporary management strategists promote more life-affirming practices in the workplace, based on collaboration, communication and cooperation (Senge, 1990, Covey, 1989, 1990, Sharma, 1998), all of which have been traditionally attributed to women. Senge (1990) goes so far as to suggest that in order for the work of management to become more effective, the 'war' between what has conventionally been identified as the workplace and the homeplace must end, and similar, life-affirming practices must take place in both locations.

According to Mies (1986), however, when jobs get scarce, "the league of men closes its ranks again and puts women again into their place" (p. 16). This is currently resulting in increased conservatism and a backlash against women's progress (Mies, 1986, Oakley & Mitchell, 1997). Finlayson (1996) and Daly (1996) point out that if no changes are made in how work and business are attended to, then women, many of whom are mothers, and marginalized men throughout the world (and especially in non-Westernized countries or of non-

Westernized heritage) will become poorer, at the expense of the huge profits for the already wealthy in the twenty-first century.

In the midst of this climate of the potential disappearance of work (within traditional workplaces), motherwork, the work of subsistence, care and nurture of life is here to stay. In fact, due to the destruction that is being brought about by war and a profit driven economy, such subsistence-oriented work is becoming more crucial than ever (Waring, 1998, Mies, 1986, Hart, 1992). It is clear that the 'profits' and 'progress' of the twentieth century were destructive to the earth and contributed to the extinction of many species (Shiva, 1989, O'Sullivan, 1999, Hall, 1996). Consequently, it is entirely and imminently "within our power to make life extinct on this planet" (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 27).

In light of this gloomy view of the future, Hall (1996) suggests, "our ability to have hope for the future depends to some extent on our assessment of the changes which we have experienced..." (p. 124). Shiva (1989) adds to the message of hopefulness by indicating that "recovering the feminine principle as respect for life in nature and society appear to be the only way forward, for men as well as women" (p. 223). Motherwork, the learning, "working and educating for life" (Hart, 1992, p. 173) and ongoing assessments of the changes experienced in the course of this work, have the potential to contribute to such hope for the future.

Research Questions

As I prepared for this project, I had several research questions in mind, knowing that as the project evolved, more questions would emerge and some

questions might change. I wondered: What are the epistemological foundations of the lived experience, learning and knowing within motherwork? What are the major changes or transformations that take place among the participants as a result of motherwork learning? What can an art-informed inquiry of motherwork learning contribute to adult education research?

The Methodological Journey

As a theoretical foundation for this study, I borrowed from several qualitative research methods to construct my own approach. These methods include interpretive biography (Denzin, 1989), artful inquiry (Borone & Eisner, 1997, Knowles & Finley, 1995, Denzin, 1997), narrative life history approach, (Cole, 1991, Josselson & Lieblich, 1993, 1995), feminist research methods (Smith, 1987, Oakley, 1981, Kirby & McKenna, 1989, Rubin & Rubin, 1995), and grounded theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994, Strauss & Corbin, 1990, Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In keeping with Denzin's (1989) work on interpretive biography, I conducted interviews that focus on "personal experience stories" (p. 7), in which participants were given opportunities to tell stories that highlighted "turning point moments" (p. 7) in their lives, that related to their experience and work as mothers. The goal of this research method is to "build shareable understandings" (p. 28) of lived experience, which is the intent of this study.

Turning Point Moments

There are moments
frozen in time
when breathing stops...
the heart is still.

In that empty space
just before
a child speaks
the phone rings
tires screech...

the silence deafens
the sky goes black
and life
as we knew it
is rearranged.

As a researcher, I recognize that turning point moments in people's lives can be process oriented, rather than moment oriented. However, in talking to the research participants, I found that there were many stories of learning and transformation that at least retrospectively, centred around specific moments, conversations or dilemmas.

Kirby and McKenna (1989) describe the gathering of biographical stories or life histories as a method that can be used for gathering research data from the margins. Using this approach, research can become a political statement that "creates opportunities to reclaim and re-name" (p. 64) experiences that have traditionally been excluded from research. As the knowledge creation and learning of motherwork have been largely excluded from traditional research, it is my intent that, through participants' storytelling, this study can contribute to such a reclaiming and renaming of women's experience as mothers.

Having been inspired by several feminist researchers and sociologists, I also use for this study, key concepts that have been developed as feminist research methods. In keeping with Smith's (1987) work regarding the problematic of everyday experiences, I conducted this study by focusing on the "standpoint of women" (p. 182). Chase (1995) indicates that within a standpoint method of research, the storyteller's social action and experience are studied in relation to the

social world, which is shared with others. Therefore, this research locates itself first and foremost in the daily living and experiences of women in order to make their experience visible from their own perspective.

Oakley (1981) and Smith (1987) identify some of the shortcomings of traditional methods of qualitative research used by sociologists, social scientists and educators. Oakley indicates that "finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (p. 41). By minimizing the hierarchical relationship between the researcher and participants, the participants can become empowered (Oakley, 1981, Rubin & Rubin, 1995), and are encouraged to take a more active part in the interview. The researcher addresses power relationships through self-knowledge and self-awareness, in an effort to mitigate the tendency for hierarchy, to use the position of trust ethically, and to ensure that the research does not replicate "the oppressive practices of the marketplace" (Goodson & Mangan, 1991, p. 14).

Ethical Principles

In order to minimize the hierarchical relationship between the research participants and myself as a researcher, and in order to 'own' my power as a researcher in an ethical way, I developed some principles that guided me in this study. Although I acknowledge that as a researcher I always held the bulk of power within my study, I chose to put myself into this project both as a researcher and subject of research, in order to reduce the hierarchical and exploitative

potential between myself and research participants. I also put considerable effort into maintaining my power as a researcher in ethical and respectful ways (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, Rubin & Rubin, 1995, Goodson & Mangan, 1991).

To further this goal, I developed a set of ethical principles that I used in relation to participants in conducting this study. I began by developing a rapport with each of the research participants through several conversations, prior to the first interview. In an effort to maximize the transparency of the research process, I provided as much information as I was able, about the project: its scope, parameters, and the process I was developing.

I also clarified my own location within the process, both as a researcher and a participant. In order to do this, and in keeping with the concepts of feminist research methods (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, Oakley, 1981), I shared my own mothering stories with participants, in some cases verbally, and later, once it had been completed, I gave each of the participants a copy of the poetic and short story works that I wrote as part of the self-inquiry.

Further, I gave participants opportunities to read the transcripts of the interviews, and to change, challenge and revise anything that might have been misrepresented. As a researcher, it was interesting to note that my ethical principles left me feeling quite vulnerable, especially when I shared the poetic works and short stories with participants. I wanted to do this because I firmly believe that anything written about someone else, or in someone else's voice, should represent that person's truth. However, I was unprepared for my own feelings of vulnerability that resulted from this practice. I received very positive

feedback from each of the participants and I believe that this step increased my awareness of the vulnerability that the research participants experienced and consequently contributed to the rapport building between us.

Self-Inquiry

Prior to meeting with any research participants, I conducted an extensive self-inquiry project of my own experience as a mother. I did this by participating in a preliminary interview as suggested by Kirby and McKenna (1989). This served several purposes. First, it assisted me in developing a clearer and more appropriate interview format, prior to meeting with research participants. Second, it provided me with an opportunity to empathize to a greater extent with participants because I had put myself in a similar position. This also assisted me to develop a greater sensitivity to their experience of the interview process. Third, I was able to transcribe my own interviews and to place them among the research data, and include them in the resulting analysis (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). The self-inquiry is represented in Chapter Three.

Participant Selection and Contact

Finding participants for this study was not difficult. As I had been discussing this study with colleagues and acquaintances for some time, several women (and also three men) had already indicated that they would like to participate in this research study. (In the case of the men, I thanked them for their interest and acknowledged that they had undoubtedly experienced significant turning point moments in their parenting work. However, I told them that I was

choosing to interview only women for this study, in order to honour, among other things, their historic roles as mothers.)

Further, I wanted to interview women who represented diversity in the population based on their family structure and in terms of ethnic location, sexual orientation, race and class. In keeping with a narrative life history approach (Cole, 1991, Josselson & Lieblich, 1995), I chose to interview only a small number of participants, and focus on the richness and depth of their experience. I interviewed six women and included myself as the seventh person in the project.

The common criteria for participants were that they had been involved in providing primary care to children within a household, and that at least one of those children was currently an adolescent or teenager. This served to ensure that the women had significant levels of experience as mothers, they were not too far removed from the daily interaction of care-giving, and they were at a stage in life when they could reflect back on their experience over a period of time.

I then controlled the participant selection for a diversity of family structure. I began with the women who had volunteered to participate, sending them letters of invitation, which outlined the parameters of this study (Appendix A). I asked several women if they would like to participate, suggesting that they could also contribute to this study by referring other women who they thought might like to participate instead. As I guaranteed anonymity to the participants, I use pseudonyms to identify all participants and their family members.

Layered Research and Analysis

I met with each of the women for two interviews. In the first interview, I asked participants to tell me several stories of 'significant personal experience' that involve moments of transformative change within the context of their work and learning as mothers. The storytelling was followed up by short semi-structured interviews (Appendix C). These interviews normally lasted one and a half to two hours, and were tape recorded and transcribed with the participants' informed consent (Appendix B).

In each case, I began the data analysis process immediately following the interview, by describing my experience and observations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I also prepared initial poetic and short story works that centred on the women's stories. The transcripts and creative writing pieces were shared with the women prior to the second interview.

In the second interview (also semi-structured), participants were invited to comment on the creative writing pieces, and to offer suggestions that would make the poems and stories reflect their experiences more accurately. Further questions followed up on the first interview, in that stories were expanded upon, assumptions and parental influences were examined, and the goals of parenting were explored.

Issues of gender, race and class were explored from the participants' perspectives. In order to formulate questions for this part of the interview, I used some of the practices of Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac and Zine (1997) who examine issues of racism by asking people from varied backgrounds to imagine how their

experiences would have differed had they been of another racial background. I extended this concept to examine issues of gender and class (Appendix D).

Meaning Making through Art-Informed Methods

Eisner (1993) states:

> ...experience is the bedrock upon which meaning is constructed and that experience in significant degree depends on our ability to get in touch with the qualitative world we inhabit. This qualitative world is immediate before it is mediated, presentational before it is representational, sensuous before it is symbolic (p. 5).

The question for researchers is, how best to capture and mediate that qualitative lived experience so that it can be represented in ways that ring true to lived experience, grab the interest of readers and provide an avenue for meaning making through language and text.

Denzin (1997) suggests that the qualitative research of the twenty-first century will move further in the direction of "messy text" (p. 200), text that is art-informed, and reflects lived experience in ways that push or extend the boundaries of traditional research, drawing upon literary devices. Although, he cautions, such experimental writing (including poetry and short stories) must be well crafted and engaging, it "privileges emotions and emotionality, arguing that the main goal is to evoke emotional responses for the reader, thereby producing verisimilitude and a shared experience" (p. 209).

In drawing on the work of professional poets, poetry is described as "one of the most powerful tools we have to help us remember who we are as women, where we came from, what was done to us, and what we wish to do about it" (Brandt, 1996, p. 43). Feminist poets have also written convincingly about creative

writing and its relationship to women's lived experience, oppression and subordination. Marlatt (1984) suggests that poetry is the language that we enter at birth, through the body of the mother. She says we are born into the "body of language we speak: our mothertongue" (p. 45), and that as poets, women can make use of the powerful medium of language to take issue with the

"... discrepancy between what our patriarchally-loaded language bears (can bear) of our experience and the difference from it our experience bears out – how it misrepresents, even miscarries, and so leaves unsaid what we actually experience" (p. 47).

Story writing and storytelling also provide rich avenues with which to share lived experience, engage readers and listeners (Ceglowski, 1997) and present opportunities that can contribute to social change (Razack, 1993). In fact, according to Greene (1991), our voices are set free through stories, where they "resonate with the sense of seeking, struggling to name, striving to find language for what was repressed and suppressed over the years" and "give shape and expression to what would otherwise be untold about 'our lives'"(p. x).

As poesies, the writing of poetry and stories have become vehicles of processing meaning making for me, particularly at times when I have struggled (as a woman and mother) to make sense of my experiences, and because there is such a credible link between these media and the struggles that women and the oppressed have face throughout history (Brandt, 1996, Marlatt, 1984), I chose to use art-informed methods of research, analysis and representation to conduct this study. This included collecting and analyzing data in ways that reflected the

wholeness of the participants' experience in creative ways, and maintained their emotionality. I chose to do this through women's storytelling and the writing of poetic and short story works around these stories as a first level of data analysis. This process involved capturing the essence, intensity and emotions of the storytellers, while maintaining the wholeness of their stories (Glesne, 1997, 1999, Denzin, 1997). The transition from transcript to poetry or short story has been more fully described Chapter Three, where I detail how I developed this process through self-inquiry.

For a second layer of analysis, I coded and categorized the transcripts to find emerging themes, as well as significant similarities and differences, in the participants' stories (Miles & Huberman, 1994, Strauss & Corbin, 1990, Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (1995), coding took place in stages, beginning immediately after each interview. Major themes that emerged over time centred on the process and products of learning, as well as on women's experience of contradiction, contestation and learning to take action in response to motherwork struggles. These themes were supported by smaller units or categories, which are represented in Chapter Five. Collectively, the stories and responses from the women contribute toward a theoretical perspective of subsistence learning that is grounded in the motherwork, as represented in Chapter Six.

Limitations of this Study

For those who come from more scientific or positivist approaches to research, the small number of research participants, and the subjectivity within the

project may be seen as a limitation of this study. What this approach does not allow for, is the assumption that these participants are representative of women-as-a-group. This impacts the kinds of generalizations that can be made from the findings of this study. However, it is the very subjectivity of this research method that allows for an exploration of the richness and depth of experience of individuals, which would be lost within more conventional methods of research. Further, it is because of the number of participants is small, that it is possible to represent their stories in ways that capture their intensity and appeal to the emotions of both the participants and the audience.

Also, because the number of research participants is so small, I was unable to interview women with a wider range of experience. I would have loved to interview women from more varied ethnic and racial backgrounds, and had specifically hoped to reach more women who came from non-Western, and other than Judeo-Christian heritages, including women from aboriginal, Muslim or Buddhist backgrounds. I had also hoped to interview adoptive moms, women who mothered within blended families, and women who provided care to children who are physically or mentally challenged.

A further limitation of this study that is inherent in its subjective methodology, is the fact that I did not substantiate the stories by consulting any sources other than the women themselves. Clearly, within this method, there is a potential for inaccuracy or differences of perspective. However, this was also intentional, because I wanted to hear the stories from the women's own perspectives. Further, if I were to substantiate the stories using other sources, it

would likely involve looking at them from a position of societal dominance, or a "view from above" (Hart, 1992, p.1), which has, all to often, subjugated the experiences of women and other from the margins.

And of course, the fact that several men volunteered to participate indicates that there is an inherent gender-based limitation within this study. It is my hope that this study inspires further research, so that more stories of personal experience and learning that result from the work of parenting for both women and men can be explored.

Chapter Two: Uncovering Settled Stones

You have to live who you are!
People may like it or not like it,
but you have to be true to yourself!
- Kate

This chapter consists of a literature review of adult learning and motherwork. By linking the lived experience of motherwork to adult learning theory, I challenge or uncover traditional (settled) societal views that mothering comes naturally to women. This review consists of four sections. First, I explore the current discourse and debates regarding theories of adult learning. Section two examines feminists' views on women's knowledge creation and learning. The third section is a review of current literature on motherwork. I examine ways mothers are perceived of by the state and institutions within society and contrast this to motherwork as a lived and learned experience. Section four concludes this chapter with a short analysis of the gap that exists in the current literature regarding the learning of motherwork.

Theories of Adult Learning

How adult learning takes place has been a source of fascination for educators and researchers for a long time. As Kidd (1959) wrote, half a century ago:

> Learning means change. It is not simply a matter of accretion – of adding something. There is always reorganization or restructuring. There may be *un*learning.... What there is of pain in learning is not so much coming to terms with what is new, but reorganization of what has been learned (p.17).

If, as Kidd suggests, learning means change then it also follows that we can find out what kind of learning has taken place by examining experiences that were transformative or life changing.

Sarton (1961), a poet, novelist and peer of Kidd's echos his views, when she describes learning as a painful process that involves much unlearning. More recently, Mezirow (1990) has built upon this view, indicating that through critical reflection, adult learners begin to recognize distorted assumptions (a process that often involves pain).

With these concepts in mind, I approached this study of the lived experience and learning of motherwork. I looked at self-identified transformative experiences or significant moments of change within women's lived experience of motherwork. For the purposes of this study, I used the words 'turning point moments,' 'epiphanies,' 'change' and 'transformations' to refer to the self-identified significant learning moments of participants.

Forms of Learning

In analyzing how change, transformation and learning take place in the course of motherwork, I looked at the ways in which that learning took place and considered current views on the forms of learning.

The seventies were a time when adult learning theories were exploring where most of adults' learning takes place (Brookfield, 1986). Tough (1971) noted that up to eighty percent of adult learning is self-directed and does not take place in formal settings where it is facilitated by educators. This discovery influenced adult educators to look more seriously at the learning that takes place outside of the academy (Brookfield, 1986).

Tough's work has been criticized because it focuses primarily on the individual, rather than on the social or relational context of the learner (Livingstone, 1998, Caffarella & Merriam, 1999). Another problematic area of Tough's work is that it is presented as entirely gender neutral, and therefore, does not give any significant consideration to issues of gender, race and class, and how these may impact who the learners are, and what is being learned (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999). Tough's work did, however, provide an initial focus to theories of adult learning that acknowledge some of the many settings and experiences in which informal adult learning takes place.

More recently, different forms of learning were identified. Foley (1991, 1995) and Newman (1995) describe incidental learning, informal learning, non-formal learning and formal education. Their work is also presented as gender neutral. Therefore, it does not do justice to the social and relational context of the learner which, according to Gilligan (1982) and Belenky et al. (1986), is where much of women's learning takes place. Yet, it is useful to explore the ways in which learning takes place. Therefore, a brief description of the forms of learning that Foley identified and how these apply to motherwork follows.

Incidental learning is identified as "learning that takes place during action" (Newman, 1995, p. 247). One may not have set out to learn anything but while taking action, participating in or experiencing something new, learning takes place. According to Foley (1995), learners are often not aware of the learning that takes this form as the "learning is incidental to the activity" (p. xiv).

I anticipated that I would find a lot of incidental learning within motherwork. This is because the work of mothering, particularly while children are

young, is so overwhelming, busy and constant (Oakley, 1979, Ruddick, 1989) that mothers may not have time to reflect on the learning that is taking place.

Informal learning is the learning that occurs when people "consciously try to learn from their experiences" (Foley, 1995, p. xiv), but where no formal systematic approach of instruction takes place. In the case of motherwork, this might include the reflection of mothers on their activities, (or on learning that takes place during specific incidents) on the ways that mothering is portrayed in the media, and how this compares and conflicts with their experiences. The reading of the many readily available self-help materials about mothering has also influenced the informal learning of women who mother to a great extent in the last several decades (Arnup, 1991).

Non-formal learning occurs "when people see a need for some sort of systematic instruction, but in a one-off or sporadic way" (Foley, 1995, p. xiv). From this perspective, work related training, which might consist of short workshops that relate to one's daily activities or work might be seen as non-formal learning. With regard to the learning within mothering, non-formal learning might then refer to participation in parenting or community support groups, parenting workshops or courses, or therapy.

Foley (1995) and Newman (1995) also describe formal learning. They indicate that formal learning or education usually refers to planned and systematic learning that is facilitated by a professional educator, and leads to a specific qualification. Although there are increasing efforts to formalize and regulate parenting education (Turner, 1999), at this point in time, this form of learning appears to have a limited role in relation to motherwork.

As stated earlier, it is my view that these forms of learning are not as linear and separable as Foley (1995) and Newman (1995) have suggested, and that especially for women, who tend to learn through experience and connection (Gilligan, 1982, Belenky, et al., 1986), the distinction of what type of learning takes place when may be difficult to determine. For example, a mother might experience something quite incidentally, without any recognition of the learning inherent in the experience, and then at a later date reflect upon that learning. At that point, informal learning takes place that may result from an earlier experience of incidental learning. For this reason, I did not differentiate, to any great extent, between incidental and informal learning in this study.

In addition to this, it seemed to me that the four forms of learning that have been identified have overlooked learning that is of an intuitive or embodied nature as described by Gustafson (1999) and Michelson (1998). Therefore, I considered learning that was of a visceral or embodied nature, as a part of this study.

Further, according to Newman (2000), all learning can be separated into three kinds of learning. He suggests "instrumental learning enables us to control our environment, to do a job..."(p. 304). Interpretive learning contributes to the development of an understanding of the human condition; of why people do things, and how they relate. Further, he describes critical learning as learning that "helps us identify the assumptions and values that constrain the way we think, feel or act" (p. 304), and contributes to our contestation of social norms or restraints that we face. Therefore, he says, "critical learning is a political act" (p. 304). Although, once again these kinds of learning may not be as separable as Newman suggests, I

considered and found evidence of all three kinds of learning in the work of mothering.

Experiential Learning Theory

As I studied motherwork from the perspective of experience and the process of change for individuals, the two theories of adult learning that I considered were experiential learning theory and transformative learning theory. In the following section, I outline the key characteristics of these two learning theories, and identify current debates and critiques that have developed in relation to these theories.

Kolb has often been credited with being one of the key developers of experiential learning theory (Brookfield, 1986, 1998). According to Kolb (1984), learning through experience is a lifelong process that involves adaptation and change. For the individual, Kolb says, knowledge is created in the 'process' of learning and is not dependent on the content or outcomes. It consists of a continuous cycle of activity (or experience), reflection, conceptualization (or meaning making) and application or action. He also indicates that experiential learning is constant: that there is continuous creation and recreation of knowledge, as one grows older. Consequently, the daily concerns of the human condition, such as reflection, taking risks and feelings of doubt and apprehension are an important part of the experiential learning process.

Brookfield (1998) critiques Kolb's (1984) view, and identifies ways in which a learner's experience can be a barrier to learning. He indicates that learners don't automatically reflect critically on their experiences, nor are experiences "inherently enriching" (Brookfield, 1998, p. 126). In fact, according to Brookfield,

the problem with experiential learning theory is that one is led to believe through this theory that the older people get the more they will have experienced and therefore, learned. This is not necessarily the case.

In keeping with Brookfield's concern, it seems that Kolb's (1984) version of experiential learning can be applied equally to experiences that are positively life changing, of minimal significance to one's future, (like learning to play a game), and those that focus on destruction (like learning to make a bomb). The important elements that must be considered in validating experiential learning theory as a valuable adult learning theory, according to Brookfield, are critical reflection, contestation of societal norms and the analysis of hegemonic assumptions.

Feminist theorists take this critique a step further and indicate that the way experiential learning is conceived of in literature is in accordance with the male norms of society, in that it "denies the connectedness of knowledge to the body" (Michelson, 1998, p. 217). Michelson argues that experience and knowledge are "located in the body as well as in the social and material location that bodies invariably occupy" (1998, p. 218). She explores what experiential learning theory might look like from the perspective of women's embodied experience and knowledge. By virtue of the fact that only women's experience and knowledge are seen as gendered, she says, mainstream theories of experiential learning have assumed neutrality based on male ideology.

Gustafson (1999) goes on to describe embodied learning as "learning that blends two parallel and complementary ways of knowing: the knowing that is discoverable in and mediated by concretized text, and the knowing that is discoverable in our experiences as embodied beings" (p. 250). Because feminisms

contest male norms and the "primacy of androcentricity" (p. 250), Gustafson says, the body becomes a valid epistemological site of experiential learning within feminist pedagogy.

It is with Brookfield (1998), Michelson's (1998) and Gustafson's (1999) views in mind that I consider experiential learning theory in my exploration and analysis of the learning and experience of motherwork. I examine the processes of learning through experience while 're-membering' (Michelson, 1998) the body and women's historic location within culture and society. Through critical reflection and analysis, I explore the lived experience and learning process with interview participants.

Transformative Learning Theory

According to Mezirow (1978, 1990, 1991), the learning process is more than change; it is a process of engaging in transformation. He defines transformative learning as "the process of learning through critical self-reflection which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative understanding of one's experience. Learning includes acting on these insights" (1990, p. xvi). Thus the transformation within this learning includes "perceptive taking - taking the perspective of others" (Mezirow, 1978, p. 104), which is followed by recognition of meaning and a change in action resulting from this meaning.

Merriam and Clark (1993) found that the same learning experiences are not equally significant or transformative to all. However, they discovered that individuals who described their learning as transformative, described an expanded sense of self which often led to a transformation of the whole person, and of the

way that the self was conceived of within the world. Two ways in which they found transformation was experienced were through the "development of greater independence and autonomy" and "the establishment of an increased sense of relatedness or connection" (Merriam & Clark, 1993, p. 134). This echoes the view of Noddings (1984) who indicates that in the process of learning to be caregivers, women learn to take the perspective of others, while maintaining a sense of the self, through the care-giving relationship.

Mezirow (1991) has outlined the evolving process of transformative learning that he developed after studying personal transformation of women who were returning to college after many years. As a result of this study, he describes the experience of transformation as an evolving process that includes ten phases that begin with a disorienting dilemma, involve critical reflection and self-examination, and are followed by the development of new competencies based on one's new perspective.

Hart (1992) as well as Caffarella and Merriam (1999), argue that Mezirow's theory remains based primarily on the experience of the individual and therefore, does not take into consideration the social context in which the learning takes place. Newman (1991) agrees and argues "if we accept reintegration as a satisfactory outcome, then, although the individual may be transformed, the oppressors may go unchallenged and the society these oppressors continue to act in may go unchanged" (p. 45).

To ensure that a theory of transformation involving adult learning goes beyond the experiences of the individual, Hart (1992) suggests that women's collective experience, and particularly the experience of motherwork, must be

studied further. Through the study of motherwork, says Hart, (1992) it becomes possible to develop a life-sustaining, life valuing educative theory that goes beyond the individual and looks toward a collective transformation. She says that as "the duality of natural and human life is embedded in a greater unity..." (p. 179). This unity, she says, is experienced by many women through the process of giving birth. In pregnancy, women "can consciously and intelligently *act upon* and influence the natural forces of this event and closely interact with them" (p 179). In taking action throughout pregnancy and childbirth, and later through childrearing, women have an opportunity to experience, in harmony with the forces of nature, what Mezirow has called "perspective transformation" (1978, p. 100).

Yet, according to Lenskyj (1993), "women's development of critical consciousness transcends mere 'perspective transformation'" (p. 38). She indicates that in developing women's critical consciousness, personal problems and experiences must be analyzed in relation to society's forces that result from patriarchal capitalism.

In order to apply transformative learning theory to this study, I began by exploring the perspective transformation women have experienced through their motherwork, through storytelling. These stories involved personal change that often began with a disorienting dilemma, as Mezirow (1991) has suggested. However, in keeping with the view's of Hart (1992), Michelson (1998) and Lenskyj (1993), I investigated the participant's transformation and experience from a critical perspective that examines this work within the historically subordinated role of women in society.

Feminists' Views of Women's Learning

In further developing the perspectives of adult learning that I used in this study, I explored feminists' views of women's knowledge and learning. Feminist learning theory looks specifically at the lived experience of women as a site of learning and knowledge creation (Bunch & Pollack, 1983, Luke, 1996). In fact, feminists promote the idea that emotions and feelings, and the daily life experiences and processes are an important part of learning and the creation of knowledge (Gilligan, 1982, Belenky, et al., 1986, Neumann & Peterson, 1997, Clover, 1995). Furthermore, feminists believe that women have been systematically excluded from the mainstream masculinist notion of knowledge creation (Addelson, 1993, Alcoff & Potter, 1993). This has resulted from the same sex based dichotomy that has laid the foundation for much modern academic research which has been used to justify the sexual division of labour and subordination of women in families (Eichler, 1988a, 1997).

The fact that women have less of a history in formalized learning (within the academy) does not mean that women (and therefore mothers) have not been learning and knowing in the experience of their everyday lives (Neumann & Peterson, 1997, Belenky, et al., 1986, Luttrel, 1997). What women have done, for generations, is find alternative ways of learning and knowing, thus constructing and sharing knowledge which centres around their own experiences (Neumann & Peterson, 1997, Belenky, et al., 1986). Bates, Denmark, Held, Helly, Lees, Pomeroy, Smith and Zalk (1983) say "women have always had a great store of knowledge about our immediate world which we have taught our

daughter and our daughters' daughters" (p. 398). This learning, which takes place in the everyday lives of many women, is still largely overlooked in academic circles, but is knowledge that "has been of direct benefit to our families and our communities" (Bates, et al., p. 398).

Feminist educators and theorists are beginning to take a new look at the everyday lived experience of women. This is to acknowledge the learning that takes place in these experiences, and to begin the process of theory building around women's experience, learning and knowing (Hart, 1992, 1995, Blundell, 1995 Alcoff & Potter, 1993). In fact, according to Addelson (1993), this moment in history requires that that researchers look at the knowledge that emerges from the lives of women, to forge "...appropriate epistemological units – who knows, what they know, and how they know it" (p. 267). And while feminist pedagogies, epistemologies and learning theories are in the process of developing (Tisdell, 1995, Alcoff & Potter, 1993, Harding, 1993, Gouthro, 1999a), it is clear that all "feminist pedagogy is concerned with transforming both what is learned and how it is learned..." (Gustafson, 1998, p. 52), and that transforming patriarchal society and ending oppression is the goal.

Feminist learning theory has developed as a woman-centred perspective that builds upon the work of critical pedagogy (Walters, 1996). Tisdell (1995) and Maher (1987) describe current feminist pedagogy as a body of knowledge with a common focus on the experience of women and women's learning. It is grounded in connection and relationship (Gilligan, 1982, Belenky et al., 1986, Tisdell, 1995), which is "emancipatory in the broad sense that it is concerned with women's personal empowerment" (Tisdell, 1995, p. 211).

Categories of Feminist Learning Theory

Tisdell (1995) builds upon Maher's (1987) work with the view that current theories of feminist pedagogy fall largely into two categories. The first is a gender model (Tisdell, 1995). This model "deals directly with women's socialization as nurturers" (p. 215) and includes such work as that of Belenky, et al. (1986) and Gilligan (1982). This model is "emancipatory in the personal psychological sense but it is not emancipatory in terms of dealing with power relations in the larger social structure" (p. 215), as it focuses on the emancipation of the individual. The second is the liberatory model (Tisdell, 1995). This model builds upon the work of critical theorists such as Freire (1970) and Habermas (1971/1968). hooks (1984, 1988, 1995) Walters (1996), Miles (1996a, 1996b), Luttrell (1997) and Tisdell, (1995, 1998) have contributed to this model of feminist learning theory which analyzes and challenges society's "systems of oppression which are based on gender, race, class, age, and so on" (Tisdell, 1995, p. 211).

Both theories have validity, says Tisdell (1995) but (as was noted in the case of experiential and transformative learning theories) if we examine the experience and learning of the individual, without analyzing the social systems of oppression that have contributed to that person's experience, then we are not contributing to any substantive change in society. As Blundell (1997) points out:

> if we immerse ourselves in the subjective experience of subordination, and do not apply any hard analysis to the political and social structures which determine that subordination, then we run the risk of producing only individual responses to a collective oppression (p. 234).

Therefore, if feminist pedagogy and feminists seek to transform society, a synthesis or integration of these two models is necessary (Maher, 1987). Maher says "since the gender models tend to ignore power and the liberation models tend to ignore the personal domain, a pedagogy for both personal agency and public effectiveness needs both strands of thought" (p. 98). This means that the subjective experience of learning and transformation of women must still be heard, studied and analyzed, but must further include an examination of the societal structures, forces and powers that have contributed to subordination based on gender, race and class.

Learning from Subsistence Work

I believe that one of richest, but largely unexplored areas of learning for women, through everyday experience is in the learning of motherwork. Yet, it is this very work (and consequently, the learning process that can be explored within it) that has been occluded and subordinated by patriarchal capitalistic society (Hart, 1992, Waring, 1988, Mies, 1986, Harding, 1993, Code, 1993).

Feminist theorist, Mechtild Hart (1990, 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997, 1998) believes that the transformative process that takes place in learning and knowing of motherwork can contribute to models of learning, by adding to them as a primary focus for learning, the value and sustenance of life, relationship and community. Hart also, in my view, synthesizes and integrates the two models that Maher (1987) and Tisdell (1998) have identified to include both 'personal agency and public effectiveness'. In addition to building upon the work of critical theorists, Freire (1970) and Habermas (1971/1968), Hart (1992) acknowledges the value of Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning and Mezirow's (1978,

1991, 1991) theory of transformative learning. In weaving together the essence of these theories and locating her own work firmly within a woman-centred ideology, Hart orients her theory of 'working and educating for life' firmly towards the "production, sustenance and improvement of life" (Hart, 1995, p. 239). The place where this kind of learning is necessary, experienced and learned, she says, is in the work of mothering.

Hart (1993) suggests motherwork provides the potential for a woman-centred vision of transformative experiential learning, or "educative" versus "miseducative work" (p. 19). This learning still requires critical reflection, meaning making and reflective action, as described by Mezirow (1978, 1991, 1991) and Kolb (1984). However, according to Hart (1993), it also provides "a model for education that is characterized by a 'subsistence orientation'" (p. 31) in that it supports life and a life valuing orientation.

More recently, Gouthro (1999a, 1999b) has argued that women's learning can and does take place in the experience within the home. She states that the "homeplace is central to determining the quality of learning experiences" (1999b, p. 123), particularly for women. This is because the "homeplace is both a site of liberation and a site of domination, where women have struggled to be free of patriarchal power, and where they have worked to shape their own lives and the lives of their families" (p. 123). Gouthro echoes the work of Hart and argues that exploring the learning that takes place in the homeplace has the potential to contribute cooperative and communicative processes to adult learning theories.

Hart (1992) indicates that "subsistence producers are the ones whose labour and production is directly oriented towards life - its creation, sustenance, and improvement" (p. 95). Yet, subsistence work has been the work of the exploited and the oppressed. In fact, according to Harding (1993), "the more successful women are at this concrete work, the more invisible it becomes to men as distinctive social labour" (p. 55). Harding goes on to say that the closer the work of subsistence is to "caring for the body and places where bodies exist, the more likely it is that this work will "disappear into 'nature'" (p. 55), where it is performed by women, and even more particularly by women who have been marginalized.

Because Western society is structured on what Razack (1998) identifies as "interlocking systems of patriarchy, white supremacy and capitalism" (p. 9), this has resulted in a subordination and oppression among women, based on race and class. Calliste (1991) agrees, and identifies that under the Canadian federal government, policies were developed that invited women of colour to immigrate as domestics, to do the work of subsistence for wealthy white families. In this way, white privileged women benefited from Canada's racialized policies and contributed to the oppression of women based on race and class.

Glenn (1992) describes subsistence work as 'reproductive labour' which she says includes "purchasing household goods, preparing and serving food, laundering and repairing clothing, maintaining furnishings and appliances, socializing children, providing care and emotional support for adults and maintaining kin and community ties" (p. 1). She states that this work is divided, not only along gender lines, but also along lines of race and class. Glenn indicates

that as "standards of cleanliness...childcare and the mother's role in nurturing children" (p. 7) were raised during the modernization of Western society, white privileged women often relied on women of colour to assist them to perform the subsistence work necessary to maintain their homes.

Because systems of marginalization are linked, these feminist researchers agree that any inquiry that looks at the work of women must therefore consider interlocking systems of oppression based on gender, race and class (Ng, 1991, Glenn, 1992, Calliste, 1991, Razack, 1998). In addition to this, Harding (1993) states that any inquiry into the lives and work of women, "can provide the starting point for asking new, critical questions about not only women's lives but also about men's lives and, most importantly, the causal relations between them" (p. 55).

The learning of the disproportionate amount of subsistence work that women do has rarely been considered by educational theorists. Within the academic community and masculinist theories of adult learning, the learning that is grounded in motherwork as subsistence work has also been taken for granted and overlooked by societal structures and educators alike. Yet clearly, motherwork is learned, and requires subsistence-oriented learning and knowledge (Hart, 1995, Gouthro, 1999a, 1999b). In researching the learning of this work, I consider ways in which this learning, when analyzed to include interlocking systems of oppression that include race, class and gender has the potential to add to theories of adult learning, a life valuing, life-affirming perspective.

Reconceiving Motherwork

This section consists of a review of motherwork discourse as the contextual framework for this research study. Because systems of power are central to my analysis of how the work of mothering is experienced, I explore the concept of patriarchal power that has systematically privileged and oppressed people based on gender, race and class. Then I explore the role and work of mothers from the perspective of the norms of the state and mainstream society, and contrast that to how motherwork is experienced by women. I investigate feminist perspectives on patriarchal religions and their impact on the institution of motherhood, and how this has resulted in the oppression of women. This oppression has influenced the way in which mothers are perceived in all current disciplines, and all too often shapes how women see themselves. Further, I examine feminist literature regarding the work of mothers as it relates to the capitalistic economy, the experience of reproduction and the experience of family. I briefly look at the problematic within motherwork, and how mothers can and, in fact do, contribute to oppression, nationalism and militarism within society. I conclude this section with a short review of literature that examines motherwork as learned work.

Patriarchal Power

According to Eisler (1987), patriarchy is a socially constructed institution based on a dominator model. Others suggest that patriarchy is any "system which ensures that women's lives, bodies, work and experiences remain largely under the control of males" (Kannabiran, 1989, p. 25). Feminist writers agree that the

world is currently dominated by patriarchal systems that span the political, the environmental, economic, social, educational and domestic spheres (Eisler, 1987, Miles, 1996b, Hart, 1992, Eichler, 1988a).

One of the major effects of a patriarchal ideology throughout history has been the construction of societal norms based on binary opposites (Mies, 1986, Christianson-Ruffman, 1989, Eichler, 1988b, Ortner, 1974). According to Christianson-Ruffman (1989) this has resulted in an "either/or syndrome" (p.124) which separates social practices into dichotomous pairs such as public versus domestic, paid versus unpaid work, production versus reproduction. Patriarchally constructed binary opposites include the division and ranking of all that is determined to be masculine above that which is determined to be feminine (Irigaray, 1990/1993, Mies, 1986, Eichler, 1988b), and this has been used to rationalize the sexual division of labour (Mies, 1986, Hart, 1992).

The either/or syndrome has affected every aspect of modern society and was exposed in a groundbreaking work by Sherry Ortner (1974) entitled "Is female to male as nature is to culture?" Ortner argues that the patriarchal ideology has resulted in "the universal devaluation of women" (p. 71). The consequence of this dualism, she suggests has linked culture to males, and nature to women, with the socially constructed assumption that culture is superior to nature. Nature, from a patriarchal perspective is free, can be exploited and must be controlled (as are women). This echoes the conclusions that Beauvoir (1952/1989) reached half a century ago. She said that society was constructed with the male as the 'norm' which results in making women, their work and their

experience including that of reproduction and child rearing, the work of "the other" (1952/1989, p. 718).

Brown (1992) takes the analysis of patriarchal ideology and power a little further. By analyzing what she calls "masculinist power" (p. 14), she identifies interlocking modalities of power in every realm of the state (although, she indicates, they are not limited to the state). Although she acknowledges that there may be many more dimensions of masculinist power, the four modalities, which she analyses in her American-based study, include the liberal, capitalist, prerogative and bureaucratic dimensions of power. Analysis of these overlapping modalities of power, she indicates, may assist feminists in developing a comprehensive theory of power that is more specific than the rather sweeping term "patriarchal power."

As I include in my study of motherwork, an analysis of the power structures that have impacted the participants, it is useful to look briefly at Brown's (1992) analysis of the four modalities of power. Although Brown's study is American, the relationship between the state and women in America resembles the Canadian situation quite closely and will not limit the usefulness of her theory.

Liberal power, says Brown (1992), supports the notion that the family is a natural and pre-political part of the world. In this ideology, the reproductive work that women do is 'natural' and the family, as it is currently conceived of in North America, is a natural entity. As a result of this ideology, women's participation in public service and discourse is 'naturally' and justifiably limited when compared to men. According to Brown, the juridical-legislative ideologies and practices by governing bodies in America are currently based on this model.

The capitalist modality of power, according to Brown (1992), also divides the sexes so that men are part of the public sphere and women are part of the private sphere. However, according to this dimension of power, this division is based on the capitalist views of 'productive' versus 'non productive' work. The consequence of this modality of power is that women still earn only a fraction of what men are able to earn (as the ideology promotes men earning a 'family wage'). Women continue to do most of the work of primary care in households, which remains unpaid labour. Because the structure of 'the family' is changing significantly in today's society (Eichler, 1988a, 1997), this modality of power continues to contribute to the increasing poverty of women and particularly single mothers.

According to Brown (1992), the prerogative dimension of power comes out of a "combination of violence, sexuality and political purpose" (p. 23). According to this modality, women take care of life and are weak, while men are warriors and protectors of these weak women. This modality of power is evident in political systems, as well as in individual households, and according to Brown, contributes to the continuation of domestic violence. The prerogative power modality clearly puts women in the position of 'the other' where men have the power to choose whether they will control, protect or violate women, as is their prerogative.

Bureaucratic power is masculinist in that domination is achieved through the construction of formalized practices that are based on male values such as rationality, objectivity and hierarchy (Brown, 1992). Consequently, women are judged as irrational and immature, while their care-giving work can be seen as

work without value. Brown says that "bureaucratic power obviously 'serves' male-dominated interests" (p. 28), in that the policies, procedures and processes that develop as a result of this dimension of power (such as those which women on 'Mother's Allowance' are subjected to) are gendered, while they appear to be neutral.

By providing a more specific analysis to overlapping modalities of power that exist, Brown has made the power imbalances that women and therefore, mothers face more visible and more specific than the general term 'patriarchal power'. I use Brown's ideas regarding dimensions of power within patriarchal ideology as a way of analyzing the experience of motherwork from a variety of perspectives.

Here is a poem I wrote some years ago in response to reading Wilhelm Reich's (1970 1946) The mass psychology of fascism. Reich likens the patriarchal family structure to a nation in miniature and ascribes to it, the same characteristics that are prevalent in nationalism.

At the time, I was struggling with raising my three children in a heterosexual marriage, and became keenly aware of how my experiences as a woman and mother were influenced by my experiences as a child in a conservative, rural Manitoba Mennonite community and family (which is further explored in Chapter Three). Some of the themes that Brown (1992), Ortner (1974) and Mies (1986) raised are evident as well.

The Mini Nation

I dreamed a dream
of a family farm
which modeled a whole nation
in miniature;
where every citizen
was identified
by a prescribed role
and code of behaviour.

The father, autocratic,
with forboding authority
received his direction from God

and assigned tasks to each of his subjects.
He chose what crops to sow
and what livestock to keep
how rigidly to adhere to schedules
how harshly to penetrate the earth,
to rid it of nature's
weeds and pests.

The mother (support staff),
container and receptacle
of family feelings
and bearer of future generations,
anticipated the needs
of each situation.
With buried vivaciousness
she read minds in readiness
for others' commands.
Her survival depended on it.

The eldest son,
entitled, inheritor
of the family name
and assets,
learned from birth
the delicate balance of
domination and submission.
Painstakingly, and painfully
he learned to play
by the rules of the nation.
He was in training
from the moment of birth.

Sisters, some years later:
now there was a problem in the making.
Lively with creative vitality,
they were a constant reminder
of the single-mindedness of nature:
a force to be overcome.

A delicate matter,
the raising of daughters
in a mini nation
whose ultimate goal for the future
was the preservation of
the authority of God
the family name
and the acquired land.

A bit of a nuisance
those girls were.
Essential to the promotion
of the human race;
but potentially a source
of embarrassment to all....

How could they keep a lid
on the constant exuberance
and creative energy
of such budding bodies
that could,
with a single act of passion
shame the whole nation
and destroy the family name.

Better they be silenced
at an early age,
those daughters.
Perhaps if they were weak
or depressed,
and needed the protection of men....
Better still, if they didn't
speak to one another:
more manageable they were,
one at a time.
Better they die...

But just before
the final act
I awoke in a sweat...

Patriarchal Religions

Patriarchal ideology or systems of masculinist power have been instrumental in developing social and cultural practices that promote a ranked order, which have subordinated women throughout recorded history. A major contributor to this development was and continues to be the practice of patriarchal religions. In monotheistic religions, God is literally seen as a patriarch or in the male image of a father (Eisler, 1987, Saadawi, 1997, Spong, 1982,

Sanford & Donovan, 1984, Bates, et al., 1983). By developing a vision of God as male, men appear to be the embodiment of God on earth. This contributes to the idea that men have prerogative power. Women, by this design, have less value and, in fact, are put on earth primarily to serve the interests of men. Within Western society which has developed out of a monotheist Judeo-Christian world view, women learn to sacrifice themselves and disregard their own needs for the benefit of the needs of men and children (Miller, 1976, Sanford & Donovan, 1984).

Religion has also contributed in a major way to identifying who is 'good' and who is 'bad' among women, pitting these as binary opposites with little room for variation. Perhaps the most damaging concept within patriarchal religions is the belief that women are the earthly embodiment of evil or the 'gateway' of the devil (Sanford & Donovan, 1984, Noddings, 1989). In doing so, the roles of women have been narrowly defined and controlled. For instance, Mary, the sexless virgin and mother is glorified and seen as 'good' while Eve represents all that is evil because she is seen to have caused the 'fall' of man (Eisler, 1987, Spong, 1982, Noddings, 1989). According to Saadawi (1997), all religious teachings and practices that operate out of such binary ideologies, "are partners in the attempt to breed division, strife, racism and sexism" (p. 91). This ideology continues to divide "...women into 'madonnas' and 'whores' in order to control..." (Bunch, 1986, p. 309) them in religious social structures throughout the world.

Common to virtually all religions is the idea that all women should be mothers within heterosexual marriages and that motherhood is natural, desirable

and necessary for successful womanhood (Eisler, 1987, Saadawi, 1997, Bates, et al., 1983). Eisler (1987) indicates that "...even now our most powerful religious leaders, as well as many of our most respected scientists, still tell us women are creatures put on earth by God or nature primarily to provide men with children - preferably sons" (p. 81). By valuing women more when they produce sons than daughters, the patriarchal model continues to confirm its value system.

Women who grow up in this system often learn to participate in their own subordination. This is because they learn to serve the interests of others at their own expense and all too often identify this pattern as virtuous in women (Sanford & Donovan, 1984). If this pattern is not changed, this ensures that women will continue to be pitted against women: mothers against daughters, and daughters against mothers, and sisters against sisters for generations to come, while the interest of men continues to be served (Chodorow, 1978, Caplan, 1989). Bonding between women and especially between mothers and daughters then becomes difficult because this social system creates an atmosphere where women compete with other women for the attention of men (Thurer, 1994, Caplan, 1989).

There have been other traditions, though. Paula Gunn Allen (1992) speaks of a time where the work of women and mothers was honoured and respected. Women were not "required to live only for others rather than themselves..." (p. 27). She describes the spiritual vision that formed the ideology of Native Americans, based on the source of life "Thought Woman, or White Buffalo Woman" (p. 27). As a result of Native American Indians' woman-centred sacred practices, the lives of women and mothers were revered. These traditions

were overpowered during the conquest and colonization of Native Americans, and sadly, were lost to ideology of Western patriarchal religions, which resulted in the subordination based on race, class and gender.

It is clear that within the patriarchal religions of the West, there exists a social system based on a model of domination and oppression (Eisler, 1987, Saadawi, 1997, Bates et al., 1983). This model of society polarizes what is masculine and what is feminine and values all that is seen as masculine at the expense of all that is seen as feminine. It also teaches women to participate (often willingly) in their own subordination as heterosexual wives and mothers, for the benefit of men who are seen as 'heads of the households' The sex-based division of labour results from the prerogative power system that often contributes to the subordination of women who do motherwork.

Capitalism and the Economy

Mies (1986) argues that capitalism, the economic system out of which the majority of the world currently operates, has its origins in patriarchal ideology as well. In capitalism, she says, a ranked and hierarchical dualism is constructed that further entrenches the model of domination and subordination. This is in keeping with Brown's (1992) analysis of the capitalistic dimension of power. It ensures that men, particularly rich, white and Western men are in a position to dominate all others.

Even though historically, the sexual division of labour may have developed out of necessity (Lerner, 1990), current capitalism still associates women with nature, for its own benefit (Mies, 1986). According to Mies, capitalism separates the sexual division of labour as the difference between what

is considered "human labour" and "natural activity" (p. 46). She goes on to say that this "obscures the fact that the relationship between male (that is 'human') and female ('natural') laborers or workers is a relationship of dominance and even of exploitation" (p. 46). Women and men, who are socialized within this society, then learn that 'work' in the labour force is of value (economic and otherwise), while the 'natural activity' of motherwork is not.

Waring (1988) argues that the way that capitalism has devised to keep accounts and determine economic progress is also based on the capitalist model of power that subordinates and exploits women. In her deconstruction of international economic systems of accounting, she argues that

> the international economic system constructs reality in a way that excludes the great bulk of women's work - reproduction (in all its forms), raising children, domestic work and subsistence production. Cooking, according to economists, is 'active labour' when cooked food is sold, and 'economically inactive labour' when it is not. Housework is 'productive' when performed by a paid domestic servant and 'nonproductive' when no payment is involved. Those who care for children in an orphanage are 'occupied'; mothers who care for their children at home are 'unoccupied' (p. 25).

This capitalistic economic system of keeping accounts is fatally flawed, Waring goes on to say, because it names as productive, anything that contributes profit to the economy. This means that wars, destruction, exploitation of natural resources are all productive and of economic value, while preservation of the environment, peace and the work of mothers, which satisfies the basic need of human life, are unproductive, undervalued and unpaid.

Currently, while more North American women enter the public sphere and have increased economic power, they are often seen as a threat to the goals of capitalism. However, Afro-American feminist bell hooks (1984) cautions us to

remember that the feminist argument that women have been excluded from the workplace and relegated to the home is racist, and does not reflect the experience of women of colour. hooks says that black women have always worked outside their homes, albeit through periods of slavery and ongoing oppression. The same is true of poor and single women. Simply working in the public sphere has not eliminated their oppression as women in a patriarchal society. Paid work alone has not secured economic power for most women, as the work that is available to women (and particularly women of colour) tends to be the work which is undervalued in terms pay, as well (Randolph, 1995).

Nevertheless, in the last few decades, many women have entered the public domain. For most, this has been out of necessity, and for some, as a result of choice. Many have gained some level of economic power and positions of significance for themselves that are not dependent on men in their lives. Many of these women now have two jobs. One, where they earn money to contribute to the family's economy and another within the private sphere that includes the bulk of childcare, eldercare and the related domestic work (Hart, 1992, Wilson, 1996, Eichler, 1988a). This is because as women have participated in greater numbers in the work force, the work done in the home remains primarily women's work (Mies, 1986, Waring, 1988).

Currently, there is a real resurgence of conservatism throughout the world (Mies, 1986, Waring, 1988, Saadawi, 1997) and a powerful backlash towards feminist progress (Kaplan, 1997, Oakley & Mitchell, 1997). Mies (1986) believes that this has resulted from the economic crises that have arisen since the 1980's. This has caused "a renewed emphasis on the patriarchal family, on

heterosexuality, on the ideology of motherhood, on women's 'biological' destiny, their responsibility for housework and child care..." (p.15). Feminists see the purpose of this backlash and the resurgence of conservatism as an attempt 'to put women back into their place' and, from this perspective, they see capitalism as a system that exploits, oppresses and subordinates women.

Reproduction Experienced

The medical model of Western medicine that is practised in North America bases its power in what Brown (1992) has called the bureaucratic modality of power. Therefore, while the systems, practices and procedures that are put in place are represented as neutral, they clearly serve the interests of men, at the expense of women. This contributes to unequal power relations based on gender in all aspects of the medical system. This is visible in the unequal power, based on gender, of those who provide and receive medical services. For example, even though progress has been made by women entering the medical profession, far more men are doctors and administrators who diagnose, set policy and demand higher pay, while women provide the bulk of services in the positions of lower status and pay, such as nursing. Yet the majority of people who seek assistance from medical practitioners are women, often because of their reproductive capacity ("Ministry", 1993).

In addition to this, "the health care system continues to use the needs of men as a basis for defining the needs of all clients" ("Ministry", 1993, p. 205). This results in the pathologizing of women's lives and experiences, in terms of their physical and mental well-being, and systematically disregards any social

context such as racism, poverty, violence or the double burden paid and unpaid labour in the process of diagnosing or treating women.

Although this gender bias in the practice of modern medicine impacts every area of medical practice, as it does the study of all sciences (Benston, 1989), the one that I will focus on here is most closely linked to the beginning of motherwork, in the experience and work of reproduction. According to Ford, ("Working", 1990) "Women have unique health care needs and a unique relationship to the health care system because of their childbearing role" (p. 4). Yet, masculinist power structures have taken control of the reproductive capacity of women.

That women are taught or forced to be passive recipients of treatment in the process of childbirth is made most clear in hearing from women who experienced subordination during the process of childbirth itself. One example is given in an article entitled Giving birth the 'white man's way'. Sheila Jennings Linehan (1992) describes the transition in the birthing process from the Inuit traditions to the enforced practice of modern medicine. She says that medical practitioners see the Inuit women as uncooperative and resistant to progressive techniques when they balk at lying in a horizontal position with their feet in stirrups to give birth, rather than using their traditional squatting position. She quotes one Inuk woman:

> ...when I had my oldest son, they took me to Fort Simpson. I didn't like being on my back. I wanted to be in the squatting position, so I stayed in that position until just the last minute. They had to push me down on the bed to have my baby that way... (Linehan, 1992, p.12).

For this woman, the bureaucratic medical practitioners, who were practicing Western white male dominated medicine, resorted to physical dominance to push the woman into, what they believed according to their 'higher level' of knowledge, was the appropriate position in which to give birth. This is an indication of how bureaucratic power, which is presented as value free and neutral, contributes to the oppression of this woman based on gender, race and class. Consequently, the medical practitioners violated the woman's view as well as the historical and collective knowing and experience of women that had given birth before her.

Katherine Martins and Heidi Harms (1997), in their book entitled, In her own voice: Childbirth stories of Mennonite women, share the birthing stories of women between 1920 to 1980. During this time, Martins (1997) says the women reported a "rise and dominance of modern hospital birthing techniques" (p. xxi), that institutionalized birthing practices and systematically took the control of birthing away from women. Women participated in this change to modern medicine because they were told that this would be for their own good, that the hospitals would be cleaner and safer, and of course, the women wanted what was best for their children. Many participated in classes that prepared them to cooperate in the hospital controlled experience of giving birth. They were told that anesthesia during childbirth was a necessary and normal part of the birthing experience.

In one of the stories, Di Brandt (1997) identifies how the moment of birth of her first child was controlled by medical science:

> I was already on the table, the head was starting to come out, there was absolutely no need for an epidural at that point, and they got this needle all ready with the stuff in it, and in the middle of a

> contraction they said, 'Do you want it?' and I was not in a position to fight these twenty people all around me, so I said yes. I really, really resent that part. Even now, when I remember my first birth experience, it's like these two different stories happening at one time, the one was the incredible, wonderful, miraculous thing happening, and the other one is just this stupid bureaucratic hassle, just coming out of there feeling really numb (p. 118).

Brandt clearly expresses the feeling of betrayal of a woman who has had the control over the experience of reproduction taken away from her. Other women in the study, many of who found the hospital experience alienating and isolating, echo this experience.

O'Brien (1981) says that the contradictions such as those identified by Brandt (1997) and Linehan (1992) must be uncovered and identified as rooted in the realities of male knowledge and experience that result from patriarchal practice. O'Brien (1981) suggests that feminists must take ownership of the politics of reproduction and must redefine this experience and the learning and knowledge around it from their own perspective. To do this, they must expose the contradictions that they experience, to determine what is valid, transcend what is not longer valid, and then create new ways of perceiving, knowing and practising motherwork and reproduction, based in the reality and creativeness of women's experience. She says, "If one wants a metaphor for this process, women do not have very far to look. We are labouring to give birth to a new philosophy of birth" (p. 13).

In recent years, a redefining of the process and experience of childbirth has been made possible, in that the woman-centred practice of midwifery has become increasingly accepted in North America. In Ontario, midwifery has been recognized as a practice covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Program

(OHIP), under the Regulated Health Professions Act, since 1994 ("Out of", 1994). Midwifery arose in Ontario, "not simply as a professional movement, but was also a counter hegemonic social movement responding to the professional or medical mismanagement of birth" (Bourgeault, 1996, p. 1).

However, the simultaneous resurgence of conservatism within health care expenditure, policy and practice threatens to control even midwifery within a bureaucratic power modality. While the recognition of midwifery is a positive and woman-centred move within health care, I argue that the reason the Ontario government chose to accept midwifery as a profession at this point in history is not because it benefits women but because midwifery reduces the cost of childbirth to the government. Thus, the government's endorsement of this practice at this point in history still benefits the masculinist bureaucracy.

The Experience of Family

In the currently resurgent conservative wave of society, feminists are often seen as dangerous to the family, as they continue to speak out against the family as an institution (Thorne, 1992). What feminists are challenging, however, is "the ideology of 'the monolithic family', which has elevated the nuclear family with the breadwinner husband and the full-time wife and mother as the only legitimate family form" (p. 4). This ideology results from patriarchal power and currently informs what Brown (1992) has identified as the liberal power dimension, where the family is seen as 'natural', and women are 'naturally' suited to provide the bulk of childcare. As a result of this ideology, women are seen as 'good' mothers if they are heterosexual, stay home, raise their children and contain their husbands sexuality, and 'bad' if they are not white, married, middle-

class and heterosexual (Fumia, 1998, Rich, 1986a, 1986b, Comeau, 1999). This ideology continues to promote the dominance of men, particularly of white heterosexual men and subordinates women, and obscures issues of gender, race, class, poverty and family violence that are experienced by women.

According to Eichler (1988a), the shape of families is shifting dramatically, as a result of an increase in the divorce rate, remarriage, blended families, same sex relationships, and single parent families (which most often means single mothers). New reproductive technologies, which are male controlled practices within modern medicine, have also changed society's practices of who can have children and under what circumstances (Morgan, 1989, Overall, 1989). On top of that, Eichler says, the "professionalization of childcare" (p. 175) has increased the expectation or standard of what women will do in their roles as mothers. She goes on:

> It is interesting to note that in child development literature, overall the role of the father is seen as fairly negligible. It is likewise interesting to note that the child development techniques recommended for use tend to be developed in institutions, non-family settings, by professionals for whom concern with childcare is a job with limited hours of work and holidays, rather than a twenty-four hour responsibility (p. 176).

The notion that the professionalization of childcare has increased within recent decades is supported by Arnup (1991), who indicates that this phenomenan promotes society's ideology of the monolithic family.

The increasing professionalization of childcare has contributed to the creation of what Chodorow and Contratto (1992) have called the "fantasy of the perfect mother" (p. 191). They say that literature on the role of the mother often views the mother as an all-powerful being in the child's life: one who is totally

responsible for the outcome of the mental, physical and behavioral well-being of the child. This view disregards the impact of our male-dominated society on the lives and work of mothers, as well as on the development and well-being of children, and overlooks the fact that children also have fathers, many of whom have a major impact in their development, both by their presence and absence.

The perfect mother myth further creates an atmosphere within which women, as mothers, participate in the hegemonic practice of making the work of the mother invisible. Gustafson (1998) reveals how she discovered, through her own motherwork and belief in the mother as someone who is "uncomplaining and self-sacrificing, blanketing everything with love and forgiveness..." (p. 108), that she had learned to make herself invisible not only to society, but to her own daughter. In addition, the perfect mother fantasy puts women into a unique position as the ones who are to blame for everything in their children's lives that does not measure up to societal expectations (Caplan, 1989).

Feminists locate mother-blame in patriarchal ideology that serves men at the expense of women (Caplan, 1989). At the same time, more realistic views of the mother, ones that focus on the subjective experience of women who do motherwork, as opposed to "...mothers as larger than life, omnipotent, all-powerful, or all powerless..." (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992, p. 206), must be developed within society, and legitimized by social policy.

Currently, many single mothers who are solely responsible for their children experience profound inequities as a result of a society that punishes them because they do not conform to the monolithic family norm (Kitchen, 1997, Crawford, 2000). This is evident in Canada with the governments' cuts in welfare benefits

that are directed primarily at the expense of women and children who are already living in poverty. Kitchen points out:

> While the economic prospects for almost all families raising children in Ontario today are dismal, sole support mothers and their dependent children suffer more than men from measures undermining the welfare state.... The reasons for their poverty cannot be attributed to their sole parenting but are directly related to their gender.... The economic vulnerabilities of mothers is a reflection of their disadvantaged position in a labour market that is increasingly segmented into hi-skilled, well-paying and low-skilled, low-paying jobs. Women are overwhelmingly found in the low-paying jobs, and even when they work at higher-paying jobs, women receive only two thirds the payments of men. The Common Sense Revolution ensures that women's economic situation is not likely to improve (p. 105).

Rodin (1991) talks about her experience as a single mother of three, who is dependent on welfare. Poverty is a major issue for her, yet, when questioned about her situation, she boldly notes her contribution to society and says:

> ...whether it's Canada Council grants, unemployment insurance, tax breaks for big corporations. It's all the same money, and it's ours. Government money is money we've all paid in to, in one way or another. People needing financial help to raise kids should get it without any stigma attached to it.... We're a good investment, very productive, and it's financially the cheapest way to raise kids, who are in turn going to contribute to society (p. 163).

In spite of the contribution they make to society, single mothers, whether on welfare or in the workplace, face very stringent and time consuming demands. These include the sole management of the household, finding childcare, raising the children, responding to the high expectations of parents in relation to schools, and managing financial obligations. For many single mothers, this leaves no time for dating, or other socially or personally fulfilling activities and therefore, often results in a very lonely experience (Ziegler, 1995).

Beyond issues of poverty and loneliness, many single mothers face further oppression and marginalization based on issues of race and class, because the monolithic family ideal, is after all based on the norms of a heterosexual, middle-class nuclear family, that is also white (Thorne, 1992, Fumia, 1998). This results in situations where many women of colour, who are sole supporters of children, struggle to meet norms that are completely foreign to them. According to Randolph (1995), in her American based study, "one third of all single-parent families live in poverty and this figure worsens for families of color..." (p.118). In fact, adds Hemmons (1995), two thirds of the children born in America live in single parent households headed by women of colour. Of these, well over half live in poverty (Randolph, 1995). If they are the recipients of welfare, these women tend to be "viewed as the...undeserving poor" (p. 171). If employed, they are often localized in "sex-segregated jobs" (p. 169), where it is unlikely that they will improve their social positions. In either case, according to Hemmons (1995), society and governments will blame them for their socio-economic situations.

Although the work of Randoph (1995), Hemmons (1995) and Ziegler (1995) are based on American studies, the plight of Canadian single women of colour is similar. As Kitchen (1997) has indicated, government cuts in social support and difficulty that women face in improving their situations through adequately paid employment ensure few single mothers, and particularly single women of colour who mother, will be able to change their socio-economic circumstances.

A further phenomenon that impacts many women is that they have been solely responsible for the raising of children, due to the absence of fathers that

resulted from the demands of the workplace. In recent years, this phenomenon has increased dramatically among Chinese immigrant families who live in Canada, where fathers have returned to Hong Kong (Man, 1996, Sheppard, 1998, Fong, 2000). Sociologists have dubbed these absent fathers as "astronauts". Fong (2000) describes this phenomenon:

> These women's husbands are not really astronauts working in spaceships; instead, they immigrated to Canada with their wives and children but then left them behind in the new country to continue their career or business in their country of origin. As a result, the women in these families are forced to take up the sole responsibility of caring for the children...(p. 66).

Many of these families began their lives in Canada together but experienced economic hardships that resulted from their immigration. Therefore, the women in these families often supported their husbands' return to the country of origin, "in order to maintain a certain standard of living, to which they were accustomed" (Man, 1996).

Sheppard has described the mothers in these families as "virtual single mothers" (p. 31). This is because, she says, the experience of many other single mothers is that economic resources are of major concern due to their sole economic support of the family. Virtual single mothers, says Sheppard, do not share the same economic hardships as sole support single mothers do, as they typically maintain a middle-class lifestyle. However, for the most part, they take on all the responsibilities for the family home, the children, and increasingly, for careers of their own.

The fathers in these families typically come home for a "vacation" (Fong, 2000, p. 66) two or three times a year which causes a major disruption in the

household. The women and children are then expected to change their routines, in order to "entertain" (p. 66) the fathers, who are often treated as "guests of honour because of their rare appearance" (p. 66). According to Sheppard (1998), there is evidence that this pattern of the father's coming and subsequent leaving contributes to emotional and behavioural problems among many of the children. Of course, as the women are the sole caregivers within these families, they are then held singly responsible for dealing with any problems that arise out of this arrangement.

Lesbian mothers also do not fit into the image of the monolithic family. Stewart (1991) talks about her struggles in a heterosexual relationship at the time when she was coming into her own as a lesbian, and still in a relationship with a man. She says that when the child was born, the sexist roles in the relationship were sharpened and became unbearable. Yet, when she left that relationship to pursue her lesbian identity, she faced a whole new set of issues in her mothering. Stewart was among the lucky ones. Through a lot of effort and struggle, she was able to become part of a community where she was accepted both as a lesbian and as a single mom. Then with unusual perseverance, she pursued developing a good relationship with her ex-partner and his new partner. As a result of much struggle, the three became an intentional extended family. Gabb (1999), Epstein (1999), Arnup (1998) and Nelson (1996) have also written about their experience of family as lesbian mothers. According to Nelson, lesbian mothers are often able to feel like families in private but she says, "people's reluctance or inability to acknowledge a lesbian couple and their children as a family can make it difficult..." (p. 103) in the public sphere. Epstein echoes this view (1999) and describes the experience of

attending teacher-parent night as a lesbian mother. Within schools, as in most other societal structures, she says, heterosexuality is privileged and this in turn, contributes to lesbian mothers' being marginalized within the public sphere.

Many families also choose to adopt children, for a variety of reasons. Adoptive families can be structured in many ways and can include families with mothers who are lesbian, heterosexual, single or married. Magdalene Redekop (1997) is one woman who describes the experience of becoming an adoptive mother. She describes the painful journey of confronting infertility in a "Mennonite community, where childbirthing is very much a part of what forms a woman's identity" (p. 183). While Redekop and her husband are white, their two children are of mixed race. Because the children are adopted and because they are a family of mixed race, people often fail to comprehend just how "deep the emotional bond is" (p. 185). Redekop describes the emotional journey of going through the process of adoption and acknowledges the courage of her baby's birth mother, who faced a tremendous struggle to determine that adoption was the best choice for her child. On reflection of her experience, Redekop says:

> I'm lucky that I have two highly intelligent children, very sensitive children, very funny children. They have a resilience. They'll be able to deal with it. But there's no question that the identity you emerge with, after you're an adolescent if you're adopted, is going to be more conscious, is going to be more resilient.... So in a sense I feel that it's a special gift to them to be adopted. At the same time - when I feel the closeness with them, the incredible closeness, and I hold my daughter and I say, 'How lucky I am to have you as a daughter, I can't believe how lucky,' and I love her Chinese eyes - at the same time I wish I could have produced that (not anybody else!) that Chinese daughter out of my body (p. 191).

But, says Redekop, it is often when she is speaking with other women, (particularly those who have given birth and breastfed their babies), that she feels alienated from their experience as mothers.

Another family situation that doesn't fit the socially defined norms of society is that of families with children who have special needs. The special needs can range anywhere from learning disabilities to physically and mentally challenged children. Having children with special needs can be very guilt provoking for parents, especially mothers. It is as if they are held singly responsible for having given birth to a child that is seen as 'less than perfect' (Weiss, 1989, Salter, 1991).

Due to a more constant interaction with professionals, as a result of the special needs, these mothers run a high risk of losing confidence and self-esteem (Weiss, 1989). Salter (1991) describes the work of mothering her child with extensive special needs as endless and exhausting. Where other mothers can look forward to the children growing up and gaining new levels of independence, the future looks much more daunting for her.

Eichler (1997) says what will allow experience of motherwork within families to change is redefining what 'family' means. We need a socially accepted vision of the family that rejects the patriarchal model, where men are seen as heads of the household, and financially responsible for the well-being of the women and children. She believes that our society has currently embraced a model of 'individual responsibility'. In this model, "husbands and wives are...assigned the same economic function in family law" (p. 13). This means "they are both considered responsible for their own economic well-being, as well

as that of their spouse and children" (p. 13). This model of the family creates a triple disadvantage for women, because they are now expected to contribute financially to the well-being of the family, they are paid less for their work in the labour force (Kitchen, 1997), and they are seen to be the ones who should provide a professionalized level of childcare (Eichler, 1988a). Eichler (1997) also indicates that the individual responsibility model still advantages the middle-class two income family, and obscures the existence of any other form of family. This particularly disadvantages the huge numbers of single mothers of which a huge percentage are women of colour (Hemmons, 1995, Randolph, 1995).

Eichler (1997) envisions a new model of the family. She calls this the "social responsibility model" (p. 16). In this model of the family, she says, there would be an "ideological commitment to minimizing stratification on the basis of sex" (p. 16). Family units would be formed on the basis of relationships, and a variety of family structures would exist that would include single parent as well as lesbian and gay families. Flexibility, in terms of the family structure would be considered the norm and would replace the current ideal of the monolithic family. While parents would retain parental responsibility for the care of children, this responsibility would be shared with the public through social policy and support. This would reduce the currently overwhelming burden of mothers and would generalize the responsibility of motherwork to the greater society.

Other feminists agree that changes need to be made to the ways that families are viewed in society (Hall, 1998, Rapp, 1992, Epstein, 1999). In fact, as Hall (1998) puts it,

> We need to work towards the redirection of material, financial and social resources to families in need, and towards the structural and communal socializing of parenting, so that the welfare of children and the support structures for parenting are no longer restricted along nuclear family lines (p. 63).

Rapp (1992), on the other hand, suggests that society make a distinction between families and 'households', so that the 'monolithic family ideal' of the heterosexual couple with the male breadwinner (which is no longer the predominant model in existence in our society, but is maintained as the ideal) is diminished and disappears.

Problematics within Motherwork

According to Ruddick (1989) there exists within Western thought, a myth of the "masculinity of war and women's peacefulness" (p. 143). Yet, mothers have often contributed to misogyny, nationalism and militarism by applauding, watching, ameliorating and forgiving their son's violence. The nationalism that gives rise to such dynamics is rooted in colonial relations (Agathangelou, 2000), where oppressed groups use violent tactics designed "to reverse the conditions of domination and put themselves on 'top'" (p. 12).

Says Ruddick (1989), "...a boy is not born, but rather becomes, a soldier. Becoming a soldier means learning to control fears and domestic longings that are explicitly labeled 'feminine'" (p. 145). Historically women have often contributed to educating their sons to become 'masculine', and to avoid being 'feminine', while teaching their daughters to seek the protection and attention of men. Women have also contributed to the dynamics of oppression based on race, class and gender within society and within families. Beyond this, some women have been violent, abusing their children, neglecting them and failing to provide

protection from abuse, within families. Ronai (1995), for example, tells a heart-wrenching story of how she was sexually abused at the hands of her father, while her mother (who was cognitively impaired) participated, watched or ignored her situation.

Caplan (1989) cautions us to remember, that while women who mother are products of our society, who are quite capable of participating in dynamics of abuse and violence, the "less a group is valued and respected, the easier it is to target its members as scapegoats" (p. 40). Consequently, she says, mothers are blamed overwhelmingly for the problems in our society, for the psychological impact they have on children and for issues that arise in families. And while mothers contribute to, and must bear some of the responsibility for these problems, including violence, racism, sexism, nationalism and oppression, she says that experts, including doctors, teachers, therapists, journalists, lawyers and judges are quick to blame individual women for problems that develop within families, when they really result from larger contextual and societal problems. It is this quick leap to mother-blame that allows these same experts, and society in general, to ignore the systemic social structures of patriarchal power (Caplan, 1989, Gordon, 1992). This often includes isolation, the double burden of paid and unpaid labour, as well as the increased demands or standards of professionalization for women who mother (Eichler, 1988a, Arnup, 1991). As Caplan (1989) puts it, "... hand in hand with mother-blaming goes a taboo against father-blaming" (p. 41), which in turn creates a social dynamic where mothers are easily blamed for the problems in families while fathers are held less accountable for problems that arise in families as well as in the greater society.

Motherwork as Learned Work

As I have shown elsewhere, patriarchal ideology would have it, that motherwork is 'natural' for women, that women are more suited to do this work and therefore, should do most or all of it, for the benefit of humankind. To the contrary, Price (1988) has found that the "maternal instinct does not arrive by magic to coincide with the first birth" (p. 126). She found, in her work with women, that all mothers, except if they had already been involved in the nurture and care of babies, had to familiarize themselves with the nature and requirements of this work, and learn how to look after babies and growing children.

Of course, in being raised as daughters in patriarchal society, many young women are more familiar with childcare than their male counterparts because they have been providing this care as baby-sitters, sisters or aunts (Rich, 1986b). However, Ruddick (1989) indicates that, aside from the biological acts of child bearing and breastfeeding, the "work of child tending can be, and is being, undertaken by women and men, gay and straight, single, coupled..." (Ruddick, 1989, p. 185). It is society's masculinist power structures that have rigidly defined these sexual divisions and have mandated child rearing as the work of women.

'Essentialist' feminists wonder if women are intrinsically and biologically predisposed to have an understanding of the ideology of care and nurture because of women's collective experience of the womb (Irigaray, 1990/1993). Irigaray reframes the traditionally held views of Freud's theory of biological determinism (Ryckman, 1989) or Beauvoir's (1952/1989) view of biological destiny. In an interview with a feminist biologist, Irigaray writes, the placenta is "...tissue, formed by the embryo, which while closely imbricated with the uterine mucosa remains

separate from it" (p. 38). This, she says, differs from the traditionally held view that the placenta is formed of half fetal and half maternal tissue. The fact that the placenta is separate from the fetus and the mother allows it to play a mediating role between the mother's body and the fetus, ensuring that the tissue from these two separate beings is never fused, and that the fetus can develop without "exhausting the mother in the process" (p. 39).

According to Irigaray (1990/1993), the biology of women and women's collective biological experience may uniquely place them in positions where they can understand and comprehend care, nurture and mediation because it is a part of their embodied knowledge. She goes on:

> A woman's body in fact gives equal opportunities of life to the boys and to the girls conceived in it through the coming together of male and female chromosomes.
>
> The between-men culture works in the opposite sense. The way it is structured excludes what the other sex brings to society. Whereas the female body engenders with respect for difference, the patriarchal social body constructs itself hierarchically, excluding difference (p. 45).

Irigaray's view is that the position of subordination that is allocated to women in patriarchal society is deeply rooted in both biology and culture. She believes that even though biological differences have been used by patriarchal society to exploit women, increased value of motherwork will come from renewed learning: learning that respects life, nature and nature's processes, as well as learning that rediscovers the female identity and the uniqueness and value of women's biological specificity.

O'Brien (1981) also argues that biological specificity contributes to women's understanding and practice of care and nurture. She believes that it is men's alienation from the reproductive process, from the moment of ejaculation

during copulation that has influenced patriarchal Western male-identified philosophy, culture and institutionalized structures. The experience of reproduction for women, on the other hand, is not an experience of alienation but an experience of integration, "...since it is the moment when our continuity as a species, from one generation to the next, and as a successful partnership between nature and culture, is most clearly affirmed" (Brandt, 1993, p. 13). Yet, according to Price (1988), the work of mothering does not come naturally to women and must be learned:

> One of the first questions I hear young mothers asking most frequently is 'why didn't someone tell me it would be like this?' They are referring to their sense of desolation and annihilation after the birth of their baby. It is a fascinating part of our cultural mythology that motherhood is given a rosy write-up everywhere and that the other, much blacker, side of the bargain is hardly mentioned. This silence probably reflects the extent to which our cultural mythology is a male mythology (p. 125).

Price (1988) believes that although motherwork has to be learned, it has been culturally defined and it is the patriarchal or liberal view (Brown, 1992) of the family that continues to subordinate women in their mothering roles. The fact that, according to the liberal masculinist notion, motherwork must be carried out by women is further evidenced by the large number of male 'experts': medical practitioners, psychologists and therapists, who have told and continue to tell women how to be successful mothers (see: Spock, 1954, Dreikurs & Stolz, 1964, Winnicott, 1964, White, 1995, Shapiro, Skinulis & Skinulis, 1995). In fact, Rich (1986b) wonders, if mothering is determined to be natural within patriarchy, why are there so very many systems at work within society that enforce the institution of motherhood. While many women benefit from accessing experts and resources

that have been written about childcare, these books contribute to the "fantasy of the perfect mother" (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992, p. 192) and continue to place the burden of motherwork on women, rather than identifying it as a social responsibility (Arnup, 1991, Eichler, 1997).

Debates continue about how women's power in this regard can be increased. bell hooks (1984), however, argues that recent feminist writings such as Adrienne Rich's (1986b) Of women born and Sara Ruddick's (1989) Maternal thinking risk the danger of re-romanticizing motherhood. Their writing could imply that "motherhood is a woman's truest vocation" (hooks, 1984, p.135). hooks also indicates that earlier contemporary feminist analysis regarding "motherhood reflected the race and class biases of participants" (p. 133). She indicates that if black women had been included in studies, the work of mothering "would not have been named a serious obstacle to our freedom as women" (p. 133). This, she says, is because black women have always juggled motherwork with work outside the home.

hooks (1984) believes that men are socialized into avoiding the responsibility of child care, and that when contemporary researchers emphasize the work of mothers, or motherhood, this separation between mothers and fathers is further entrenched. hooks prefers using the words "effective parenting" (p. 139) to indicate the work of childcare. As a gender-neutral description of the work, she believes this will be an advantage in encouraging men to share equally in parenting. She says men must be taught that "fatherhood has the same meaning and significance as motherhood" (p. 137).

Hart (1996), on the other hand, suggests that it is specifically the sexual division of labour that has caused the "fundamental inequalities in the labour market..." (p. 33). She believes that refocusing on the motherwork as the work that women do is necessary. Motherwork, she says, must be redefined as productive and learned work that has value, both within families, and in that it benefits society as a whole. Her thoughts echo those of Waring (1988). Both believe that the work of women in the domestic sphere and consequently, motherwork must be redefined as productive work: work that is learned and work of economic and social value. Such a view could provide a model for breaking through "the sexual division of labour that underlies fundamental inequalities in the labor market" (Hart, p. 33) and is a necessary step in changing society.

I agree with Hart (1996) and Ruddick (1989) that a woman-centred, feminist focus must remain on motherwork regardless of what it is called. Along with Ruddick, I argue that the work of mothering does not have to be biologically determined, even though women may have a greater understanding of what the work of nurture and care consists of, due to both their socialization process (Rich, 1986b, hooks, 1984) and due to their biological potential to provide care through the collective experience of the womb (Irigaray, 1990/1993). This perspective does not mandate motherhood for women; instead, it identifies a need to learn what this work consists of, so it can be generalized to the greater society in a woman-centred, holistic and life valuing way, beyond the biological mother.

But before motherwork is likely to be generalized to society as a social responsibility, the many aspects of the binary dualism with patriarchal society must be eradicated. Currently, these dualisms also divide women into those who have

children and those who are 'childless' (Ruddick, 1989). As Nelson, (1996) a lesbian mother points out, "It is not terribly uncommon for men and childless women to be informed that they do not really 'know' or 'understand' because, after all they are not mothers" (p. 8). In this regard, it is often biological mothers who have hung on to the power (albeit small in patriarchal terms) of their 'knowing' and 'understanding' with regard to motherwork, as superior to that of other women and men, creating further opportunities for women to be pitted against each other for the benefit of masculinist power. Solidarity among women, both heterosexual and lesbian, on the important issue of motherwork (whether or not they are biological mothers) is an essential step in counteracting the subordination of women who mother.

What's Missing?

As demonstrated, there is a vast and growing discourse on motherwork that challenges traditional (settled) or societal views on the institution of motherhood (Rich, 1986b). In addition, there is considerable adult learning literature that centres on informal and transformative learning, or learning that is embedded in experience.

However, there remains a dearth of literature that centres on the lived experience and learning within motherwork from a qualitative experiential standpoint. Where literature does address motherwork from a learning perspective, it is often from a theoretical perspective that is largely based on the author's own views and experiences (see: Ruddick, 1989, Rich, 1986b, Chodorow, 1978, Hirsch, 1989).

The experiences of new mothers, who are caring for infants, have been analyzed within the recent discourse on mothering (Everingham, 1994). The process of becoming a mother has also been explored in the literature of Oakley (1979) and Martins and Harms (1997). Luttrell (1997) and Belenky et al. (1986), have studied the learning experience of women (and therefore some mothers) who return to school, and in doing so, motherwork has become a theme within their work. Allen and Walker (1992) have focused on women who provide primary care to their elderly parents, from the perspective of Ruddick's (1989) concept of maternal thinking.

In addition to these, a few sources focus directly on women's experience of mothering (Dragu, Sheard, & Swan, 1991, Weiss, 1989, Arnup, 1998, Epstein, 1999). While these are excellent sources of knowledge regarding the experience of mothering, they are not exhaustive, nor do they focus on the learning and knowledge creation within motherwork.

This study contributes to the literature regarding the lived experience and learning of motherwork from a subsistence-oriented, adult learning standpoint. This is to record and make visible the significant moments of learning and transformation within motherwork, to document the knowledge creation that takes place through these significant experiences, and to explore the epistemological foundations of this lived experience and learning.

Chapter Three: Things Come Crashing Together

Truth, from a single perspective lacks depth.
- Marie

Much as I liked to imagine that writing an autobiographical story for this project could begin with the birth of my first child, or perhaps even with the start of doctoral studies, I began to realize that the way motherwork was shaped in my life began much earlier, in the experiences, cultural practices, personal observations and belief systems of my childhood. This chapter consists of a reflexive, autobiographical journey written in two sections. The first section is an exploration that chronicles my history and current location as a woman, mother, researcher and thesis writer. In keeping with feminist research practices (Kirby & McKenna, 1998, Rubin & Rubin, 1995), I explore my heritage, cultural and social contexts, and my transition into adulthood and into the work of mothering. In doing so, I place myself, as a researcher and thesis writer at the centre of my work. The second section consists of an art-informed self-inquiry of my own experiences of motherwork.

The Autobiographical Journey

I write as a Western white heterosexual woman, who has raised three children within patriarchal society. While my North American biases will be evident in my writing, I have come to my current understanding and place in life, to a large extent, as a result of the transformative experiences in my own family: including the distancing and reconnecting with my family of origin, and the bearing

and raising of children. The starting point of my journey was Reinland, Manitoba, the place of my birth.

A Religious Subsistence Heritage

Reinland was and remains a conservative Mennonite village in the heart of the 'West Reserve', a grouping of Mennonite towns and villages that had begun their settlement in this region in the 1860's (Schroeder, 1990, Zacharias, 1976, Loewen, 1982). As a fifth generation Canadian on my mother's side, and third on my father's, we spoke a functional and unwritten Plaut Deutch (Low German) dialect at home. Village life centred around the church where we prayed, sang and read a German Bible. Most of our traditions and heritage were passed along by oral histories through storytelling. As a result, many of my extended family members and forebears, including my mother, were exceptional storytellers.

We were farmers, peasants who practised a subsistence lifestyle. I learned at an early age, that agriculture, the reproduction of food and procreation are essential to the promotion of all life. We raised pigs and cows, dogs and cats, and grew wheat, oats and barley. Later on, when variety and cash crops became the order of the day for farmers throughout the world (Waring, 1988), we produced corn, sunflowers and sugar beets. In those early years, life seemed quite idyllic. I suppose we were quite poor by Canadian standards, but as a child, my needs were met, and whether we were rich or poor never occurred to me. We grew fruits and vegetables which we sold, canned or froze for the winter. For the most part we were able to produce whatever we needed to live on, within our conglomerate of Mennonite villages and towns.

We were religious. The focus of our community was on devotion to God, on subsistence, community-oriented living and on the promotion of the agricultural way of life. In the early days, the rest of the world was actively shunned and thought of as worldly and suspicious. We had come to Canada via Russia, from Germanic origins, and were in search of religious freedom. Canada had promised that to our people (Schroeder, 1990). In fact, according to Ng (1991), Mennonites and other eastern Europeans were invited to come to Canada, specifically to further Canada's economic and political goals, and in this case, those political goals aligned with our people's goals for living in communities that were separate from the world, for religious freedom, and for the option to abstain from military service. We lived what has been called a 16th century lifestyle in the 20th century (Brandt, 1996).

Traditional Roles

It was clear to me, as a child, that women and men had different roles in life, though both worked very hard in our village. Men worked the land, went to church meetings and spoke from the pulpit. Women looked after children, homes and gardens. Women were silent in public places but often chatted merrily when working together to create quilts or to prepare food for gatherings. In church, women sat on one side, men on the other. Because I am a twin and it was difficult to look after two little girls in church, I often had the unique privilege of sitting with my father, on the men's side. I learned a lot about what I believed the roles of women and men were, from watching the people in my community, and especially from my mother and maternal grandmother.

Klocken Geschichten

Tick...tick...tick...
Taunte Justine
Taunte Marie 'n
Grossmamma
zetten gaunz stell 'aum Desch'
jieda met en Kufful Koffe.

Tick...tick...tick...

Ehre Häng sänd gaunz ruch
von lange, schwore Johre.
Se säyen muscht....
De Klock one Waund
mott ole Geschichte vetahlen.

Tick...tick...tick...

(Title: The Clock's (hi)story. Grandma and the great aunts are sitting around the table in silence, each with a cup of coffee. Their hands are rough and worn, from many years of hard work. They say nothing. The clock on the wall must tell their stories. Tick...tick...tick...)

It came as a complete surprise to me in my adolescence that there was increasingly, no place for my sister and myself in our home or community. It seemed we were becoming bad girls. While my father trained our brother in the ways of the farm, working together to make it more successful, I felt that as daughters, we were reprimanded for having too many dreams and ideas. It seemed that it would be preferable for us to find Mennonite farm boys to marry, so that we too could be successful by that system.

I began to feel that being female was actually a problem. It did not appear that we were doing anything that terribly different than our brother, but it seemed that our very creativity, our life force energy was a mistake. The sexuality of adolescent girls seemed to create the biggest unspoken fear in the family because it carried the potential of putting the family to shame.

In retrospect, I have no doubt that my parents were doing the work of parenting to the best of their abilities, that they loved me, and wanted the best for each of their children. In fact, I have learned since, that there is a very appealing internal integrity in the Mennonite community way of life (Schroeder, 1990), which my family endorsed. What they were trying to do was to preserve that way of life for themselves and their family, in the best way they knew. However, for myself at this stage, life in the village began to feel very restrictive and repressive. I wanted to explore the rest of the world.

One particularly bright spot in my adolescence was our 4-H club. These clubs emerged as part of the larger co-operative movement that the Mennonite community, including my parents, endorsed quite actively (Zacharias, 1976). However, it also opened up avenues of knowledge about the world beyond our communities, which according to Schroeder (1990) was the feared 'wedge' that, once it had been inserted into the Mennonite community, opened up possibilities of assimilation into 'worldliness'. As a result of these clubs and the cooperative movement, the Department of Agriculture became increasingly involved in local farming activities (Zacharias, 1976). Soon, professional agricultural representatives and home economists visited the village. They were the judges who determined our achievement levels as club members. Furthermore, they began to interact with the daily activities and way of life within the Mennonite communities, often providing advice and expertise.

At the 4-H club, boys and girls would gather separately, each week, to work on projects. The boys raised calves or grew plots of sugar beets, while the girls cooked, sewed and created handcrafts. At the beginning of each meeting, all

the members stood up to recite the club motto in unison: "Learn to do by doing." I never gave much thought to what we were saying, or what it meant, but enjoyed the social aspects of the club and developed many (still useful) domestic skills.

Clearly, I was influenced greatly by the practical and experiential way that we lived our lives. I remember how, when experts from the Department of Agriculture arrived on the scene and claimed to be able to assist farmers to increase the productivity of the farms, they were first viewed with considerable skepticism. In later years, mom said that it seemed they were 'farming with pencils'. This was a way of expressing concern for the theoretical knowledge and expertise that they shared, which was not grounded in lived experience.

Broadening Horizons

I left that community to attend high school in a nearby (still Mennonite) town. This small move opened up new and endless possibilities for me. The teachers at Mennonite Collegiate Institute were university educated (Zacharias, 1976), and I soaked up their version of what the world was like with keen interest. They recognized my abilities and encouraged me to attend university in Winnipeg.

Attending university was rare for Mennonite girls from the villages. The few, who had attended 'Normal School,' returned to the community to teach Mennonite children. The mere act of leaving home after high school and attending university was viewed as suspicious, and was met with considerable disapproval (Brandt, 1996). As no financial support was available from my family, I lived on student loans and bursaries. I completed a general arts degree, majoring in religious studies. I was particularly fascinated by Marxism, which was associated

with the danger of Communism and Stalinism, from which our forebears had fled. Therefore, it was considered dangerous.

It became difficult to discuss what I was learning at university on my infrequent visits home. At school, however, I was finding new ways of seeing the world and I found them exhilarating. In the middle of my second year of university, I married a man who was willing to support me and my academic ventures. (I am fortunate enough to still be married to him and still have his support in this project.)

Early Mothering

Shortly after graduating from university, my daughter was born. I was very puzzled by the feelings I encountered around her birth and early life. As Price (1988) suggests is quite usual for new mothers, I was totally unprepared for the sleepless nights, for the exhaustion and the loneliness of that experience. I felt a bond with my very energetic baby but I seemed to have lost my identity. When I discussed my feelings with others, I rarely found support and wondered if I alone felt this way, or if there was something wrong with me as a woman.

When my daughter was six months old, I began to teach (on a part-time basis) in a Mennonite private high school (in Winnipeg). Working outside of the home, as a mother of an infant, was frowned upon in the Mennonite community and in my own extended family, in the 70's. The fear was that my daughter 'would not know who her mother was'. For myself, however, I knew immediately that getting out of the house every day and going into the paid workforce gave me a clearer sense of identity that contributed to keeping me positively focused as a mother.

By the time my daughter was three, my first son was born. In this same year, my father died after a prolonged illness, my mother nearly died, and sustained open-heart surgery, and my baby had to endure emergency surgery due to a congenital ulcer (see: Barg, 1984). My own world felt like it had been turned upside down.

Within a few months of these family traumas, my own nuclear family moved to the Toronto area, as a result of a workplace transfer for my partner. The move to Toronto caused an even greater disparity for me. I was 28 years old and had, at some level, always imagined Toronto, Mississauga and Don Mills to be places that were just referred to on the back of cereal boxes. They did not seem real. In Toronto, there were very few Mennonites and the sense of community living (Schroeder, 1990, Zacharias, 1976) that I had developed in Reinland, and to a large extend in Winnipeg, was missing. I now found myself in a large urban centre, without a career, relatively isolated in my home with two small children, and before long, with a third baby. All my friends were far away. My husband traveled extensively as a result of his career, and was not able to provide much relief to my long and demanding hours of childcare.

This was a very lonely and trying time for me, as an individual and as a mother. Often as I was caring for my children, I was afraid of my own anger and ability to abuse the power that I held in relation to them. I was often afraid that I would repeat the cycles of oppression that I had witnessed, experienced and abhorred as a child. Consequently, I went to great lengths in searching for alternative ways of parenting in order to change what I saw as damaging cycles of oppression.

There were two significant ways in which I coped with life in Toronto in the early days. One was by participating in a community course on parenting, based on Dreikurs and Soltz' (1964) book Children: The challenge. This book builds upon Alfred Adler's theory of democracy and extends it into every day household dynamics. The other way in which I coped with this lonesome period of my life was by writing. I wrote short stories, vignettes, a play and poetry, several of which were published. Creative writing was, and continues to be, part of the way in which I process growth, change and the new insights that result from life's experiences and learning.

In those years, I also lost vision in one eye. I wanted to understand why this happened, and what my options were, in dealing this problem. The only course I could find on how the eye functioned, and at the same time, was also accessible to me as a mother of three small children (who could occasionally escape to an evening course) was in a part-time program at Seneca College of Arts and Technology. I could only take the course, however, if I was enrolled in a Diploma Program to become a licensed Optician. I enrolled, got hooked and soon became an Optician.

Developing New Identities

Opticianary work was interesting. However, there are few opportunities for personal and professional growth in that field after one is licensed, so before long, I began to teach student opticians at Seneca College, so that I could find greater challenges within that industry. I designed a new curriculum for the Opticians' Program, coordinated the implementation and delivery of the program, and taught in that field for over a decade.

Meanwhile, my children were growing up. I was puzzled at the way in which my motherwork and the skills, knowledge and insight that resulted from this work were taken for granted. I felt that my role as a mother was idealized and glorified, yet minimized and undervalued. In keeping with the work of Aronowitz and Cutler (1998), Ruddick (1989), Mies (1986) and Waring (1988, 1996), I began to think of ways in which this productive work, when taken out of the narrow confines of patriarchally, is of great value to our society.

As my children were becoming more independent, I was able to move on to more of my own interests. I returned to university to complete a Masters of Arts degree in Counselling Psychology at the Adler School of Professional Psychology. Psychology was a field that had always interested me, and taking this step resulted in a transformative experience for me, in terms of my individual maturation as well as my understanding of human behaviour.

Of course, I already knew that Adler and his followers were avid promoters of parenting education, from my reading of Dreikurs and Soltz (1964). Dreikurs and Soltz wrote from a masculinist position, which reflected the language, culture and the sexual division of labour of their time and location. However, they did promote a vision of equality and democracy within the family system that, at least on a theoretical level, opposed the patriarchal practice of male dominance. In learning about Adler and Dreikurs' theories of equality, family democracy and mutual respect, I began to change, in very significant ways, my own interactions with my children. I developed a greater respect for their individual perspectives, a deeper recognition of their lived experience, and I learned to honour their choices more deliberately.

Having come out of a conservative religious heritage, where righteous living, judgement and the consequence of sin were emphasized, I absorbed some very liberating and life-changing perspectives as a result of my time at Adler School. Some of the key Adlerian concepts that I found liberating included: it takes courage to embrace our own human imperfections; mistakes are opportunities to learn (Dreikurs, 1989, Manaster & Corsini 1982), and, as human beings (including children), we do our most significant learning as a result of the natural consequences of our choices (Dreikurs, 1989, Shapiro, Skinulis & Skinulis, 1996, Nelson, 1987).

With my renewed understanding about democracy within families and personal relationships, I began to understand the possibilities of democracy within social systems to a greater extent. Although Adler, too, was a product of his time who used very masculinist, heterosexist language, I was fascinated by his view that 'social interest' and cooperation are the key concepts that allow people to function in healthy and productive ways, both within families and society (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, 1978, Dreikurs, 1971, 1989, Manaster & Corsini, 1982).

Social interest, a concept which is better identified by the German word '*Gemeinshaftsgefuehl*' (as Adler identified it), was the way in which Adler described the benefit that people derive from contributing to life, to others and to society as a whole (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Adler believed that when people work in cooperation with others, towards the benefit of the greater good, they derive a sense of belonging that contributes to their personal sense of well-being which allows them to function in mentally healthy ways (Manaster & Corsini, 1982, Dreikurs, 1989). As a result of this concept, a major part of Adlerian

psychotherapy focuses on encouraging individuals to take action in ways that make cooperative contributions to relationships, workplaces and society as a whole.

Regarding relationships within households (which he saw only in terms of heterosexual marriages), Adler believed that the sexual division of labour within Western culture came about as a result of a historic necessity that was grounded in the biological difference between women and men, and the desire to protect children from harm (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1978). This view has been echoed in subsequent feminist writing, including Lerner (1986) and Eisler (1987). Adler pleaded not so much for a change in the sexual division of labour, but for a redistribution of the value that is placed on the work that was done by women (in the home) and by men (in the public sphere). Although my views about gender-based equality differed considerably, the part of Adler's theory that I found most insightful and which resonated with my experience as a mother, was that the work of mothering is undervalued, and this contributes to women's oppression within society and often within families.

As a result of my studies at Adler School, I began to teach parenting courses as a part of my practicum assignment. In doing so, I was frustrated, however, that many of the books and resources that were used were written by male 'experts' and most of the participants in the classes were women. To me, this disparity brought forth shades of 'farming with pencils', which, as noted earlier, was the way that my parents had described the advice of experts who were not involved in the day-to-day struggle of lived experience. Furthermore, although Adlerians systematically referred the courses as 'parenting classes', in an attempt to promote the participation and responsibility of both women and men, I began to

understand why Eichler (1997) says that using the word 'parenting' when one really is speaking more specifically about or to mothers actually 'neuters' the important work that women do in their mothering roles.

Following Dreikurs and Soltz (1964), several women who self-identify as feminists (Nelson, 1987, Bettner & Lew, 1992) contributed to the writing of Adlerian books on parenting. However, my feeling was that even they wrote with a 'view from above' (Hart, 1992, 1996), imagining that North American families, for the most part, consist of two white heterosexual partners and their biological offspring. Consequently, my frustration with the Adlerian approach to parenting was that it still seemed to place the responsibility of 'good parenting' on mothers or parents as individuals, with a blatant disregard for issues of class, race, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

Social injustice, exploitation and the oppression of women and others in marginalized societal positions appeared to be disregarded, while the idea that individuals (primarily mothers) could ensure that their children would become well adapted, mentally healthy and productive citizens flourished. And while I found a lot of merit in learning that I was not powerless and could make significant changes in the functioning and communication of members within my family, this seemingly total absence of social justice and responsibility contributed to my search for further learning.

While I was completing my Masters Degree at Adler School, I experienced cataract surgery. As an optician and educator, I was keenly aware of the impact of poor vision and eye surgery on individuals, and therefore I documented this experience elsewhere, for the benefit of my students and others within the optical industry (Barg, 1994). It was through the intersection of the effects of surgery, my professional work and the daily activities of the nurturing young people, that I wrote this poem:

Depth Perception

There is something
to be said
for the experience
of seeing things
differently
from each eye.

One, once blind
now sees
in the vibrant colour
of youth.

The other, aged
and yellowed
in its perception
knows wisdom from
years of seeing
what is.

Both are in search of truth
yet cannot agree on
what is
real.

Perhaps in the end
these eyes will know
only that truth
does not exist
in one dimension...

that wisdom
is in the knowledge
that truth
from a single perspective
lacks depth (Barg, 1995).

Towards Doctoral Studies

When I enrolled in the Adult Education Program at University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), I had fully intended to do my doctoral thesis on experiential workplace learning (as my part-time

employment, at this time, was in the area of staff training within the provincial government). In my first course at OISE, I studied the concept of self-directed learning with Allan Tough (see: Tough, 1971). Tough asked class participants to write a small paper on the most significant learning experiences of our lives, clarifying that this could consist of any learning through life experiences and did not have to centre around formal learning. When I pondered how I would complete this assignment, it became clear to me that the most significant adult learning experiences in my own life were grounded in the work of mothering.

I began to wonder how other women experienced the learning and transformation in motherwork. I believed that motherwork was the work learned within relationship and community. At OISE, I found further evidence among feminst writers such as Shiva (1989), Mies (1986), Waring (1988) and Hart 1992), that mothering was work of great significance. Consequently, before long, I began to focus most of my research and learning on motherwork, and chose to focus on the learning and lived experience of motherwork for my doctoral thesis.

Birthing a Thesis

This is the experience of thesis writing:
all the parts of one's life
come crashing together
into one fiercely powerful moment...
exhilarating, often overwhelming
sometimes filled with pain...
reminiscent of a long a difficult pregnancy...
that ends only after much enduring,
and an arduous
yet bountiful labour.

The significance of what 'learn to do by doing' meant within my heritage and the subsistence-oriented way of life of my childhood, and how that concept can be applied to the learning and experience of motherwork came 'crashing together' for me as I began to work on this thesis project.

Reflexive Self-Inquiry

This section consists of an art-informed self-inquiry of my own experiences of motherwork. In keeping with the views of Kirby and McKenna (1989), I wanted to add my own experience to the conceptual data of research participants. I also wanted to ensure that, as a researcher engaged in a very subjective study, I had developed considerable theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and self-knowledge in the area of my study. This is in keeping with Denzin (1997), who states:

> The poetic or narrative text is reflexive, not only in its use of language but also in how it positions the writer in the text and uses the writer's experiences as both the topic of inquiry and a resource for uncovering problematic experience (p. 217).

He goes on to describe the ethnographic reflexive text within qualitative research (as opposed to research that claims objectivity) as "messy text" (p. 224), because the writer is always, necessarily at the centre of the project. Self-knowledge, for the researcher, therefore becomes a key element. Denzin goes on:

> (The researcher) is a writerly self with a particular hubris that is neither insolent nor arrogant. The poetic self is simply willing to put itself on the line and to take risks. These risks are predicated on a simple proposition: This writer's personal experiences are worth sharing with others. Messy texts make the writer a part of the writing project (p. 225).

In keeping with this theme, and in preparation for this study, I chose to explore, through art-informed inquiry, my own lived experience as a mother.

This section consists of six parts. First, I have described the design of the self-inquiry. This is followed by an outline of how data for this project was collected and processed. Poetry is interspersed throughout this work and is not

confined to a section on representation. However, the next three parts do highlight, in a more specific way, the art-informed representation of this work. These include representation in poetic forms as well as a short story. I conclude this paper with some musings about how I would like this work, as art-informed inquiry, to be read and evaluated.

Designing the Project

The research questions which I had in mind as I began the self-inquiry included: What are the foundations upon which I have worked, learned and taught as a mother? How can I represent my experiences of mothering in a reflective and art-informed way? Can I present the process and learning of my work as a mother in ways that are authentic and meaningful to me, and simultaneously resonate with the interests, imagination and experiences of readers? Does the representation of my mothering process ring true for myself and for each of my children? Is this art-informed research? Is it research?

I began the reflexive self-inquiry by working with the transcribed interview that I had taken part in, as an 'interviewee'. I participated in this preliminary interview, both to clarify the interview process for myself (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) and in order to develop a greater level of empathy for the women who were to participate in this process (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). My transcribed interview consisted of three stories that centred around "turning point moments" (Denzin, 1989, p. 7) that involved my work as a mother.

I decided to look at these stories and explore ways in which I could represent the data in art-informed and meaningful ways. It seemed to me that I would be able to write some stories or poems about my own experiences without

referring to transcribed interviews. However, as I was trying to develop methods of art-informed representation to analyze research participants' transcripts, I decided to practise some of these techniques, using my own transcribed interview.

As I struggled with my transcript, I noted that all three stories were about my mothering relationship to my daughter. I knew that I had also experienced significant insights in mothering my two sons.

At this point in my inquiry, I attended an Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) conference at Brock University (October 1 – 3, 1999). I was inspired to continue my work, particularly by two sessions. One was a storytelling session: two women presented powerful and provocative stories about women and mothers through storytelling (Wehking & Janzen, 1999). Although their stories were based on fairytales and fiction, the form that they took inspired me to look further into storytelling and short stories as art forms. The other session that evoked my emotions was part of the final session. A woman from Kosovo showed a film that made visible the horror of human atrocities within that country, unconscionable violence, rape and murder that had been directed specifically at women (Salillari, 1999).

This moment inspired me to ponder how differently I had mothered my daughter than my two sons. I decided that I would add two further research questions to this study: In what ways has my experience of mothering a daughter differed from mothering sons? How have my sons and daughter been impacted by these differences in mothering?

To provide a greater context regarding my family, at the time of the interview, my daughter was 23 and teaching in Winnipeg. My oldest son was 20.

He attended Brock University where he was enrolled in Recreation and Leisure studies. (I managed to interview him when I attended the ARM conference, in exchange for an interview that he needed to do for one of his school projects.) My youngest son, who still lives at home, was in grade 11, 16 years old and extremely keen about driving, girls and hockey. The children's father, to whom I am married, is a supportive parent and very involved in certain aspects of parenting. However, because he works in a field that requires him to travel extensively, I have, to a large extent, functioned as a single parent throughout my mothering years.

Collecting and Processing Data

In order to gather further data for this project, I engaged in conversation with each of my children. I described to each of them, in a somewhat sporadic way, what my mothering process had been for me. I asked them for insights into their experiences as my daughter and sons. I asked them to reflect on their experiences and to consider how they saw the world differently (than they might have in other circumstances or than their friends did). In keeping with the ethical principles that I developed and have described elsewhere, I asked each of them for permission to talk and write about them, knowing that I am unable to offer them the same level of anonymity that I can offer other research participants. I am glad to say that each of them has offered me their support.

'Mum vision' is a poem that resulted from these questions. I wrote this poem after talking to my 20-year-old son about how he sees the world differently as a result of my mothering. I discovered, in reflecting on his answer, that I too, have been shaped in my vision of the world by my history and heritage.

Mum Vision

I learned
at a tender age
to see through the eyes of my mother
to hear with her ears.

I knew the music she heard
the songs she sang
the melody and rhythm of her life.

In adolescence
I knew how to separate
what I said in mum's presence
from other places.

Selective swearing
rock music
lipstick and dancing
became part of my disparity
because of my mum vision.

I asked my son
the other day
if he sees the world differently
on account of my mothering.

This is what he said:

There are things that my friends say
in the dressing room
when they watch movies
see a pretty girl walk by

that I could not say
cannot even think,

because I know they are disrespectful
and I learned that from you.

And do you voice your feelings at those times?

No, he said, *Not yet (Barg, 2001, pp. 116-117).*

(I am putting a lot of stock into the '*Not yet*' at this moment, and I trust that one day he will own his vision and that he will have the courage to speak out.)

As I continued to collect data and to write, I also went back to poetry that I had written some years ago. I noted that much of this poetry centred around my experience of mothering as well. Here, for instance, is a poem I wrote (but have since refined) when my daughter was about sixteen. Again, my experience with my own mother plays a significant part in the story.

Mother's Hands

I saw my mother's hands today
attached to the ends of my arms...
fumbling clumsily
with coins
that did not want
to be contained
by my change purse.

I looked in the mirror
and saw her face
looking back at me.

Mother,
how embarrassed
I learned to be
by your hands
your face
the very body
that gave me life.

Let me bless you
Mother
and remember the love
with which your hands held me...
the same hands that hurt me.

*****

"God, Mother
I can't believe you"
are the words I am hearing
today.

"Like...
You lost your car in the parking lot?
'Spilled tea
all over your clothes
and then were late for the meeting!

Weird, Mother,
when are you gonna get it together?

And the things you say
to my friends:
you are embarrassing!"

*****

Ah, the wisdom
of youth
the vision of perfection
long lost to me
along with the coins
that evaded my change purse.

Maybe one day
they too will remember
these clumsy hands
for their gentleness
as well as their hurting
for both their love
and their pain.

As I reflected on my mothering poetry, I was struck, once again, by the way in which our society is structured to see mothers as "larger than life, omnipotent, all-powerful, or all powerless..." (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992, p. 206). As a product of this society, I have participated in this dynamic. Yet, it is this social dynamic that contributes to the myth that mothers (women) should be perfect, which in turn often pits women against each other within families (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992, Caplan, 1989).

In order to process what I was going through, I began to journal and to describe for myself what I was experiencing, as a mother and as a researcher

invested in self-inquiry. My data analysis, at this point, consisted mainly of pondering: pondering and reflecting on my experiences, poetry and conversations with my children. Often I immersed myself in a transcript, story, conversation or poem, and then, with the thoughts and emotions that were stirred up in me, I went for long walks. While trudging along purposefully, I organized my thoughts in new ways, so that I could write down my experiences, insights, ideas and emotions. Since then, walking (or purposeful trudging) has become an essential element of my thesis writing and has contributed immensely to the experience of data analysis or meaning making.

Representation by Poetic Narrative

I began working on my transcribed interviews by taking specific words that I had said and weaving them together in a poetic form, so that the meaning and intensity of the stories could be captured. Sometimes, I found that the words had to be changed slightly, in order to allow this form to flow. I had no name for what I was doing, until I came across two articles by Glesne (1997, 1999) where she describes a similar process. Glesne calls this method "poetic transcription", and indicates that it "involves word reduction, while illuminating the wholeness and interconnections of thoughts" (1997, p. 206). My own preference, however, is to call this process poetic narrative. This is because my goal is to tell whole stories or narratives in a poetic format, while representing the vernacular wording, flow and emotion that were evident in the interview.

Here are two pieces that I developed, using this process. The first one represents a small part of a larger story that I told as a part of the interview. To provide a context for it, this was a time when I was still greatly influenced by my

heritage and a belief in the virtue of what Gustafson (1998) identifies as women's long-suffering silence. However, I was now living in the Toronto area with my family. In my new urban setting, I often felt that I did not belong and that I was unable to negotiate the social norms I found myself immersed in. At this point in my life, I came up against a situation that was of serious concern to me. It involved my daughter, who was in grade five, and her teacher.

My Homework

Mr. G.
would touch her a lot
...touch her face
...hold her chin.

'Sounded like
this was directed
specifically
at girls.

I called the principal
who said
in a "pat on the head"
sort of way:

"There, there, dear
I appreciate your
concern
but..."

I called the
superintendent...
I called the Ministry...

Someone was sent
to observe
this fellow's teaching:

(everything was different
that day,
of course).

I wanted to be very
clear...
this wasn't just about
my daughter:

it was about
changing what this guy
was doing.

My fear was...
sexual abuse
of little girls.

I felt I was bad
confronting authority
figures.

I had been thinking
teachers and schools
were there to benefit
children.

I felt bad
like
God will get me.

There was this
moment
of conflict:

A good mother
protects her children
from harm....

A good woman
does not challenge
social structures....

Does she
(Barg, 2001, p. 117-118)?

The moment that I have described in this piece represents a powerful turning point for me. It was the moment when I decided that as a mother, my own justice work could not be done from a position of silence. I used a right-hand

margin in this piece, as a way of visually depicting a push against norms and boundaries, in this case, the norms of my own heritage and assumptions about expectations of 'good women'

As the situation that my daughter was in intensified, my own actions intensified. Eventually, the teacher in question was asked to leave the school for a year and the principal was replaced. I believe that my own actions contributed to these changes.

The next piece reflects my experience of mothering my daughter through some very difficult teenage years. In this piece, I have tried to capture the conversations and actions between us, in the left-hand column, while my own processing and reflection of these experiences is on the right.

A Delicate Balance

"I have to tell you something, mom
that really scares me...
I'm scared to tell you...."

She was bulimic
and had been practising this
binge purge cycle
for several years....

I asked her,
(foolishly, in the moment)
"Why didn't you tell me
before?"

She said
"I thought you'd
yell at me...."

If what my kids are thinking is
I'm going to yell at them
if they tell me the biggest struggles
in their lives
then I've got to have a serious look

at how I do
parenting.

We decided
between the two of us
to see a doctor...
a female doctor.

I made this assumption
that if she is female
she will have a
different than the "normal medical
sciences approach"
to things.

The doctor's first response was...

You, mum, are overbearing, meddling
...the cause of all problems
...butt out....

Feeling chastened
both of us
walked out of there.

At home, when we had dinner
I'd feel myself watching her
... eating
... leaving the table
... I would hear the toilet flush....

Oh God...
It was scary

very, very scary.

I took parenting classes
... studied psychology
I found a therapist for myself
...a different therapist for her
...and I promised I would pay
for everything
until we could
make things safer.

For many years
I struggled with
the delicate balance of
butting out...
and
staying involved.

I experienced a lot of guilt.

A friend said to me:
"I don't think you can assume
that you were the only person
to influence her....
I don't think bulimia is
just about what mothers do."

But...the guilt is big!

Motherhood is just
jam packed
full of guilt.

There are all those theories
about body image...
about abuse....

It's true...
we all think we should be thinner
women...probably men, too.

The crisis is over now, so
this summer I asked her:
"What made you think
I was going to be mad at you?"

She said
"You told me
about someone who was anorexic

And said
'I hope you don't ever
have to go through something
like that.'

I heard:
Don't you ever
do anything like that!"

Reflecting back on it now,
I have to thank my daughter...
I learned more
about focusing on life
because she let me mother her
through this,
than I could ever have
imagined (Barg, 2001, pp. 119-122).

Representation by Short Story

The third story that I told, as part of the interview process, did not seem to lend itself to poetic narrative. Without really knowing why, I decided to represent it as a short story. In retrospect, this is because the story seemed to flow more specifically in a story-like fashion, with a specific beginning, middle and ending, and used less poetic language. (Although this difference may not be apparent to readers, as I proceeded with the thesis and with research participants' stories, I used this concept of 'story-like flow', versus poetic language to guide me in determining when to use poetic narrative and when to use short stories as methods of representation.)

I have fictionalized each of our names for the purpose of this story, in order to maintain some level of anonymity for my daughter, and because it seemed appropriate to write the story from a third person perspective. Again, my own heritage and experience became a major part of the story.

Blessing Good-bye: Processing a Daughter's Leaving

Marie had left home at 15. Life had become unbearably confining on the farm and in the conservative Mennonite village under the firm governance of patriarchs. Leaving home meant freedom. The seemingly small step of leaving home and attending a residential (still Mennonite private) high school in a nearby town had opened up new and endless possibilities that exceeded all her dreams.

Now Elana was planning to leave home. The thought of having her daughter leave home stirred up painful and deeply buried memories for Marie. For some years, Marie had known that Elana dreamed of going back to Winnipeg, the city of her birth. Marie had encouraged those dreams and promised to help her daughter's dreams come true. Now, with the end of high school approaching, those dreams seemed unmanageable, fiercely unfair, painfully familiar, unkind....

Marie was determined to say good-bye gracefully. She sought out possible ways in which the two of them could say good-bye significantly and symbolically. Marie and Elana agreed to attend a weekend parent child workshop at the Omega Center for Holistic Learning, in New York State.

As they were driving to the Center, they had opportunities to negotiate (and fight) over everything: which road to take, where to eat, when to stop. When they reached the Center, they were ushered into a tiny cabin, which they were to share. There again they negotiated: who would sleep in which bed, take the first shower....

The workshop was intense. Every moment of every day, touched off some raw nerve in Marie. For three days she cried, wept...grieved. But what of Elana? Elana tried to comfort Marie, wondering, all the while what she might have done, to make her mother so unhappy.

In one of the workshop sessions, parents and children sat facing each other in a circle; parents on the outside, children on the inside. Then each person (both parents and children) moved to the right, so that no parents were across from their own children. Now adults and children were asked to introduce themselves to one another, and to talk about their dreams and aspirations. Marie, a therapist, was well trained in processes of encouragement and affirmation. It was easy to hear the dreams of the 12-year-old boy in the opposite chair, and to offer support.

Then the boy asked Marie to introduce herself to him, and to name her dreams and aspirations. Marie told him about her children, and what an important place they have in her life. She also talked about her dreams of working somewhere internationally, and doing something of significance that would make the world a better place. "Well, what's stopping you, lady?" asked the unsuspecting, but wizened boy. Marie burst into tears. In an instant, the boy had made visible how much Marie felt she had sacrificed when she chose to marry and have children.

The circles moved on; the conversations continued, until Marie and Elana were seated once more, across from each other. Marie on the outside; Elana on the inside. Now they were asked to introduce themselves to each other, mother and daughter. As Elana talked about her dreams, Marie saw, for the first time, how much easier it was to support the dreams of children other than her own. When there were no emotional, financial and family ties, it was easier to say: "Go for it! You can do it!" Yet within her own life, every moment carried with it, a painful memory, feelings of guilt and potential loss. This time she was able to encourage Elana with renewed zest.

As the two left the workshop, Marie assured Elana that the tears of the weekend were not about Elana at all. Marie was processing big memories of how

and why she had left home. And somewhere, buried in those memories, had been Marie's greatest fear: that Elana was leaving out of anger or frustration; that Elana, too, was finding home restrictive and confining; that somehow Marie had failed as a mother. Having processed their relationship at Omega, Elana left for University of Manitoba the following year, with Marie's blessing.

Poetry Inspired by Mothering Sons

Griffiths-Maxymiw (1999) states:

> Feminist mothers face a challenge: how do you educate sons about the issues of gender equality without alienating them from their male culture? By being sensitive to sexism, sons face potential rejection from the masculine culture that bestows inclusion, esteem and privilege to 'masculine' men (p. 180).

I became increasingly aware of gender equality issues and how my sons were processing and developing in their own masculinity as they became adolescents, and particularly when they began to develop specific and intimate relationships with girls. I thought I could see in them, an embodiment of their (as well as society's) attitudes towards gender equality. I struggled for a long time about how to talk to them about sex, beyond the early and pragmatic 'birds and bees' discussions that we'd had.

I reflected on how we develop a 'repertoire' of knowledge in our lives. As both my sons had been musicians, and were familiar with the word 'repertoire' from their music lesson experience, I decided to use this word and concept to describe to them, the development of embodied sexual knowledge, and to urge them to develop that repertoire with a deliberate level of respect and reflection. Here is a poem that describes the conversations I had with both of my sons (at separate times) around this issue.

Body Repertoire

The thing about the body
(I tell my teenage son,
who has recently fallen
madly in love
with a pretty girl)
is that whatever it learns,
it remembers.

When you were a baby
and you learned to sit,
sitting became part of your
body repertoire
When you crawled,
crawling was added
then standing, walking, running....

You didn't always choose to
sit, or walk or run
just because you knew
what it was
and how it felt...

but your body remembered.

And now when you explore new possibilities
of the body...

When you hold your friend's hand,
touch her lips
hold her tight
these will be added
to your body's repertoire

and your body will remember....

So take each step
slowly...
thoughtfully...
reflectively...

so you are sure
you engage only
in those actions
that each of you is ready for

and only in the moments
when you are ready for them.

And sometimes you may choose
(individually or together)
not to engage in actions
even though your bodies remember....

Respect those moments.

And if each step your bodies take
can be beautiful
respectful moments

Then your bodies will have lovely memories
(Barg, 2001, pp. 122-124).

One of my sons rolled his eyes when I first shared this poem with him, and then he hugged me. I believe he understands the concept that I was trying to convey and I believe that both my sons have developed some level of sensitivity around the choices of others, within close relationships.

The next poem reflects a conversation I had with my 16-year-old son, after he came home from seeing the movie The General's Daughter (a movie that I have not seen, nor do I intend to).

Movi(e)n' Moment

You would like this movie
my son tells me
with an air of assurance.
He knows that I abhor violence,
particularly,
systemic violence against women
made visible in movies.

It's a social comment
about the position of women
in society.

This woman is raped
in the military....

She reports it and then
to prove what happened
to her dad. (the General)
she reenacts
the whole scene

nakedness

bondage

violence

rape....

And the dad?

Oh he believes her
especially after she dies
while reenacting the scene.

I think
that you would like it
because is really depicts
why violence against women
is wrong.

Okay, tell me, son
when, during the movie
did your heart beat most loudly...
your breathing stop momentarily?

When were your emotions
most aroused?

That's not fair, mom
Of course it was hard
to watch
the rape scene....
But she did it
to prove to her dad...

And the movie makers
what was their purpose?

Why do you suppose
they put that scene
in the movie?

Oh mom,
I know
you think they did it
just to make more money....

You sure know how to ruin
a good movie!

Evaluation of Art-Informed Self-Inquiry

The questions that come up for me now are: Have I answered all my research questions? And how should art-informed research be evaluated? As I shared in discussions and shared my work with my children, I was convinced that the poetry and story I wrote were authentic and art-informed, both in terms of the research process and representation. Each of my children, in their own unique way, was very supportive of this project. Because I am exposing many of my own vulnerabilities as an individual and as a mother within this writing, their support means a lot to me.

In considering the features that Borone and Eisner (1997) suggest are ways of evaluating art-informed, text-based research, I hope that my work represents all the features that they describe. I hope that I am creating a virtual reality that evokes meaning for readers, and perhaps encourages them to consider their own experiences in new ways. I attempt to use expressive, contextualized and vernacular language. I hope to promote empathy and to evoke emotion. My work carries my personal signature, in that it very clearly represents "the negotiations between the author and the phenomena under scrutiny" (p. 78). Finally, I believe that there is a presence of aesthetic form, in that each of my poems and story centres on an issue or dilemma that produces a kind of tension within my experience and representation of motherwork.

In addition to these features, I have several hopes. I hope that the poetry I write is seen by others as 'good' poetry, in that it "persuades and moves the reader", and "plunges the reader into a believable world in which past, present and future merge into a single but complex interpretive experience" (Denzin, 1997, p. 210). In addition to this, I hope that my work is inspiring. For women and men who parent, I hope that my work inspires them to search their own experiences, to discover their own insights, knowledge creation and learning. I hope my work assists them to give themselves credit for this very hard and undervalued work. For women and men who have been parented, I hope that this work inspires them to consider ways in which they have been shaped by their own experiences, and to give credit to their primary caregivers (as they are able to), who, although they were undoubtedly imperfect, may have struggled enormously as they were parenting.

A further goal I had in doing this art-informed self-inquiry was to develop a greater self-knowledge and understanding of how I have been shaped as an individual by my own experiences. As Denzin (1997) suggests, I wanted to 'take risks', and to prepare to do further research work from a standpoint that clearly puts me, the researcher at the centre of my work, through 'messy text', and avoids the notion that researchers are objective.

Chapter Four: Learn To Do By Doing

I didn't know I was so poetic!
- Carole

This chapter is about women's experiential learning and change. The site of learning is motherwork. Six women tell their stories about turning point moments or significant experiences of learning that centred around doing the work of mothering.

Comment on the Interview Process

I felt increasingly privileged and humbled by the experience of interviewing the women who participated in this project. I felt privileged because the women shared with me, some of their most vulnerable moments, emotions and thoughts. At least one woman told a story that highlighted feelings of guilt that she had never shared with anyone. Several women told stories that they felt they could not share with their friends, partners or colleagues. I also felt humbled. The participants appeared to have implicit faith in me as a researcher: to use their stories respectfully and accurately. I appreciated their faith and made every effort use my power, as a researcher and writer of their stories, respectfully and ethically.

By the time I began the interview process, I also realized the enormity of the task the women had so willingly taken on. Several of the women had written journals or extensive notes prior to the first interview, to organize their thoughts and stories. One woman discussed this study with her children to determine which experience stories would provide me with the most insight into her experience, learning and change. One woman shared an intimate letter that she had recently written to her daughter. Another shared her mothering poetry. As partners in

conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), we laughed and cried together, as we shared our mothering stories, our feelings, our thoughts and insights.

Comment on Representation

In this chapter, I represent the mothering stories. The formats I have chosen are poetic narrative and short story. In cases of poetic narratives, I have maintained, as closely as possible, women's whole stories. Therefore, this differs from conventional poetry, in that the words are not as economical as they would be in reflective poetry. Nor have I added any images or metaphors or other poetic devices. Where such poetic devices are incorporated in this work, they come from the women themselves.

This form does parallel conventional poetry, however, in the sense that I try to capture the intensity and emotion of the storytellers (Denzin, 1997). Furthermore, the stories are represented in verse, and maintain a certain wholeness and interconnectedness, through a process of poetic word reduction (Glesne, 1997, 1999).

In several cases, where the topics of more than one story centred on a similar theme, I represent them as a single narrative. For the most part I represent the women's own voices, using vernacular language (Borone & Eisner, 1997). Occasionally, verb tenses and the chronology of the transcripts are modified in an attempt to strengthen the flow of representation. Occasionally words are repeated in order to add emphasis (Glesne, 1997). In some cases, my own words are added. This normally takes place only in cases where a question is asked and where the response to that question would appear incomplete, if some of the words from the question were not added to the narrative.

Stories that seemed to have a more specific beginning, middle and ending, were, for the most part, represented as short stories (Denzin, 1997). Several of the short stories are written in third person. This is an attempt to provide differing perspectives, in the hope that this evokes different levels of identification for readers. In the case of one short story, I added to it after the second interview. This was because several significant and related events had taken place since the first interview.

In several cases, I shared stories and poems that seemed to have a relevant theme with the women (as part of the second interview, or in writing). Two such pieces are included in this chapter.

Caution to Readers

There have been times when I presented some of this work to audiences, where listeners have responded like this: 'Why does she feel so guilty?' or 'That must be really oppressive to her children!' or 'Why does she think her experience is so oppressive? It doesn't seem that different from every other woman's plight!' At those times, I have pointed out that we live in a society that blames women, and particularly mothers for many things. We as individuals, as women, as men, as mothers and fathers are not immune from the effects of mother-blame. As members of our society, we participate in this dynamic, which is continually reinforced by the media, by professionals, and all to often within families themselves (Kaplan, 1997, Caplan, 1989, Chodorow & Contratto, 1992). Therefore, it is tempting for listeners and readers to say, 'What's wrong with that woman?' and to judge her, yet again. This is not my purpose. My goal is to reflect, as accurately as possible, the stories, thoughts and emotions that the women

expressed. I invite readers to listen to those experiences, while recognizing the ease with which the work and experiences of women are judged, and yet, to withhold that judgment.

The societal impacts, the experience of mother-blame within patriarchal culture and motherwork learning are discussed in Chapter Five. In this chapter, theorizing is minimal. However, I provide a brief context about each woman, along with her stories. I have used pseudonyms to identify the women and their family members. All ages and number of years, refer to the occasion of the first interview. In most cases, I provide a description or rationale for the form I have used in representing the stories.

Anna

Anna is a 53-year-old white heterosexual woman with a British heritage. She was born in India, as a child of a colonial family. At the age of three, her family returned to England, where she lived until age 21, when she relocated to Canada. Shortly after her arrival in Canada, Anna married a man of German heritage. They have two children: Miriam, 21 and Jonathan, 19. Besides working as a mother, Anna has taught for many years and currently, is a principal in a Catholic elementary school in Toronto.

Anna is an articulate, creative thinker and a poet. I was immediately impressed with the care she had taken to tell her stories in a chronological and orderly fashion. I chose to represent Anna's stories as one poetic piece, with seven sections, each of which is based on a different theme. In addition to this, the work is two columns. Although this division is not always clear, for the most part, the

left-hand column represents Anna's experiences, actions and reflective thoughts. The right-hand column represents Anna's description of her darkest moments, her fears and her feeling of guilt.

Mum's Contradiction: Forever Love Forever Guilt

We were the first generation
to have control over nature
to choose whether and
when to have children.

I took a long time to decide...
made research of this
read baby books, Dr. Spock...
tackled it like a university credit:

I would be prepared...
everything was planned...
I was aware that having a baby
would change things irrevocably.

The birth of our daughter
was a very positive
and indeed,
nothing has ever been the same, since....

*****

Our second child was not planned.
In a moment of wild abandon,
I conceived.
It was a shock to my planning abilities.

I thought I was so smart,
so in control.

Nature got me.

One day, I was lying down
trying to nap,
with my little girl
jumping on the bed
around me.

I dozed off, and
woke up with...

"Oh God
there won't be enough love
for both of these
babies...."

Research of the time
indicated that children can hear
and sense things
in the womb.

I wished I could
wipe out that day...
wipe out that thought...

I had real guilt.

The doctor said (about my daughter)
"This one's a winner!"
I agreed.
I was passionate about her...

and I revealed to him
my deep dark secret.

But how could he understand?

It was such a visceral feeling.

I was so afraid
that I would not have
enough love
for this child!

We were among the invincible youth
of the 60's
We had this arrogance
and thought
everything would work out
perfectly....

I developed a real angst....

*****

Labour was intense,
the dilations quick,
and then, at the baby's final push,
a moment of euphoria....

They put him on my breast,
I had a quick look at him
and like a flash
it was gone!

I knew I could love this child....

And I thought
'maybe the spell is broken.'

But
I still have guilt over that thought...
...residual guilt....

*****

I began to realize that our children
had very different personalities.

Miriam was a very active
rambunctious infant.
She was like cotton candy...
I could've devoured her.

Jonathan seemed to be
very easy going,
more docile,
not demanding....

As he grew,
I realized he wasn't talking
while my daughter never shut up!

It sounds silly now, I know,
but sometimes
if she would be quiet for a while
and let Jonathan talk,
I gave her candy
or money as a reward.

In junior kindergarten
the teacher pointed out that
Jonathan was very quiet.
He had only one good friend.

When it was painting time
Jonathan's whole painting
was black....

I thought:
This has some kind of dark meaning!

I had this eerie feeling.

On a rational level I was processing this,
but on an irrational level
I felt this was bad omen...

I treated it as my guilty secret
I was ashamed....

*****

From grades five to eight,
Jonathan was in the gifted program.
He did very well at school.

So it was a surprise
that he never took
to high school.

He was in this huge factory
of a school....

Academically and socially,
he seemed to say:
'I don't want to be gifted anymore.
I don't want to be different.'

He would sit at the back of the class
and not get involved.

He became an underachiever.

There were a lot of
visits to teachers,
phone calls,

heart to hearts with Jonathan...
monitoring of homework....

And amazingly, he rarely resented this.

He didn't seem to know
what he wanted...
'just sort of cruised....

*****

He did make it to university this year.
His girlfriend wanted to go.
(She had to work harder
to get good marks.)
I think that really helped him.

We celebrated his 19th birthday
had a dinner party.

For me, it was a kind of watershed
I looked at him
at the head of the table:
he has done well!

*****

I don't think I'll ever be finished
mothering them!

I thought everything would work perfectly.
If we wanted something to happen,
we would make it happen.

There's a youthful arrogance in thinking
the world is your oyster!

But I have faced a lot of guilt...
the pregnancy was a total accident,
that evil thought during my pregnancy,
the black paintings....

Maybe we made the wrong decision
with the gifted program.
Maybe we didn't send him to
the right schools....

I've had to learn to let go:
let him make choices,
focus on our relationship.

(And, of course,
I know I should be letting go of this.
He's on a positive spiral now.
But if he doesn't get good marks,
all the guilt will
come flooding back!)

Hearing Anna's story had a great impact on me. The thoughts she described in her second pregnancy resonated with my own experience. Many years later, at Adler School, I saw a performance of 'Love Story'. This story provided me with a visual image of the power and possibilities of love in families. The next time we met, I shared this story with Anna. (This story can be adapted to suit any family structure, and I have adapted it here, to coincide with Anna's family.)

Love Story

(Equipment: two long candles in holders and two shorter candles in holders. Matches.)

Two-year-old Miriam was feeling very left out. A few days earlier her mother had brought home a brand new baby boy. Miriam felt confused. She had been so happy with her mom and her dad in their lovely home. Now everything felt upside down. Mommy was too tired to tell her stories, and the baby was always crying or being changed or fed.

One evening after mom put the baby to bed, mommy said: Miriam, honey, I have a story I want to tell you about our family.

These candles represent our family. *(Picks up one long candle.)* This is the mommy candle. This one is for me. This flame represents my love. *(Lights candle.)*

This long candle is the daddy candle. When I met your daddy, I gave him all my love. *(Lights second candle with mommy candle.)* And look! I still have all my love left!

Miriam, this candle is for you. *(Lights smaller candle from mommy Candle.)* When you were born, I gave you all my love. And look! Daddy still has all my love left, and I still have all my love left, too. *(Picks up smallest candle.)* This candle is for your baby brother. When he was born, I gave him all my love. *(Lights smallest candle from mommy candle.)* And look, you still have all my love. Daddy still has all my love. And I still have all my love left, too!

That's how love is: you can give it all to everyone you love, and still have all your own love left! Now look at all the love and light we have in this family (Adapted from Nelsen, Lott & Glenn, 1993)!

Joanne

Joanne is a woman of Chinese heritage who came to Canada 11 years ago. She is married but like many Chinese immigrant women, she and her husband found they couldn't make ends meet and that her husband could not work in his own career, as a result of immigration. Therefore, after half a dozen years of struggling, he returned to Hong Kong and is, what has been dubbed, an 'astronaut' husband (Man, 1996, Sheppard, 1998, Fong, 2000).

Joanne, now a 'virtual single mother' (Sheppard, 1998), works in an administrative role, in an office in Toronto. I found her to have a very philosophical, goal-oriented outlook on life. Joanne also seems to feel singly responsible for her children's well-being, and focuses on her own self improvement as a key to their progress. Her children are Andrew, age 19 and Gina, 14. I have represented Joanne's stories as one poetic narrative.

Mothering Perils: Work and Sleep

Two years after we arrived here,
we started our own
restaurant business.

I had to devote a lot of time to it.
It left no time for the kids.

And then,
whenever we had time,
we had to entertain ourselves;
otherwise life seemed so dull.

Sometimes we got together
with friends
to play Mai Jong.

My daughter was still little.

Before I had my daughter,
I had lots of time to care for Andrew.
He got lots of attention from me.

But my daughter didn't get enough.

*****

We were in a new country.
I had my new job.
We owned this restaurant.
There was a recession.
Then the price of houses went down!
We lost a lot of money!

(In Hong Kong, my husband
had a good government job.
He lost a lot of income,
and self-esteem.)

We fought and argued.

*****

Gina watched all these happenings.
She was neglected,
because we were too busy coping!

The teachers complained:
she's not sociable;
not attentive in class...
not participating very much.

I blame myself too much,
I know.

I had no control over those things,
but I was worrying about it.

I kept hoping my daughter would get better.
I knew I should stay with her
...talk with her more
...read books.

I didn't have time!

Every time I came home,
I was so exhausted,
I'd go to sleep.

Work and sleep...
work and sleep...
work and sleep....

*****

It was very confusing,
the feelings...

Because the intention of us moving here
was to have a happy family.

And to spend our new life together.

That was our goal.

But, we were not doing well,
and we suffered a lot.

*****

Well, I always think:
What do I want from life?

I want a happy family.
I want my kids to grow healthily.
I want to give them a happy life.
That's all.

And that was not happening!

I asked: What are we doing?
I'm working hard...
my husband's working hard....

Our dream didn't come true.

*****

So I was thinking
I want to change our life again.

But in order to change something,
you have to sacrifice.

Since I was doing well,
(I had cemented my own job here)
and my husband was not doing well,
I thought, maybe he'd get better job at home.

So, after we closed the business,
my husband stayed in Hong Kong.

I think it is better this way.

Since then
he has gained his faith back,
and he is satisfied with what he's doing.

*****

So now I try to work with the kids.
I care for their health.
I cook good meals.
I give them a balanced diet.

It is very hard,
but I think it is good for them....

So I try my best.

*****

But my daughter
was still having problems
at school.

She didn't participate in class.
didn't cooperate well
with the teacher.

I talked to the principal.
and requested that the school
get a psychologist
to talk to Gina and find out why
she isn't doing well at school.

The psychologist and the teachers said
she has language problems.

But Gina started Kindergarten
in this country
and she was very literate.

Then they tested her hearing
and rated her ability to do work.

They prepared a report
and everything was fine.

They couldn't find a reason...
but I know, I think.

I have a "mother diagnosis".

And I think this problem
must be coming from
her background
...her family....

She was neglected most of the time,
because I didn't have
a chance to talk with her
like other moms do;
to ask her what she's doing at school,
to help her with her homework,
to listen to her.

*****

So now I try to stay working with her.
I listen to what her problems are.
I talk to her
I try to stay with her all the time.

And I see a big improvement!

And then, I let her have a dog.

(Keeping a dog is a big sacrifice for me)
I don't like it.
I really hate it,
but I know she likes it.)

The dog is a companion for her.
When she comes home from school,
there's nobody at home,
only the dog.

Of course, I do most of the work...
Give him a bath, feed him.
And then there's dog hair,
all over the house!

But it has been good for her:
she is learning responsibility,
and about life
by taking care of him.

It is true,
after we had the dog,
she's been more open
and sociable with friends.

She seems to have more confidence.

Now she told me that
lots of people like her.
She feels important!

And she is doing well.

*****

How did I figure it out?
I didn't get much help
from the principal or the teachers.

I talked to my friends.

I read books...
I always read books
when I come across a problem
that I cannot discuss
with my husband
or anyone else.

And I've always had an interest about
why people do this and
why they do that....

Human behaviour interests me.

Because I think:
people have a purpose,
and I want to know,
what is the purpose behind them?

And then, I always try to find a goal...
a goal for my life....

And I think I learned something
from years of life experience....

I believe strength can give you success
and weaknesses can make you fail.

So I observe people's strengths and weaknesses,
and try to work on my weaknesses
because I have only intentions
of getting better....

And silently,
I set a goal,
and improve myself.

Carole

Carole is a 45-year-old, white, heterosexual, single mom, with a conservative Mennonite heritage. She was married for nine years to a man of Ecuadorian Hispanic origin, during which time they had two children. Currently, Marianne is 16 and Jason is 11. Although the children live primarily with their mother, they can go back and forth freely between their parent's homes, as both mom and dad live within the same community.

Carole, a remarkably reflective thinker, currently describes herself as middle-class. However, she has experienced much financial hardship, loneliness and poverty on account of her separation and divorce. With virtually no economic support for herself or the children, from their father, she spent time on welfare, during the economic recession of the 1980's. Carole describes this as a time when many white, middle-class, educated women turned to the government for social assistance, a view that is echoed by Kitchen (1997). Carole was fortunate to be able to return to university and obtain a teaching certificate. Currently, she teaches in the public high school system.

I have represented Carole's storytelling by poetic narrative and short story. In the poetic piece, Carole's actions and experiences are in the left-hand column, while her reflections on those experiences are on the right. The short story maintains a first person perspective, using primarily Carole's own voice. In the story, Carole's experiences and actions are written in italics, while her reflections are in normal print.

Under the Umbrella: Living a Shattered Dream

I was buzzing around
under the big umbrella of my life;
teaching...
and being hit
by rigorous curriculum changes;

...my daughter and I fighting,
arguing, shouting at each other,
every single evening....

Finally Jason said:
"I can't take this anymore
You two are making me sick."

He had been sick a lot this fall,
nauseated...
I wondered what was going on...
'couldn't figure it out.

Well, Jason's a pragmatic fellow,
...very matter of fact.

So I took his words to heart!

I utterly, utterly resent
having to cope
with all these things
alone.

I don't grieve the loss
of my ex-husband,
but the loss of that dream.

Who would have thought that
at forty-five,
I'd still be struggling
to make ends meet;

...wouldn't have my own place,
...some greenery...

and there's no end in sight.

I was bitterly disappointed,
angry...

and I think what happened,
when dealing
with the kids was...

I got impatient...
irritable...
totally over reacted.

That set Jason off,
and it clued me in.

I always thought we got along
easily and well.

Now he was sobbing.
He said "Things are so bad here,
that they are interfering
with my ability to concentrate
at school....

All this upset at home
that was at the back of my mind,
has rolled to the front
and I can't do my schoolwork
any more."

I thought,
"How much more can I change?
I'd better figure this out real fast!"

So I did.

*****

I took it one day at a time:
...no impatience today...
...no fighting...
...none for the next hour...
...the next minute....

It was very hard for Marianne.
She didn't want to give a damn
about what her brother was saying....

She is extremely personable...
colourful...
dramatic...

But I told her,
"We must do this for your brother,
and right now."

I stepped up my visits
to counselors....

I couldn't have survived this long
on my own without them...
but there's still a stigma
in needing them.

But it gives me people
to interact with.

I've so little time for socializing,
and I think one of my key feelings
has to do with loneliness.

It is so intensely deep.
I long for a very close friend
or partner.

One person
who would be there for me.

(But I lack the energy,
even to make plans.)

Well, Jason was desperate.
He was sobbing and saying:
"I don't belong here!
I don't belong at my dad's
I have no place where I belong."

We have this idea
that they'll just adapt...

and there's a level to which
they do adapt,
but I think
divorce is hell for kids....

Often I console myself with the fact
that it's better this way
than it was in the marriage....

And, of course,
there's no looking back.

You see, I had this vision
of what would happen
under my umbrella...
I had
expectations
dreams
hopes....

And now this incident with Jason.
It really devastated me.

He's a wise boy, and
I'm sorry he had to
'hold it in' for so long.

I certainly learned something
about myself,
from this incident!

I grew up in a day and age
when life was based on this dream of
marriage
having kids
raising them together....

I suppose I'm still using that
as my measuring stick.

Then I lose sight
of how much
I've accomplished...

because I'm focused on
where I'm not getting to....

But my dream is shattered.

Single parenting is hard,
horribly, horribly hard!

*****

It's been a big, big shift for me
and it's not over yet....
(Because, the other day
Jason said his Christmas wish was
for "a peaceful family.")

...and...
in floods the guilt....

Leave No Stone Unturned:
Navigating Modern Medicine's Obstacle Course

Marianne got the flu just before Christmas, the year she was 13. She had been very tired and run down before that, and by Christmas, she was so ill that even light hurt her eyes. She couldn't hold a glass of water to her lips. She was ill through the whole school break.

In January, she seemed well enough to go back to school. She attended school for four days. Then she crashed. We had a naturopath at that time, who suspected chronic fatigue, and did some tests. But, she said it's not called 'chronic fatigue,' unless it goes on for more than three months. Instead, it's called 'post-viral syndrome'.

In speaking with the naturopath, I knew I had to get a traditional doctor involved: for blood tests, and to rule out anything treatable, like lupus, mono or leukemia. With that, we connected with a whole host of medical and health practitioners.

Repeatedly, we were faced with: "Are you sure this is chronic fatigue? Isn't that rare for someone this age?"

We went to 'Sick Kids'' (Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto), for some tests, in an attempt to pinpoint a diagnosis. Meanwhile, Marianne was getting more and more tired.

My sister came over from Japan. We wanted to go and visit the cousins in Kitchener. But Marianne was so tired. What to do? I know we set her back by making that trip, but I didn't know any better at that time. She just got sicker and sicker.

I don't remember how we got connected to all the people in the health care system. It's a bit of a fog by now. But I do remember being hit with an absolute brick wall in the traditional medical community. Very few medical doctors were recognizing chronic fatigue, because it doesn't have any measurable symptoms or diagnoses, as yet. I'm just thankful that we'd already been introduced to alternative health care approaches.

We were referred to a pediatrician. By the time we left his office, I intensely disliked him.

He said, "Mom, your daughter's depressed. She's been off school. Depression breeds depression. The more inactive she is, the less able she is to become active. Get her in to see a psychiatrist!"

I said, "Thank you very much. I don't think my daughter's playing games here! Something serious is going on and I don't think it's a matter of just telling her to get up and go to school. I don't think depression is the key." We got up and left!

One of Marianne's teachers recommended a pediatrician up at Wilson and Bathurst. That was like leaving town: forty-five minutes from here, and no fast way of getting there! She didn't believe in chronic fatigue either but thought it might be fibromayalgia.

I am tenacious and persistent. Give me that! I also know that the driving force behind my tenacity comes out of a place of guilt. I will not have my children stigmatized by some label! I also know that there is so much that they don't have,

just because I'm a single mom, that I'm hell bent to make up for it. That's where my driving force comes from. So I won't leave any stone unturned, and I'll keep working until it's uncovered, and I've figured this out!

The pediatrician measured and tested. "Yes, it's probably related to fibromayalgia," she said. "This is what you need to do with Marianne. Get her up. And every day, add on three more minutes, five more minutes, and in a week's time you'll have her up for 20 minutes, walking."

And I'm going: "Whoa! She can't walk for two minutes! How is she going to force herself to walk for twenty?" So again, another doctor was saying mind over matter, let's get going mother, get her out there....

I went through a period of not being so sure of myself. At this point, I got in touch with a woman, Lina, who was our general practitioner at one time and then went on to practice psychotherapy full time. She and my minister, Mary, had walked along side me through some of the hardest parts of my separation and divorce. Then Lina went on to U of T to do a psychiatric degree. I knew she was back in the business and so I called her up and said, "Lina, can you help us?" And here she was, specializing in environmental illnesses, with chronic fatigue among them

It seems Lina sees chronic fatigue as environmental, the clinical immunologist sees it as an immune disease, and the naturopath sees it yet other terms...

One day, Lina, called up the pediatrician and said, "With chronic fatigue syndrome, it has to be like this...."

When I went back to the pediatrician she apologized. She said, "I was going too fast. I understand it better after talking to Lina." She needed to talk to somebody who spoke her own language and had credibility in her own eyes. And with that, the people involved started to grow.

I spent thousands and thousands of dollars and my father kicked in five thousand. I went into debt for the rest. In retrospect, it was worth every penny. I wouldn't have done it differently. I totally cleaned out the savings I had so carefully eked out.

(I'm a believer in every grain of sand is how we get the damn beach! Five bucks, ten bucks, 20 bucks and soon I had a hundred. I could get some GIC's for a couple of thousand. You know, a thousand for this kid, a thousand for that one, and another thousand. Even on welfare I was saving money, because I was cooking from scratch. I didn't take a taxi. I was sewing. I was mending. I was careful about what I spent all the damn time. I hated it. I was so frigging tired of it all!)

So now I was going to see a specialist at Sick Kids'. I know that as a single parent one is very much categorized there, so I dressed up.

I thought: "I'm wearing a suit and taking this kid, looking well dressed!" You have to do these things to deal with the ideology that's out there.

The doctor kept us for four hours. After two hours I said "I have to get this kid home to bed. She's going to be a month recovering from this."

"Oh, don't exaggerate!"

"I'm not. If you don't believe in chronic fatigue, we must go!"

Well, we waited some more, and when we finally got to see him, his bottom line was that he didn't believe in chronic fatigue.

"Excuse me? Why the hell did you agree to see us when you knew that was why we came? Why didn't you refer me to one of your colleagues who does?"

"Well, none of us subscribe to it," he said, and then he began to give me this sermon.

I said: "Mister, with all due respect, my daughter is very ill." And we walked out.

When I get backed into a corner, look out! In my marriage, I sort of went into this corner and felt trapped. Maybe I'm the parent who'd better give up custody of these kids. Maybe this man is right. Maybe I'm not so balanced. Maybe I am going crazy. But then, I realized that I wasn't crazy and I started to fight back.

So by the time Marianne was ill, it was like: "If you can't be kind an generous, get out of my face!"

You know, if I'd had a little magic wand that extinguished people, there would be so many people gone, just gone! "Watch what you say! Watch what you do! Be nice!" I was quick to lose it, because my stress level was very high, and there was no reserve.

With Marianne ill, there was so much to balance and straddle. 'So many balls to keep in the air; every part of me was juggling. I just kept turning off any extra stress! Anybody who didn't agree with chronic fatigue, who wasn't going to be supportive, or who whiffed of challenging me, was shown the door.

But, my attitude paid off. In fact, that's how we got home care. I went to an infant baptism for some friends and one of the other guests was seated at the same table, and we got talking. I told her what I had going on, and guess what? She was the intake worker for children who needed home care!

And I said, "Oh nice to meet you. And when can I call you?" I called her the next morning, and it was a done deal. That's how we got a homemaker and a nurse to come in.

(Marianne had been spending days at home alone. Legally, she could be alone at 13 but she had so many symptoms of fear. I thought, if there's anything we can do to make her well, we're doing it.)

Well finally, with Lina and Mary's encouragement, all the professionals started talking to each other. Instead of contradicting each other's philosophies, they began to work together. Marianne's health became their common focus. And very slowly, her health improved.

In retrospect, there are many things that are good and strong in our life situation here. Often I tend not to see them because I'm too busy looking at what is lacking. I never thought of myself that way, but I came to recognize it and am making an effort to focus on the positive.

I think what women in these situations need to know is that there are different philosophical approaches to health care. And I would say, to those who face similar situations: "Believe in yourself. Be tenacious. Just pick and choose what you think is going to work for you and go for it!"

Carla

Carla is the 46-year-old mother of Christopher, 16 and Matt, 14. She describes herself as Lebanese Canadian, is white and has been married for many years to the children's father, a man of Scottish Canadian heritage. Carla is a delightful and articulate storyteller, and in both interviews I found that the time flew by, and that we had taken considerable more time than I had anticipated. I added to Carla's first story after the second interview, as Matt's medical problems were continuing.

Carla has not worked for pay outside the home since her first son was born. She sees mothering as a career, and is thankful for her economic status and privilege in being able to work in this way. Carla is also very generous and sees the mothering role as more than just taking care of her own children (Ruddick, 1989). As a result, she is very active in the community, volunteers in her children's schools, visits people who are ill and is often found driving other children to the places of their activities.

I have written the short story in the third person, as a way of looking at Carla's situation and experiences from a distance. Because I chose this perspective, this story is my interpretation of Carla's words. Therefore, it does not maintain the close connection to her exact language and voice as the poetic narrative piece does. The poetic narrative is written in a form that flows back and forth from left, to right, to left again. This is in keeping with the theme of the story Carla told, where there is considerable back and forth movement within relationships.

Matt: the Miracle Boy

Christopher was two when Carla took the shot. An infection was causing some alarm. "Are you pregnant?" asked the doctor, "Because, if you are, we can't give this injection to you."

"No, absolutely not!" retorted a confident Carla.

Achieving a successful pregnancy hadn't been easy for Carla and Bill. They had tried for over ten years and following the loss of an ectopic pregnancy, Christopher was born. Given Carla's history, and the fact that she and Bill were using recommended precautions, the risk of pregnancy was minimal.

But before the month was through, Carla was scared. Like a teenage girl who misses her first period and knows its potential significance, Carla panicked. Carla and Bill were busy people. They kept a hectic schedule. While Bill worked, Carla provided primary care to Christopher. She also provided considerable care to her aging mother (who needed a lot of emotional care) and her dad. Having a baby at this moment just wasn't in the plans. And then...there had been the shot.

A series of medical appointments followed. Before long, the possibility of abortion was raised. Although the decision was left to Carla, it was clear that there were risks to a continued pregnancy: the possibility of deformity, mental retardation, maybe more.... And the window, within which the decision had to be made, was small.

The doctor was supportive. He understood Carla's anxiety and knew how involved she was in providing care to her mother. Leona, Carla's sister, who was a nurse, also provided support. Leona provided a medical perspective but assured Carla that she would support whatever decision was made. Bill's support was quiet but solid.

Carla's anxiety mounted. One night, around three a.m., after trying unsuccessfully to sleep, Carla called the Distress Centre. Emotions were high. The woman at the other end of the line was a mother and an understanding listener. Not really remembering the conversation, Carla knows only, that by morning, the cloud was lifted. The decision had been made and fear was no longer an issue. Carla forgot about her struggle and the risks, and after an uneventful pregnancy, Matt was born.

But within a short time, it was clear that Matt was a very sick baby. Matt resisted Carla's comfort, cuddles and closeness. Carla feared that, at some level, Matt knew that he very nearly wasn't born and that he would never accept her love.

Caring for Matt was hard work. In short order, he faced several surgeries. Then there was to be eye surgery, after which several hernias appeared. Shortly after, while doctors still debated whether Matt could handle the two operations at once, the hernias disappeared.

In the meantime, Carla's work in providing support to her mom and dad, and the care of growing Christopher continued. Often, she provided meals for her parents three or four times a week. Other times, she chatted on the telephone with her anxious mother for four or five hours at a time, trying to reassure her. Carla's life became a haze because of her frantic pace of activity.

Although Matt had a healthy appetite, by three and a half months, everything he ingested started to come up like a fountain. It was constant. Not just after eating, but anytime Matt would move, it would flow. He arched his back and wouldn't let anyone hold him; it seemed to hurt too much.

The doctors began sorting out major problems with his stomach and esophagus, trying to figure out how to proceed when a mole appeared on Matt's foot. Carla, who had a particular affection for babies' feet, had photographed Matt's feet at birth. It was clear. There had been no birthmark. The mole was new and it was growing very rapidly.

While checking out the possibility of cancer, Matt faced a stomach operation. The valves on the top of his stomach had, for some reason, stopped working. "Eighty-five to ninety percent of children who develop this condition are also mentally retarded," said Dr. Evans, a specialist at Sick Kids'. "Maybe Matt can help us, by providing some feedback on this condition as he gets older so we can find out more about it."

By the time he was four, Matt had been to sixteen doctors. More ailments developed. Certain foods, like cucumbers, green peppers and hot dogs caused problems for him. More and more surgery was scheduled. Each time they saw a new doctor, the discussion went right back to the shot.

Then at one major surgery, he lost a lot of blood and had to be transfused. That raised a whole lot of new issues. Not long ago, a letter from the hospital arrived. "If your child is still alive..." is how the letter started. From there it continued, "and if he is alive, there's nothing we can do, but keep him comfortable." Testing, for both Hepatitis C and the AIDS virus was not an option, the letter insisted on it. They had left no doubt that this was something very serious.

Now, at 14, Matt's medical problems continue. Having had several concussions within the last year, Matt often finds it hard to concentrate at school. Yet, he is driven to succeed and always completes the schoolwork he brings home.

Recently, when he wrote a paper for an English assignment, his teacher said that the paper was written at an OAC level. In front of the whole class, she questioned him, asking him for specific definitions of words he had used and accused him of handing someone else's paper. (She thought maybe Matt's brother or mother had written it for him.) Matt, who gets flustered easily and is not quick to defend himself in the moment, was devastated.

Carla decided to confront the teacher on behalf of her son. She wrote a long letter. In it she said, "I've always taught my children to give it their best, regardless of what they are doing. But by suggesting to Matt that he didn't write that paper, you are really encouraging him to underachieve."

The teacher called Carla, and after some discussion, indicated that she had observed a disparity between Matt's work in the classroom and the work he did at home. Although Matt had told her that the concussions and his health were impacting his ability to work in the classroom, the teacher had not believed him, and had assumed that he was cheating. She apologized, and thanked Carla for the way she had handled this situation.

Most recently, Matt's gums began to bleed. At first, Carla suggested that he brush and floss harder. The dentist thought everything was fine. Then, one

morning, Matt said, "You really have to see this, mom!" When Carla turned to look, blood was pouring out of his mouth and his bedding was covered in blood.

This time, the dentist was alarmed. Matt was sent to see a Specialist, who indicated that this was, most likely, a systemic blood disorder. He prescribed some antibiotics, and asked them to return in a few days. Carla, in her usual persistent way asked, "What exactly do you mean by a systemic blood disorder?" With some hesitation, the doctor indicated that these were most often the symptoms of acute leukemia.

To Carla and Matt's relief, at this point, after blood tests and a biopsy, all tests have been negative. While the bleeding has subsided, the debate continues. Could this have resulted from a virus he had last winter? From the shot? No one knows for sure.

Does Carla feel guilty, knowing that all these medical problems could have resulted from the shot? "No," she says, "absolutely not." After that conversation with the woman at the Distress Centre, she never gave it another thought. While it is possible that Matt's medical conditions resulted from the shot, Matt's birth and life have been a miracle.

Through the years of caring for Matt, Carla has learned to be strong. Never, through the many years of bleeding, operations, incisions and hospital rooms, has she allowed herself to feel faint or squeamy as she would have in her earlier years.

Carla also learned to adapt. Prior to Matt's birth, Carla had lived a planned, ordered and structured life. Dealing with Matt's ongoing medical problems and the resulting emotional strains, while looking after Christopher and her own parents required her to "go with the flow." Carla spends less time trying to control life now. She lets life happen and focuses on what she can do in response to problems as they arise.

Further, she has learned to confront authority figures. Once she had a knock down, drag out battle in a hospital, when a male doctor berated a nurse in front of Carla. "You were totally unfair," said Carla, relying on inner resources she didn't know she had. "You were wrong to treat her like that for something she didn't do."

At first the doctor challenged her back. He wasn't used to being challenged by women, especially mothers of his patients. But later, he came back and apologized, saying, "You've taught me something, today, Mrs. C. I won't do that again."

In reflecting on her story, Carla says that if she were to meet other women in similar situations, she would tell them to let their decisions of what to do "come from the heart." "And when that decision is made," she says, "trust it. Don't question yourself because you made the best decision you could at that moment."

Love Christopher, Love Mom

It all started when Christopher
fell in love with Kirsten.

He truly believed they would marry
and live happily ever after.

Christopher was thirteen.
He was very emotional
and I could understand
the heads over heals kind of love...

but I didn't realize
what this would lead to.

Christopher had always been
very good at home,

If I said
"Your homework has to be done
because you've got hockey tonight,"
it was done.

And the telephone...
it had never been an issue.

But, suddenly
it became very difficult
to hang up the phone...
to get homework done...
or even to get to hockey on time.

I wondered why,
all of a sudden
were these a problem.

One day he said,
"Why do we have rules
in the first place?"

Then he progressed to
"I don't like you:
and then,
"I hate you".

At that point,
alarm bells went off
and I was, "...like okay,
I think it's because of the girlfriend
and this relationship."

But if I would even mention it,
I would get
"You blame everything
on this relationship!"

So I tried to back off.

Then I got to the point where
I didn't back off...
and it became a stand off.

When I make decisions,
I find out as much as I can.
I do research,
so I won't jump to conclusions.

Well, it was the first part of the school year
and there were teacher-parent interviews.
So I asked the teacher
"How is he in class?
Is he a discipline problem for you?"

Because I feel
the teacher is responsible
for the learning.
But, as a parent, I am
responsible for the behaviour.

And in the past I'd always heard
"Christopher is a delight!"

This time I heard:
"The girls sure like him!"

I knew there was a concern.
So I said: "Kirsten."
And when I said her name,
the teacher sat bolt upright, like
"You said it, not me."

And what I got from that conversation was,
"You have a right to be concerned!"

Soon after, Mrs. Smart, a teacher
who was also a personal friend of mine,
(because our boys played soccer together),
met me in the hallway.
She kind of hinted to me about
"Oh Christopher's got this girlfriend...."

I said
"Yes, I'm not very happy
about the situation.
With that, she said,
"I'm glad you're in tune with this,
because there's a home environment there
that's very different from yours."

By this time
I was very concerned about
what Christopher
was doing at lunchtime.

You see, my rule was
you can't go into a house, unsupervised,
when there are girls there...

and I knew that the rule was being broken.
He was going with Kirsten.
So I mentioned my concern to his teacher.

Shortly after, I got a directive from school,
that the children were not allowed
off school property at lunch time,
unless they were going to their own homes.
Well, Christopher was furious.
He felt that this was an invasion
of his rights.

The gap between us was widening.

I volunteered at the school, so
I was very close
to some of the girls in his class.
One day I picked them up
on the way to school.
(Christopher wasn't with me).

And one of them said,
"Christopher's really changing
(and I thought: that's a very brave thing
for a thirteen year old girl
to say to an adult)
and I said, "In what way?"

"Well, Kirsten's kind of rubbing off on him...
like...he's always been so happy,
and now he's moody..."

Shortly after,
I met Mr. Sanders
another teacher, who is also a personal friend.
He mentioned, trying to be casual,
that things had been a lot better
at school, since 'the incident'.

And I asked,
"Oh, what incident was that?"

Well, apparently these two
had been hugging and kissing
in the school yard
in full view of many children.

They had been called in
to the principal,
who said that this behaviour
was inappropriate.

I was very disappointed that
Christopher did not tell me about it,
because up until then,
he always had.

Shortly after that,
Christopher told me
about another incident.

He and his friends Michael and Jeremy
went to Kirsten's house for lunch.
Kirsten decided to do a fashion show for them
and try on her prom dress...
and other things.

And to this day,
I don't know what happened.
But I know that
even Christopher was uncomfortable.

He said:
"I don't think
Kirsten should have been changing
with three boys in the house.

I was extremely upset
because these were teenage boys
with raging hormones.

Well, Kirsten would call the house
and I'd say
"It's after 10:00 so
he can't come to the phone."

And she'd say
"Well, why can't he?
I'm still up!"

"These are the rules in our house."

Often she'd hang up.

Finally after many such incidents,
I said to Christopher:
"Your grounded from the telephone.
Not just from talking to Kirsten
but from the phone."

Well, a couple of days later
Kirsten started to call persistently:
every half hour,
and I'd say
"He can't come to the phone.
He's grounded."

She would challenge me.
One day I said,
"If you want to talk about this,
I'll get into it,
but I'm not sure you want to go there,
because I'll be very direct."

Now, Christopher had told me
that she was suicidal
and very unstable...

He had said,
"I have to talk to her,
because I don't know
what she might do..."

That had been his reason
for never hanging up.

And another thing he told me
was that Kirsten said
he could do whatever he wanted
to her body.

That really upset him...
He asked why she'd say
a thing like that.

And he was sure it wasn't only him
that she was saying these things to,
She was beginning to play Michael and Jeremy
off against Christopher.

It wasn't so far fetched
that she might do something...

And when I started talking with her,
she cried.

So I asked her if her mother was home...
I wanted to be sure there was someone
there for her.

And at one point in the conversation
when she was quite upset, I said:

"Kirsten, I'd really like to talk
to your mother
because I don't think it's fair
that I'm upsetting you
and she doesn't know why
or where it's coming from.

Well, at first she said
"I don't want you to talk to my mom."

"Well, I can't force you,
but I really think it would be better
for the whole situation."
And very reluctantly,
her mother came to the phone.

I said
"I'm very sorry Kirsten is in tears
but there are some issues..."
and I tried to talk about this.

It was clear,
she wasn't aware of the incident at the school...
and as we talked I could see,
we were going no where!

I mean,
I know there are different parenting styles,
but when she said,

"Well, Mrs. C., it's the nineties...
get with it..." and
"We have no rules,
we're free spirited."

It just blew me away,

Because up until this point,
I had been questioning
my own mothering skills,
and occasionally I had backed off a bit.

Now I didn't back off....
I thought "Damn! I'm right.
I don't care if they like my rules.
I like my rules."

Christopher still didn't like me,
but he did open up just a little bit.

You know, there was a little bit of light
at the end of the tunnel.

Then my father died.
Christopher was devastated.

You know, my father was the one
who took him everywhere:
...registered him for baseball
...took him to every practice
...every game.

He talked to Christopher,
...was like a father to him.

Well, Christopher turned to the girl he loved.

And her comment was:
"Well, I never really knew your grandfather
and I kind of feel bad,
but gee, I'm really having trouble
with my dad..."

I think that's when he saw the light.

One day he said:
"I realize Kirsten is very selfish
and my concerns are not an issue for her."

Slowly, he began to back away....

And very slowly,
our relationship got back on track.
We survived.

In the months that followed,
we talked a lot about my dad.
After, he'd often say,
"Oh, boy, mom, we almost lost what we had."
The turning point for me?
It was like a slap of water...
I mean:

Why would I give up my rules
for people who don't have any rules
or structure?

Besides, my kids did have a lot of freedom
The rules were pretty basic:
school, homework, sports commitments...

and respect
for somebody else's need for the phone....

I began to see that
my rules are right for us...
and I'm doing this because I love them.

In retrospect,
I've become more patient....
I've learned to say
"I love you" more.

And if I were to come across someone else
in a similar situation
I would say:

"Reexamine your rules
to see if they are reasonable.
And if they are, then,

tell your children you love them,
be consistent and

Stick to your guns!

Rita

Rita describes herself as Mulatto. She is the 43-year-old mother of seven children between the ages of 14 and 26. She has five grandchildren. Rita came to Canada 13 years ago and has worked for most of those years, as an administrative assistant within the public sector. After 25 years in an abusive marriage, her husband left and returned to Trinidad. It was at this point, and in keeping with the findings of Hemmons (1995) and Randolph (1995) and Razack (1998), that Rita, as a single mother and woman of colour, along with her sons, experienced their greatest hardships in relation to the painful realities Canadian legal system.

Rita's stories are represented as one poetic piece. This narrative is centred on the page, to signify, in a visual way, the many ways in which Rita has learned to centre herself as a woman, to trust herself, to speak out and to fight for justice.

Courtroom Heartbreak

My oldest son, Ricky
got involved with these kids....

He was already in high school
back home
but here he had to start all over.

We moved quite a bit...
it was hard
money wise...
a new country...
commitments....

It took a toll on the kids.

Ricky always had friends.
He exudes a charm.
He's more lenient with younger people;
tends to take them in
like a big brother.

*****

When Ricky was seventeen,
his friends came by with a car
He asked, "Where did you get the car?"
One of them said,
"My uncle's here and
he told me I could drive it!"

So he got in with them.
Of course, Ricky didn't have a licence.
So he just sat in the back
and they went to the uncle's place.
Well, my son and another boy
were still sitting in the car,
when they saw the police coming.

So Ricky went to the house.

He knocked on the door
and the door pushed open.

He went inside and said,
"There's police and stuff outside...
something must have happened!"

Meanwhile, the police are coming in the back door.
And the Officer says,
"Who are you?"

"I'm Ricky"

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm here with my friend at his uncle's house"

Well, it wasn't his uncle's house.
Unbeknownst to him,
his friends were breaking in,
and the car was stolen.

*****

Yep, "Aiding and abetting!"

Well, he had to go to court.
It was before Easter
and my husband had just left.

We wrote to legal aid.
But, they asked for all these documents...
information from his father
who was back home.
And we ran out of time.

I didn't know what to do.

I was ignorant, you know.
I didn't know anything about the law.
I had never been in court.

(Well, only once...
with my ex...
when the kids charged him...
Actually the police charged him...
with spousal abuse.)

But I didn't know what to do now.
So Ricky said
he would defend himself.

*****

Lo and behold,

the judge said...
"You were the oldest of the boys,
and you should have known better."

"Well, how could I have known better,
when I didn't know it was going on?

The judge said:
"They all say that....
I will have to incarcerate you!"

The policeman in the courtroom
tried to help.
He said, "Ricky was very cooperative.
He told us everything.
His prints were nowhere in the house;
only in the back of the car."

Even the legal aid lawyer,
who happened to be in court tried to help.
He said: "Your Honour, if it pleases the court
I would like to help my friend here,
because he has no representation."

But the judge said:
"He has to defend himself.
Sit down."

Then he asked:
Are your parents here?"

The judge asked me if I had anything to say.
Well, I was in tears,
and I didn't know what to say...

Then he asked,
"Where is your father?"

And it didn't look good.
Here is this single mom
with seven children....

*****

The judge just looked at us...

and

BANG!
It was done!

They took him straight to jail
in handcuffs.

It was heartbreaking
People in the courthouse were flabbergasted!

I think the judge made an example of him.
I'm sure if we'd had a lawyer,
he wouldn't have done one day.

*****

Well, Ricky was still in school
and by now it was May.

So I begged them at the facility:
"Can he do his studies?"

But no.
They would not allow it!

"What do you think this is, ma'am,
a school?
This is prison.
This is where kids go
when they do wrong!
Don't you know that by now?"

...like I'm stupid...

Ricky kept calling me...
"Mom don't worry, this place is good....

You know what we're having today?
Barbecued chicken, rice, beans and salad.
And we're having ice cream and cake for dessert."

I said, "You're eating better than we are,"
because we couldn't afford much.

"Well then, what are you worrying about?"

I said,
"Ricky, don't make this out
like it's a vacation."

*****

After a month and a bit
he came home.

But by then everything was topsy-turvy.
Ricky had lost his self-esteem.
He felt he wasn't worth anything
and he kept harping on:
"The justice system is not right!"

His teacher called me:
"Ricky's a good student!
He will pass.
Just tell him to come to the course!"

But it had been hard on him.
You could tell by the look on his face,
He was withdrawn.

Oh, he would go to school
today
but not tomorrow....
Then he might go the next day...
and he might go
another day....
But eventually it tapered off to once,
maybe twice a week.

I pleaded with him,
but what could I do?
Walk him to school every day?

Then I'd have to quit my job,
and then,
what would happen?

I was barely keeping a roof over our heads.
Then, the lights went
the phone went...
the gas went...
and no money to pay the bills....

And Ricky was just sitting around
doing nothing.

*****

Recently, he got into a little tiff
with my new husband
because he was just sitting around the house.
Jim said, "He can't just sit around here all day.
He has to get a job!
I'm not going to support anyone
who won't help himself!"

Jim even offered to drive him around to places.
He took him out once or twice.
Ricky applied to an agency.

He worked a day here
a day there....

Mostly he was in this routine:
watch TV all night,
sleep all day.

*****

One day, Ricky said,
"I want to go home
'leave this place...
and be with dad."

And I thought...
'Gee wouldn't it be nice, if,
instead of me having all these problems
and fighting all the time...

and, life is a little more laid back there.'
He'd been giving me some money
to save for him.
I only had to put up a very little amount
for a ticket.

I said,
"I'll give you that money
if you want to go there for Christmas."

And I thought...
once he gets there
I'm going to talk to his father.

So Ricky went to Trinidad.

And I told my ex,
try to convince him to stay,
because he's not doing anything here,
and it's not a good example
for his sisters and brothers.

Well, Ricky was angry!
He called and said,
"You're the one!
You told them to keep me here!"

But by then,
He'd lost his passport
which means he can't come back.

Not unless I sponsor him again.

*****

Then about a month ago,
he called me.
He was working.
He's happy.
He's with all his uncles,
who are young, like him.

He's enjoying that.
He's actually happier there...
and he called to say,

I was right.

*****

In thinking back on this experience,
I learned that,

SOCIETY STINKS

(pardon my language, but it does.)
I had to learn that the hard way.
I got no help!

Nobody even volunteered
to tell me about the system.

And it's really messed up.
The system is not nice to people.
It's not fair.

Not fair at all!

But I did get something out of it.
I got more self-esteem
I'm more assertive now.
It's changed me as a person.

Next time, I would be stronger....

(I was always softy,
a mush bucket kind of person.
Now, I've learned to put my foot down,
even with my kids....)

I felt so powerless in that courtroom
when I didn't know what to do....

And when he was in jail
I couldn't do anything for him.
Everywhere I turned,
doors were shutting in my face.

I was stereotyped:
single parent...
single mother...
woman of colour....

Oh, they judged me.

After my first husband left...
I felt sorry for the kids.
I felt guilty.
I still feel guilty.

I feel like I'm the reason they don't have their father.
And sometimes I still feel
like I should have sacrificed...
'stayed with him,

'Even if it meant my death.

But, I am happier
and stronger now.

Even the children are more relaxed.
Because with my ex
there was always a tension.
We never knew
when he would explode
and cuff someone....

*****

Unfortunately,
there was a next time.

Ricky, my daughter Natalie,
her girlfriend
and my younger son Chad
met this guy.

I was still having a hard time keeping
a roof over our heads.
They had cut the phone and the gas.
We had no hot water.

(I used to boil water and take it to the bath.
Believe it or not,
sometimes I couldn't be bothered.

I'd take a shower in the freezing water.

It's okay, though.
It numbs your skin
and feels hot.)

Well, all this affected the kids.
So the four of them met this guy
who encouraged them...
if they needed money to pay off bills,
he knew how to get it:

by breaking into someone's house.

Now Ricky had been through it
innocently the first time,
so now, I guess he figured he could do it
and get away with it.

Well they broke in
(unfortunately, just two streets away).

One of the girls
who happened to live opposite that house
went to school with Chad.
She saw him, and called the police.

They even knew what they would take
a computer
VCR
big screen television
camcorder...

The police came
while they were taking this stuff out....

And they ran.
They ran.

And they all got away.

*****

But, the police
came to my house that night,
asking questions.

The girl had ID'd my son,
so they knew it was him.

They took all four of them
and kept them in cells
at the police station...
didn't feed them...
didn't give them water...
nothing.

My daughter got sick.
But they didn't care.

It was winter.
'Freezing cold!

(When they came to the house,
my son had been sleeping.
They took him out
in little boxer shorts
and a T-shirt.
'Wouldn't even let me give
him a jacket.)

It was cruel.

*****

Now the police came and brought me in,
at one o'clock in the morning.
They told me to talk to Chad,
to get him to talk.
So I tried to talk to him, and wondered
why isn't he cooperating?

Well, he obviously knew more than I did,
because he said:
"Why am I going to talk to them
and incriminate myself?"

And I'm thinking,
"Is this my son talking?"
...like he's telling me stuff
that I should be telling him.

Then the cop outside,
who was very nice, said:

"Chad is a Young Offender,
and if he doesn't want to talk,
they can't make him.
My suggestion is, get him a lawyer.
He will get free legal aid.
He's entitled to it."

When I spoke to Chad,
I told him this.
But he'd already spoken to a lawyer
and the lawyer had said,
"Say nothing."

Well, they let the others go,
and Chad pleaded guilty.
He wouldn't tell them who the others were.
He said,
"That's your job. You find them!
I'm not going to tell you who they are."

And I thought,
"Wow! He's so brave."

Well, he took the rap for all of them.
He got community service;
100 hours.
And he was on probation for a year.

*****

Well, when he got out,
he moved in with his girlfriend
downtown.
He was working there,
doing odd jobs.

And do you know,
the police were out for him....
(By now he was older,
and he had gotten out of that mess
as a Young Offender.)

And one day, they came to ask him questions.
Only they didn't ask him questions.
They just hand cuffed him
and took him in.

And he said, "What did I do?"
And they said,
"Oh, there was a break-in in Mississauga,
and the guy fits your description."

He was in court the next day,
and I had to hustle to go.
I tried to talk
but the judge wouldn't let me.

He said,
"Oh, she's a single mother with seven children.
That's the problem with these single mothers.
They have to work and
they can't look after their kids
and then the kids knock about."

You know, he was judging me!
I felt so low.

And, the same as with my older son,
right there and then,
they took him to jail.

Well, I was walking out of there
shaking.
I wanted the judge to hear me.
I shouted:
"He's racist. Can't you tell?
The man's a racist.
He wasn't judging my son.
He was judging me!

I want to charge him!
I want to do something.
I have to be heard!"

You know, he had no evidence,
except that an older woman,
in her eighties or nineties
said, "That looks like him."

*****

Now, isn't life funny?
My older boy got jailed
the first time
for something he didn't do.
The second time when he really was there,
he got off.

Now, my younger son got off
the first time, when he was there,
and the second time
when he knows nothing of what happened,
they jailed him.

It's the justice system.
It's so messed up.
I'm wondering if it
needs a strict overhaul....

*****

And of course,
I couldn't really tell people at work
what happened.
You're afraid to talk about it.

Then you have to take all this time off,
and go to lawyers...
go to court...
and then they postpone it all for two weeks.

I couldn't tell my manager.

I didn't even tell my family.
Well, I told my mother,
because she kept asking,
"Where's Chad?"

And I said,
"He's in jail for something he didn't do."

"Well, aren't you going to do something?"

The only part I wanted to do something about
was that judge, judging me.

That really took me.

It was when he said:

"Oh, she's a single mother with seven children.
that's the problem with these single moms.
they have to work and
they can't look after their kids
and then their kids knock about...."

These men, judging women...

They don't know anything about
what it's like to be a single mom.

They actually have it easier in a family, too.
Like, their dad,
even when he was here,
if there was a problem in school
I would have to go.

You know,
he had perfect attendance at work,
because he never took a day off
over the kids.

Now I'm on this
attendance program,
because I'm the one
having to take all this time off...
and when my vacation time runs out,
I use sick time.

I call in and say, "I'm sick."
Meanwhile, my son's in court again.

That's how my vacation went
for two years.
Court and lawyers.
Lawyers and court.
And school.

*****

Well, it's made me realize
the world is not
such a nice place, after all.

This is serious stuff.

And then somebody makes you feel
like you're a nobody.

It just keeps on niggling away
at the back of my mind...
that man sitting there on his high throne,
like he's God.

It's hard to fight them, because
they get all the perks...
they know all the ropes,
and you're just at the bottom...

No, life is not very nice
and it's less nice for women,
less nice still for single mothers,
even less nice for vulnerable children,
and children of colour....

You're just at the bottom
of the heap!

*****

If I met another woman
in a similar situation,

I would tell her everything!
I don't want to see this happen
to innocent people.

I'd say,
"Take notes.
Try to call for a mistrial!
Go for Freedom of Information:
try to get records of
what was said."

And I'd say,

"Fight for him,
fight tooth and nail
fight the system, tooth and nail....
Do everything you can!
Don't sit back and take it!

Because they'll walk all over you."

Kate

Kate is a white, 40-year-old mother of two children: Tina, age 14 and Tom, age 11. Kate, who was trained as a Registered Nurse, worked for many years as a Public Health Nurse and currently supervizes others who work in that field. When Kate came out as a lesbian about four years ago, she found that she had to redefine, to a large extent, what mothering was for her.

Kate's stories are represented as two poetic narratives. In the first narrative, the left-hand column represents the story, and Kate's actions and words, while the right-hand column represents her daughter's words. The second narrative is written with a right-hand margin. This is to visually reflect the many ways in which Kate took actions that pushed against the boundaries of societal norms.

Loss of Innocence

Tina was in grade four
when she came home from school
and said:

"Something bad happened
but I can't tell you!
It's a secret."

I knew she was upset, so I asked:

"Well, what can you tell me?"

"My friend was crying.
She was over by the fence in the field
and she told me something.
But she made me promise
not to tell."

So I tried to get to the story
around the promise
that was made.

"You know, Tina,
some promises
are important to keep
and some promises
are important not to keep.

It depends if someone is getting hurt."

And she told me that this little girl
told her she had been raked.

She used the word r-a-k-e.

Well, her friend had been raped.

Well, I know that kids tell stories,
but here was a little girl
doing this formula;
separating herself from the kids at school
crying, upset
and has sworn her friend to secrecy.

And I'm thinking "Oh my God!"

So of course,
I went through the process of telling her
that I was going to have to tell somebody
and who I would have to tell.

I think she was quite happy
to have someone take it out of her hands.
I think she understood
that people have to deal with this stuff.
And, of course her little friend
didn't come back to school!

The turning point for me was
the shock,
that at the age of nine
my daughter was facing
the reality of abuse
that many women endure.

*****

Now Tina is fourteen.
She has a little dog,
and because we don't have a fenced in yard,
she has to walk her.

One day, it was getting dark out
and she told me she was going
for a walk in the park.

I said:
You can't go to the park at dark.

And of course, being fourteen,
she said,
"I'll be fine."

It got to the point where I had to insist
"I'm just not allowing you to."

We talked about what people are like
when they are alone in the dark,
and the difference between a group of kids
on the sidewalk in the day,
and the group that might be
drinking in the park at night.

A young girl
wandering alone
in the park at night
is an opportunity.

Are we teaching
our daughters to be afraid?

The message that is dumped on us
from our culture says:

"You're a girl.
And you have to do all the work
to make sure you're not victimized."

As mothers, we get this job
even though we're not the source
of the problem.

Our social values
become secondary
to basic survival.

And we get stuck
carrying this balance around,

because if we don't teach them
this vigilance
our daughters
will be vulnerable.

Reclaiming Motherwork

When it was becoming obvious
that I was becoming lesbian,

(I had managed to keep that underground
for a really long time...)

I knew that I had to deal with it.

I had stayed in a
"maybe I don't really have to"
phase for while
because I knew
that this would be very costly.

And of course,
the dilemma in that early stage was...
I'd been teaching my kids:

"You have to live who you are!
People may like it or not like it,
But you have to be true to yourself."

Now I was going to have to
actually go and live that out.

It was a very difficult time.

The part that alarmed me
was how strongly I knew
that I wouldn't be able to
"not live it out"
once I had allowed it to surface.

I'm just not a very good liar.

*****

A huge turning point
in that process occurred
when I went to a lawyer
and told my story.

He said:
"If you leave at any point at all
without the children,
then you won't get them!"

I had no means to take them with me.
I had no where to go
and I had no financial ability
to create a place
to go with them.

You know the place of mother
is very fragile!

What really hit me
is that as long as I stayed in the context of
husband, house and home,

the "middle-class hetero world"
then my rights were okay.

But as soon as I stepped out of that,
everything changed.

*****

My husband knew
what I was planning to do,
and he was deteriorating
rapidly in his ability
to cope in any acceptable manner.

You know
I think he was a good father,
He just wasn't being a good husband.

But I was in survival mode.
I just couldn't keep it underground.

I lived in Waterloo for a little while,
with my sister.

I was doing what I had to do
to get where I needed to go,
but not put the children
through any more than I needed to.

That meant I was choosing
not to be with them.
That's a big no-no
in the mothering department.

And taking them out of their home community
seemed selfish
(another big no-no for mothers).

I felt very trapped.

Finally I left.

Technically, I've got joint custody
but my time doesn't reflect that,
because they still live
with their father, in that community.

I see them one day a week
and every second weekend.

*****

Jane has been very supportive.
We're partners,
and we're committed to each other
and now we have a good
'back and forth' thing
worked out with the kids.

*****

Children have to live
within the context of what's around them,
and although their dad
would never directly say
nasty things about me,
for the longest time,
he wouldn't speak to me.

He'd come to the door,
and just not acknowledge me.
He set them up not to trust me,
and it's taken a long time
to rebuild that trust.

*****

What I have discovered
in almost four years
of being a mother
who's not there,
is that mothering
in this culture
is all wrapped up with
being there...
with routine
and custodial,
every day stuff.

I've had to redefine
what mothering is for me.

And to reclaim the fact that
I am still an advisor,
a sort of guide person.

I am the person who cares
who listens
who always backs them up
and is willing to share
...reminding them
where their boundaries are.

They can fall back on me in their crises,
and know that I'll give them heck
for doing wrong things....

But I'll be the first
to pat them on their backs
for doing well.

*****

If other women were facing this struggle
I would say

'Keep going
Sort it out moment by moment.

You can't decide the whole picture
at the outset.

But be true to yourself
and in the end,
you will have the reassurance that:

"This is really what I am,
this is who I am,
and I feel it to the core."

Reflecting on the stories of Kate and the other women, I was struck by the way in which women who mother learn to develop a greater sense of independence and autonomy. Contrary to much of the Western approach to learning and development, this learning is specifically linked to relationship and connectedness with those for whom they provide care (Merriam & Clark, 1993, Noddings, 1984).

In a subsequent conversation with Kate, she described her learning this way:

I've learned in the last while, partly from doing this with you, and partly from my experiences with Tina right now, is that I'm closer to my children than I ever thought I was, and farther away. You know, they're not mine. Those two things. That they're truly people, and they're not mine.... I don't own them, but they are my responsibility.

When I heard Kate's words, I was reminded of a poem in Kahlil Gibran's well-known work The prophet (1923/1993). I shared this poem with Kate. I close this chapter with an excerpt of Gibran's work.

On Children

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you (Gibran, 1923 1993, p. 17).

Chapter Five: Subsistence Learning

If I didn't do this (learning through storytelling),
I would still be cowering in my shadow.
- Rita

This chapter analyzes the process and products of learning that the women encountered while working as mothers. The four sections in this focus directly on the research participants, and links their experience to motherwork literature and adult learning theory. Section one examines some of the turning point moments where the women make deliberate changes to the ways in which they do their work as mothers, to take action or to contest social norms. Section two focuses on women's lived experience and knowledge creation in relation to their location within society, and explores how the participants learned (or are still learning) to come to terms with their own experiences in the face of societal expectations. In the third section, I look at the participants' care-giving as a site of learning that is grounded in relationship with the 'other'. This includes an exploration of how women work toward maintaining communication with their children, the goals of mothering and how women took action in ways that benefited children beyond their own. Section four explores the women's reflections as part of their learning process. This includes reflections on what advice they have for others who encounter similar situations, on having been parented, and their views on issues of gender, race and class.

All quotations from interview participants in this chapter come from the original transcripts, rather than from the poetic works and short stories. I often leave these transcribed texts lengthy because I want to interpret experience that

authenticates the richness of participants' stories (Josselson & Lieblich, 1995). Some of the themes and stories represented in these quotations will sound familiar This is because many of them reiterate transcribed text that has already been represented by poetic narrative or short story in Chapter Four. However, reading these texts in their original form will provide readers with further insight into exactly how the women responded, as well as the way in which the transition from transcript to creative writing was made. Quotations from the interviews are in italics, to differentiate them from the analytic text. Where my questions are included in the quotations, they are in italics and bold.

The transcript from my self-inquiry interview is added to the conceptual data for this chapter. I identify myself as 'Marie' and in this chapter, and for the purpose of analysis, write about myself in the third person. The titles for most of these sections and subsections are direct quotations that come from participants' transcripts.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

This study was inherently structured to look at moments of transformation or turning points moments. According to Denzin (1989), Western thought is deeply entrenched with the notion that life is shaped by such epiphanies and that individuals often mark their life stories by recounting such moments. Therefore, many of the participants' stories centre around women's specifically recalled incidents or activities that involve informal learning (Foley, 1991, Newman, 1995).

I found, in keeping with Mezirow's observations (1990, 1991), that these moments most commonly centred around disorienting dilemmas that created

conflict. Often these were "moral or ethical dilemmas that involved some levels of challenge to oppressive social structure, or to previously held notions about what mothering would be like" (Barg, 2000). In some cases, these moments (at least retrospectively) centred around specific words that were spoken or heard, or around specifically defined moments of insight. Other times, contrary to Denzin's observation, these epiphanal experiences were process oriented and did not have a single defining moment.

All of the stories of transformation began with an experience, and involved some forms of reflection, conceptualization and application or action (Kolb, 1984). However, as Hart (1992) indicates, life-centred learning goes beyond that and draws both poles of reality, so that the individual's subjectivity, "her own desires and purposes become part of a process of reflecting and acting on the objective world" (p. 156).

In this section, I link some of the turning point moments to adult learning and motherwork literature. I begin by identifying 'moment oriented' turning points that resulted from questions or statements of children, which subsequently led moms to learn, to change or to take action. This is followed by significant turning point moments that centred around conversations with others. Finally, I will look at one of the more 'process oriented' transformative experiences that was identified.

Out of the Mouths of Babes

Carole describes her busy life as a single mother and caregiver of two children. She indicates that there was a lot of fighting and shouting between herself

and her teenage daughter. The turning point moment for Carole occurred in a conversation with her son:

Jason said, crying, "I can't take this any more. You two are making me physically sick." He was sick a lot this fall. He was nauseated so often. But I couldn't figure out what it is. He is lactose intolerant, and I asked, "Are you getting milk somewhere that you are not aware of?" that is affecting him a day later? 'Cause he's no longer so sensitive that it affects him the same day, it's twenty-four hours later, sort of the residue in his system. Well I wondered... what's going on with you and your dad... I talked to him about things. "No," he said, "it's you and Maryanne fighting and arguing."

Jason's statement stopped Carole in her tracks. The personal dilemma that this moment created for her, was that her son was suffering.

Gilligan (1982) indicates that as caregivers, we often "equate responsibility with the need for response that arises from the recognition that others are counting on you (sic) and that you are in a position to help" (p. 54). Here, Carole recognized that a change in her own behaviour could contribute to her son's well-being. She goes on:

He wasn't being overly dramatic; he was so straight up. So, when Jason talks about these kind of things we really listen because we know that he is saying is very much what he means. So, I took that very much to heart....

For Carole, this was the moment when she decided to take action to change her own attitude and behaviour for the benefit of her son. It is a moment of interpretive learning (Newman, 2000), where Carole develops a deeper understanding of the human condition and of why people do things.

In one of her stories, Kate also cites a conversation with her daughter as a turning point moment. While for Kate, this moment also centred around taking responsibility, Kate's learning was not so much about changing her own behaviour

as about recognition of her location as a woman raising a daughter, within the greater society. Talking about her daughter Tina, Kate says:

She wasn't very old, and she came home from school and she said "Mommy, I have to tell you something. It's a secret.... Something happened and I can't tell you...." So I said, "Okay, why can't you tell me?" And she said that she'd promised not to tell.

After some discussion about promises, (Kate tells her daughter, *some promises are important to keep and some promises are important not to keep, it depends if someone is getting hurt),* she hears that her daughter's friend was raped. Kate goes on to articulate how this moment impacted her:

But the turning point for me was this shock that at the age of probably about nine, here was my daughter faced with the reality of this abuse that women can endure, or do endure, at this young age.

As a result of this disclosure from her daughter, Kate has to "judge whether intervention is called for" (Ruddick, 1989, p. 85), and subsequently reports the situation to the appropriate authorities. Kate is deeply saddened at the recognition that women and young girls become the keepers of the embodied knowledge (Gustafson, 1999, Michelson, 1998) that they must protect themselves and each other from abuse. This is another example of interpretive learning (Newman, 2000) that resulted from what Brown (1992) has identified as masculinist prerogative power within our society.

Marie, too, identifies an epiphanal moment that centres around a conversation with her daughter. Her daughter was in grade five, when she asked:

"Mom did you murder that baby?" and it was such a weird question because, like when did I murder a baby, and what baby are we talking about?

(Marie had sustained a miscarriage about five years earlier, which she had described to her daughter as a 'spontaneous abortion'.)

It was like... this is coming from somewhere, and I had never had an in depth discussion with Elana about abortion. It was sort of like, what's happening here? So I asked her, "What baby are we talking about?" And she said, "You remember that baby you said you were going to have and then you said you had an abortion?" And I... like we were just driving home from some activity or something, and so I kind of drove for a while... kept driving for a while so that we wouldn't get home right away, so that we could keep it going while we're in it, you know, so that I could see where this is coming from and what was going on, and so she said her teacher, Mr. G. in the school that she was attending had said that abortion was a sin and people who had abortions... women who have an abortion are murdering their babies and that they will go to hell.

In keeping with Witherell and Nodding's (1991) description of care-giving, Marie's first response is to maintain an open dialogue, so she keeps on driving. In this way, Marie is able to learn more about what her daughter's concerns are, and it is this conversation that begins her journey to become less silent and invisible as a woman (Gustafson, 1998), and consequently to take action within the school system.

Like a Slap of Water

Carla describes a significant moment of change that results in a greater level of self-trust. While she struggles to provide preservative love (Ruddick, 1989) to her teenage son, who claims to hate her as a result of a relationship with a suicidal girlfriend, Carla speaks to the girl's mother.

The defining moment of that whole thing was the conversation with her, with Kirsten's mom. Because, up until that point, I questioned my mothering skills. I questioned everything I did. When she said, it's the nineties, get with it, and there was no concern there, I thought, "Damn, I'm right and you're wrong, and she was, "We have no rules in this house, we're very free spirited." And I thought, "I don't care. I like my rules."

...and I think it was then that I thought maybe this was going to cost me my relationship, but I think these are important. And I was bending my rules and it was suddenly so apparent. I mean it was like a slap of water. I mean, "Why would I bend my rules for these people for these people who don't have any rules?"

In a society that practises systemic mother-blame (Caplan, 1989, 1985, Chodorow & Contratto, 1992), women spend a lot of time questioning themselves, particularly in terms of the mothering choices they make. Here, Carla describes part of her process of moving from a place of questioning herself to a place of self-trust. As a result, she develops an "expanded sense of self" that results in greater "independence and autonomy" (Merriam & Clark, 1993, p. 134). Consequently, she begins to rely more specifically on her own judgments.

Between Then and Now

Like Carole and in keeping with Gilligan (1982) and Belenky et. al's (1986) observations, Joanne describes how she came to understand that she could be an agent of positive change in her daughter's well-being. However, Joanne does not describe a defining moment of insight or a specific turning point moment, but rather, a process-oriented change. Joanne came to a decision about what kinds of change she needed to make in order to provide the nurture that her daughter needed, over a period of time.

I think I passed the time with my son nicely because I tended to spend more time with my son. Because, before I had my daughter, he was the only kid at home, so I had lots of time to care about him. So I was able to keep up with his homework at home, because my mom was also living with me at that time. My son got lots of attention from me already, but my daughter didn't get enough attention when she was small.

The circumstances of Joanne's immigration resulted in financial difficulties. Consequently, both Joanne and her husband worked long hours and were not able to spend much time with their daughter. As many Chinese immigrant women do, Joanne supported her husband's return to Hong Kong, as an 'astronaut' (Fong, 2000, Sheppard, 1998), while she works in Canada and raises their children.

In keeping with Fong (2000) and Sheppard's (1998) views of Chinese immigrant women who become sole caregivers as a result their husband's return to Hong Kong, Joanne is very quick to take on all the blame for the fact that her daughter was not doing well in school. This seems to let her husband or the circumstances of their lives off the hook (Caplan, 1989, Fong, 2000). After seeking a lot of help from teachers and school psychologists to determine if her daughter had a learning disability or was hearing impaired, Joanne decided that if the family became more financially and emotionally stable, and if she provided her daughter with more attention, this would be of benefit.

Joanne goes on:

So, now I try to stay working with her and try to listen to what her problems are, and now I see a big improvement.... I am very pleased now that I have been working on this a year and then now, she becomes very open to me.

So how long have you been consciously working on communication?

Consciously about, I could say, one year. After I started my new job, and settled in with the new house. I could say one and a half years. I think that there is a big difference between now and then.

Joanne describes her own transformation as a mother as a gradual process. This is in keeping with Ruddick's (1989) view that maternal thinking requires an ongoing response to emerging situations and needs of children. For Joanne, this process, which continues beyond her story, is grounded in flexibility and care-giving based on what she perceived her daughter's ongoing needs to be. She identifies no defining turning point moment.

Husband, House and Home

In this section, I examine women's lived experience, learning and knowledge creation in relation to their location within society. Because women have been subordinated and marginalized within patriarchal society, this includes an exploration of how participants learned (or continue to learn) to come to terms with their own experiences in the face of societal expectations of themselves as women and as mothers.

The Ideal Box

Several of the women who participated in this study, described how they were and continue to be impacted by what Carole calls the 'ideal box'. This is the 'box' of what our societal ideology is based on, which according to Thorne (1992), Fumia (1998) and Rich (1986a) is a white, middle-class, heterosexual, nuclear family where men are primary breadwinners, and where women look after the needs of their children as well as their husbands (Merriam & Clark, 1991). The numbers of families who fit this ideology is a small minority (Eichler, 1997). However, women who mother within this society feel the impacts of their own location in relation to this ideology, and find that it is often reinforced by friends, family, colleagues, and by professionals, whose advice or assistance they seek (Weiss, 1989, Caplan, 1989), as well as by their own distorted assumptions (Mezirow, 1991), as individuals who have grown up in this society.

Carole, a white single mother, says, that as a result of her single parenting, *the box gets narrower and smaller and more defined, and it also squishes one into a more defined place.*

Carole fought hard to maintain her own sense of dignity as a woman and single mother who was caring for a very sick daughter, when she encountered difficulties in relation to disparaging remarks from professionals within the medical system.

So here I was, going into Sick Kids', and I know that as a single parent one is very much categorized there, so I thought I'm dressing up. I'm wearing a suit, taking this kid, looking dressed well. You have to do these things to deal with the ideology that's in there. And this Doctor that we saw, kept us for four hours. After two hours I said, "We have to get this kid home to bed; she's going to be a month recovering from this." "Oh, don't exaggerate," he said.

Carole is facing the patronization that many women experience in relation to male and often, female experts who uphold societal ideals but are there to help them (Caplan, 1989, Weiss, 1989).

Carole is also keenly aware of the fact that how she had bought into the ideology of the 'ideal box', as a result of a heritage that focused on the church and a male-identified, monotheistic religion (Noddings, 1989, Saadawi, 1997). And while the church continues to be a major source of encouragement to her, she did learn that within the ideology that is often supported by this institution, women are supposed to be caring, loving, self-sacrificing, passive and invisible (Gustafson, 1998), while men are the knowledgeable and authoritative heads of households (Thorne, 1992). She describes the impacts of her beliefs in this ideology while married.

In my marriage, I sort of went into this corner and I felt so trapped, and maybe I am crazy, and maybe I'm not so balanced here, maybe I am the parent who better give up custody of these kids, maybe this man is right that I'm just this that, and the other, and all sorts of horrible things, but I realized by then that I knew that I wasn't.

Carole says that it was largely her own coming to terms with the end of her marriage, which she did with the assistance of friends, counselors and her minister, that convinced her to learn to fight back.

So you learned that through the ending of your marriage?

I think so. And so by the time Maryanne was ill, all of that I had lived, so angry, so much of the time, just throwing out the darts. If you can't be kind and generous, get out of my face. You know, if I had had a little magic wand that extinguished people there would so many people just gone. Watch what you say! Watch what you do! Be nice!

However, Carole also knows that she herself bought into the ideal box of the heterosexual nuclear two-parent family as the ideal, and that she continues to measure her own adequacy against that ideal. In keeping with the ageless views of Kidd (1959), Sarton (1961), and more currently, Mezirow (1990, 1991), Carole finds the 'unlearning' of this societal norm painful.

Do you think society is part of what's shaped your belief about what life would be like at forty-five?

Oh, for sure, for sure. I certainly grew up in the day and age when that's what one expected life would end up being, marrying and having kids and raising them together, and whatever else one would do, working outside the home or not.

And, now that you're... now that life isn't turning out like that, what are you... how do you make sense of that for yourself, about what life is and what life isn't like, as opposed to what you thought it would be?

I'm supposing that I'm still using that as a measuring stick and that's why I'm still so discontented. Because that dream is shattered....

The box that Carole describes gets smaller and smaller when the women are further from the centre of the ideology, not in a linear fashion, but as a result of the interlocking systems of oppression that are based on gender, race and class (Ng, 1991, Razack, 1998, Dei, et al., 1997). That is what Rita, a woman of colour,

experienced as a single mother of seven children, when several of those children ran into problems with the law.

Rita says that at her son's trial, after the judge determined that her son would be incarcerated, he said:

"Is your mother here? Are your parents here?" And he (her son) said, "My mother's here."

So then he asked, "Where's your father?" And his father went away, and, and it didn't look good, nothing looked good....

Here's this single mom...

Yeah, everything, yeah with seven children, and the father left her, you know, like... what's going on here?

And they make assumptions about you, don't they?

Yeah, they do. And so he gave him ninety days in jail, which meant he would have spent a month and a half, if he was going on good behaviour, or something like that.

Rita developed a lot of knowledge regarding her rights (and lack of rights) within the legal system as a result of having her son in jail, through the informal learning that resulted from this incident (Foley, 1991). Further, through instrumental learning (Newman, 2000), she began to develop strategies of how she could become more in control of her situation and environment. In discussions with family members, she considered options in how she could have responded to the judge. At one point, her daughter's boyfriend said:

"You know, you should have stood up and told them, he's in school, and if this is going to affect his school, what are you going to do about it?"

And I said "Are you crazy? You think I can just go and talk to the judge like that?" And he said "That is your right.... Didn't he ask you if you had anything to say? I said, "Yes, but I was in tears...." And he said... "Oh mom, come on.... You've got to be strong in these things."

Although Rita could have interpreted these as discouraging or judgmental remarks, she determined that she would learn to fight back and be stronger the next time. Unfortunately, she says, there was a next time. This time her son had been nowhere near the scene of the crime with which he was being accused. She described what transpired in the courtroom.

They didn't believe him. The judge did not believe him. It was a repeat of the first time, and I tried. I tried my best to think, you know, I was with him, to call me and to ask if I had anything to say. He never called me. He never asked me anything. So I motioned to the lawyer. I said, "Call me."

You know, the judge said, "That's a problem with these single... single mothers. They can...they have to work, and then they can't look after their kids, and then their kids knock about."

You know, I mean, he's judging me!

He is.

And I felt so low...

Little...

Yeah, and I felt like a thing. I didn't even feel like a person. I felt like, and I was, you know, Rose, I was so angry. I was walking out of there, and I was shaking.... I was talking very loud! I wanted the judge to hear me! I said, "He's a racist. Can't you tell the man is racist? Why did he jail my son?" I said, "Why is he doing this?" And I said, loudly, "He wasn't judging my son, he was judging me!"

At this point, most of Rita's children were grown up and the son being incarcerated was an adult, living on his own. Yet, the judge's attitude indicates that he buys into the societal myth that "motherhood is woman's central vocation" (Thorne, 1992, p. 7), in that he blames Rita for being single, for working (which in fact has supported and sustained her family) and for not looking after her children appropriately, against standards that are based on a what Brown (1992) has called a liberalist modality of power.

Although Rita still could not prevent her son's incarceration, her response in the courtroom and her quick recognition of the judge's racism indicate that she had learned, through her experiences that she could take some action in response to oppressive situations, to become her own personal agent (Maher, 1987) and to fight against social injustices. This was a first for Rita who says that up until this point she had always been a *softy and a mush bucket kind of person.* She also learned to look at society from a more critical perspective (Mezirow, 1991, Newman, 2000, Brookfield, 1998) and continues:

It's the justice system! It's so messed up! So I, you know, I'm wondering if the system needs a strict overhaul.

Kate began to feel the impacts of the 'ideal box' in a powerful way when she came out as a lesbian, having been in a heterosexual relationship for 17 years.

When it was becoming obvious to me that I was am becoming lesbian, I managed to keep that underground for a really long time. Underground to myself, you know. When I couldn't stay there any more, I certainly had to deal with, "Now that I know this, I certainly have to live it out." I stayed for a little while in that maybe-I-don't-really-have to phase, not very long, because it was just very obvious to me that it was too costly.

Kate knew that the change she was pursuing would be costly regardless of what decision she made. She describes her initial discussion with the lawyer as a *huge turning point.*

The advice she got from her lawyer was: *"If you leave at any point at all without the children, then you won't get them."* The lawyer was informing her of what would happen, based on societal attitudes based on a liberalist modality of power (Brown, 1992), which support the notion that lesbian mothering is an oxymoron (Comeau, 1999).

Kate, who had provided the primary care for her children for many years, with a largely absent husband, learned that her role as a mother was very fragile and defined by narrow societal expectations. Suddenly, everything in her life changed and instead of being seen as a capable and caring parent, she was seen as selfish and deviant (Gabb, 2000).

You lose all your status, all your power, anything that you have as a parent. You know, the mother, is just about this thin, and what really hit me is as long as I stayed in the context of husband, house and a home, sort of middle-class hetero world, then my rights were okay, I had rights and status as a mother. As soon as I stepped outside of that, that was changed around.

Kate did leave the relationship. She described this step as a *"big mothering no-no,"* given societal expectations of women who mother. Although technically she got joint custody with the children's father, she agreed to let her children remain in their home with their father, so that they could maintain a level of stability in their lives. She describes how societal ideology influenced her decision:

And then, the other option of taking them out of that is just sad, and it's just selfish, and as soon as you go over to selfish, it's all about you as a person if you become selfish, and that's another big no-no in the mothering department.

At this point, Kate says that she and her partner *have a good 'back and forth' thing worked out with the kids.* However, there are constant reminders of how Kate does not fit into the 'ideal box', which requires continual learning that is both instrumental and interpretive (Newman, 2000), in order to develop new responses to emerging issues. This notion is supported by Epstein (1999), who writes specifically about the experiences of lesbian families in relation to the public school system. Schools, she says, are among society's institutions that enforce social norms, and where heterosexual families and heterosexuality are privileged, while homosexual families and children of lesbians are marginalized. She states, "In

the face of the resurgence of conservative 'family values', and a lack of anything resembling government commitment to social justice, lesbian families, and others marginalized in the school system, face an uphill battle" (1999, p. 77).

Kate and others, who live outside this 'ideal box', face this battle in every segment of society. In this study, this phenomenon was also demonstrated by Carole, who faced it as a single mother, navigating her way through the medical system, as well as by Rita, who struggled as a single mother and woman of colour, in the face of the Canadian legal system.

The Perfect Mother Myth

As demonstrated earlier, our societal ideology has contributed to the "fantasy of the perfect mother" (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992, p. 191). According to Chodorow and Contratto (1992), this "idealization and blaming the mother are two sides of the same belief in the all-powerful mother" (p. 203), who is seen as singly responsible for how her children develop. As a result of such societal ideologies, women who mother learn to feel responsible for any difficulties that their children encounter. This phenomenon is often reinforced by professionals whose advice women solicit, particularly those who provide professional assistance to families, such as psychologists, doctors and teachers (Caplan, 1989, Weiss, 1989).

As described elsewhere, the level of expectation for professionalization of childcare has also increased dramatically in the last few decades (Eichler, 1988a, Arnup, 1991). Rarely, in the face of these high societal expectations, do mothers see themselves as 'good enough' (Ruddick, 1989, Chodorow & Contratto, 1992,

Caplan, 1989). This results from the patriarchally constructed ideology that separates social practices into binary opposites as described by Mies (1986), Christianson-Ruffman (1989), Eichler (1988b), and Irigaray (1990/1993). Further, it perpetuates the ideology of the 'good mother' and the 'bad mother' as the only two options for women who mother, a phenomenon which is continually confirmed and reconfirmed by the media, movies and other representations of mothers (Caplan, 1989, Kaplan, 1992). In the face of this ideology, women who mother "feel totally responsible for the outcomes of their mothering, even if their behaviour is in turn, shaped by male-dominated society" (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992, p.192). Some of the interview participants describe how they feel singly responsible for their children's well-being, how they feel blamed or guilty for any problems that develop in their children's lives.

Anna described visceral feelings of fear and guilt when she got pregnant unexpectedly.

So, our second child was not planned, he was a surprise.... I mean, it was, nothing failed us, we just were in wild abandon, and conceived. But it was... to find out I was pregnant was quite a, a sort of a shock to my whole planning abilities. Because, you know, I had planned everything so far to do with...

You were sort of in control of that...

I was in control. So, this was quite a shock, and I remember it was just such a physical shock to me that...I thought I was so smart, but nature got me, you know, or got us.

Anna's vision of perfection included an ideal of being in control of the occurrences within her life. Having grown up in the 60's, as a white middle-class young woman, she describes herself as having a *"youthful arrogance"*, which included an assumption that she could make things happen by choice. She had been

well prepared for her first pregnancy. In fact, she describes herself preparing for that pregnancy in a very self-directed way that is in keeping with individual, informal and self-directed learning as described by Foley (1991), Newman (1995) and Tough (1971):

I, you know, bought books; I listened to radio programs about this, and talked to people, so it was a very greatly researched thing, and then...

And what you're researching is what having children would be like, or?

Yes! Yes! Yes! I mean, I read baby books, I read Dr. Spock, all kinds of things... I mean, this was almost like... you know, I tackled this like a university credit...

Anna heaps a lot of guilt upon herself, as a mother with high ideals of perfection. Therefore, when she faced many struggles with her son, particularly when he was in high school, Anna continued to feel guilty. Now, even though her son is doing well and has entered university, when she reflects on her experiences, learning and change, Anna still questions herself and wonders if she did the right things. This supports the notion of Chodorow and Contratto (1992), who indicate that as a result of society's high expectation of what women, who mother, should be like and what they should do, many women question themselves constantly, even if they are doing a great job of mothering. In describing what her current learning consists of, Anna says:

I've had to tackle some issues and problems, and some I guess I could say, were successful, and some were never really resolved, or resolved to my satisfaction. I guess I've had to deal with more guilt than I had before in my life, over issues.

And the guilt was that somehow you were responsible?

Well, I guess the guilt was to start with, that I had that evil thought during my pregnancy, and then it goes on that I was not careful enough to not let Miriam overpower him. Then, that maybe we made the wrong decision with the gifted program, you know, letting him go, and then maybe that I didn't, I or we didn't

send him to the right high school, one that would have suited him. Maybe he should have been in a smaller high school.

Oh my goodness, you've got about five layers of guilt upon yourself there!

I have.

Anna describes herself as someone who was very influenced by the thinking of white middle-class youth of the sixties. This was a time when, according to Arnup (1991) and Eichler (1988a), expectation of professionalization for mothers increased significantly and a psychology based on individualism flourished (Greenspan, 1983). As a very analytical person, Anna reflects on how her ideals of perfection and her subsequent feeling of guilt resulted from the ideology of the day.

It was kind of like the world was your oyster because that thinking was very much up in the late sixties and early seventies. So, being that arrogant, and part of that was feeling that I could control things that happened in my life.

The first major thing was that I had one planned baby and the next pregnancy was not. It was a total accident, and then from there, you know, the guilt started creeping in.... For example, with the senior kindergarten teacher telling me about the black painting, I think it was the first time as an adult that I felt I had something to hide...

Anna says that as a result of her experiences, she learned, in a very embodied and visceral (Michelson, 1998, Gustafson, 1999) way,

that there are some things that are scary to share and maybe you do try to rightly or wrongly deal with on your own....

Consequently, she says, she never shared this story of how guilty she felt with anyone until the interview.

Marie, too, was very much influenced by the increased expectations of the level of professionalism for mothers and the belief that she was singly responsible for her children's well-being (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992). Therefore, when her

teenage daughter disclosed her bulimia, Marie felt that she was to blame and that she would have to change her style of mothering.

And I was just totally shocked. I was just totally, totally shocked. I thought I knew her very well, and that, you know I had worked very hard at keeping some channels of communication open. So one of the things I asked her, which was a totally stupid question right in the moment, was, why hadn't she told me about this before, and she said, "because I thought you would yell at me... or be mad at me" or something like that, and it was in that little moment that said... "if that's what my kids are thinking I'm going to be doing... is to be mad at them if they tell me their biggest struggles in their lives, and that I'm going to be yelling at them for it, then I've got to have a serious look here at how I do parenting."

Here, Marie blames herself for not being aware enough of her daughter's well kept secret, for asking stupid questions and for not parenting effectively enough, despite the fact that she says she had worked hard at maintaining open levels of communication with her teenage daughter

Marie experienced further mother-blame within the medical profession, when she and her daughter sought help.

And this doctor came in... young woman, not long out of med school, and she asked us what the nature of the problem was, and you know, being mother and all, I sort of explained it to a certain extent... but I was very good at letting Elana talk for herself; like I wasn't taking the story away from Elana... And, her (the doctor's) first response to me was, "I think that you should have Elana see a doctor by herself, and that you are overbearing and meddling," and that, that, somehow I was the cause, or causing all these problems. And basically, " You know, mom, butt out, you are the problem. You butt out of the problem. Elana and I (the doctor) should be dealing with this."

In keeping with Caplan (1989) and Weiss's (1989) observations, Marie (who had negotiated with her daughter, whether they should go to this appointment together or not) now felt blamed and accused by the very person from whom they were seeking help. The challenge for women in such situations, is, how to achieve a sense of balance, in order to get the help they need, even though they

feel betrayed and blamed as caregivers who are doing the best they can for their children.

Marie describes this balance. Instead of walking out immediately, as she felt she should, she stayed at the appointment, to see what kind of knowledge she could gain in spite of the discouraging remarks.

Well, she gave, on the other hand, all the signs...and physical signs of... like I didn't know all of the signs of, you know, the fingernails and the teeth. You know, what are some of the physical signs. Is it a very severe case? Or what stage are we at? And she (the doctor) did all of that, and she did that well, and we did determined from that that Elana did already have stomach ulcers which was a part of the problem, but she hadn't done damage yet, to her fingers or to her teeth, and too, the doctor said that those were signs that the problem was not as severe as it could have been, and that it would be much tougher to reverse at a later stage....

Marie and her daughter never returned to that doctor. Instead, both of them agreed to engage in some non-formal learning (Foley, 1991, Newman, 1995), in the form of therapy, so they could develop resources to manage this problem on their own.

I was already taking some Adlerian parenting classes, and beginning to study for my Master's degree, in counseling psychology, so I was sort of, already developing some levels of awareness in regard to these sort of dynamics, that I hadn't known before. And so one thing I did is, I found a therapist for myself, for my own support, and then found a different therapist for Elana, and then took her there, at the beginning, every time, and then later when she got her driver's license, because that was in the next year, I gave her the car so she could go and do as much of that on her own, and I promised her that I would pay for everything until we could, you know, sort things out or make things safer for her.

Marie places herself at the centre of the situation, and chooses to take action "by assuming personal responsibility for the choices to be made" (Noddings, 1984, p. 8). According to Noddings, this is based on a feminine ethic of care that seeks to pursue wellness for both the self and other. The danger in this ethic of care is that it is based very much on the individual, and as Noddings has indicated,

it is practised largely by women. Therefore, it can be very closely linked the societal ideology that mothers are totally to blame for the problems that their children encounter, while fathers, other influences and the societal structures are left entirely off the hook (Caplan, 1989).

Being There

Noddings (1984), describes the concept of care from a feminine perspective. She considers the contribution that the 'one-caring' as well as the one 'cared-for' make to the relationship. She suggests that caring and, therefore, mothering requires an ethic of reciprocity, not in the contractual sense, as it has been developed within the masculinist world, but in a moral sense, where efforts are made on the part of the one-caring (and increasingly by the one cared-for) so that both can grow, flourish and thrive. Her thoughts are echoed by Ruddick (1989) who describes 'caring labour' as a conscious activity that provides an ongoing or fluid response to the ever-changing needs of those being cared for. Hart (1997) echoes these notions and describes the work of caring as overwhelmingly burdensome because it requires such a "multitude of tasks, skills, abilities and forms of knowledge" (p. 135). The level and forms of this knowledge, however, are largely unrecognized within society. This is because of the gendered nature of this work, which is seen as 'non-work' (Waring, 1988), and 'natural' for women (Ortner, 1974, Rich, 1986b).

This section explores care-giving a site of learning that is grounded in relationship with the 'other'. I look first at how women worked at maintaining an open dialogue with their children. This is followed by an exploration of the goals

of mothering as described by the participants. Then I examine how some women took action as mothers, which contributed to the greater good or public effectiveness. Lastly, I investigate what participants learned from their children.

Keeping Doors Open

Witherell and Noddings (1991), indicate that one of the requirements of care-giving is to maintain communication or an open dialogue with those being cared for. Parenting self-help books and parenting courses also emphasize that providing care requires the development and maintenance of good communication (see: Shapiro, Skinulis & Skinulis, 1996, Nelsen, 1987, Bettner & Lew, 1992). Therefore, I found it significant that although no interview questions focused specifically on communication, all the women in this study described the importance of maintaining open channels of communication with children, to some extent.

Kate indicates that she modeled open communication with her daughter.

I'd always been very open with her.

Later on, when her daughter struggled with some difficult teenage experiences, Kate was thankful for the communicative groundwork that she had laid:

That's that thing... where if you keep the door open and be approachable, when she's not mad at me, then maybe she'll ask me these things.

Joanne also models openness in communication as a way of ensuring that her children will reciprocate:

I think communication is very important and I began to do this work again.

So you started off by telling them about yourself, as well?

And about myself to them, what I'm doing, what I learned from all these years. Just like I'm talking to you. I try to be friends.

For Anna, the value and nature of good communication was something she understood from her relationship with her father. She says:

...as a parent, and right from when I was pregnant, I had decided, (and I have a great role model in my father), that I wanted to have my kids grow up all the way through their lives, that we would keep our communication open, and they would always know that whatever happened, or whatever they did, that they could come to me and I would help them if I could, or whatever.

Carla describes how her children's level of communication often increased when she was driving her kids to their various activities.

So then you do get close to them because your in the car, and that's when a lot of this comes up, because I think you're in the front seat, and they're in the back, and there's no direct eye contact...So they talk more easily.

And then you get the music up, and then I end up turning it down or off, because they start singing and talking.

Finally, as identified in the section on turning point moments, Marie describes driving her kids as a deliberate strategy to continue important conversations.

Clearly, all the women see communication as one of the basic tenants of the caring relationship. Collectively, they pursue the goal of communication in an invitational way, so that children may choose to share their feelings as a result of mutually respectful, reciprocal relationships.

<u>What is their Purpose?</u>

According to Adlerian philosophy, the best goal that parents, teachers and other caregivers can strive for is to 'work themselves out of the job', not in the sense of separateness or total independence, but within a cooperative spirit that exudes social interest, collaboration, interdependence, democracy and mutual

respect (Nelsen, 1987, Shapiro, Skinulis & Skinulis, 1996, Dreikurs, 1971, 1989, Bettner & Lew, 1992). This concept is supported by Hart (1992), who suggests that the purpose of motherwork is to produce fully individuated children, who become increasingly autonomous as a result of nurture, care and monitoring. Noddings (1984) echoes this notion, and indicates that within the caring relationship, there is an ongoing goal that promotes increased self-care (to the extent that it is possible) of the one cared-for.

As my own goals of parenting were greatly influenced by these views, I was curious to see how other women articulated the goals of parenting. Therefore, as part of the second interview, I asked participants if they had overall conceptual goals as mothers. I was delighted to find how articulate the women were, in describing their goals. I was also surprised to find how closely many of their goals paralleled the concepts put forward by Adlerian philosophy, Hart and Noddings. This is an exploration of some of the responses.

Again, Anna refers to her father as the person who gave her a model of what she wanted to be like as a parent, which has contributed to the development of her goals. The theme of open communication continues in her articulation of her mothering goals.

...this is what I feel with my father, there's a kind of unconditional love that's been there all my life and it's still there, as old as I am, and it's an amazing feeling. I mean, it got me through childhood feeling... there were patches of my childhood that were difficult... so knowing that, I was hoping that I could approximate that with my children. That they could tell me anything and not be scared to tell me anything, and that I would be there for them, and that's my ongoing goal.

I think I had it articulated to myself, and I think it would be that I wanted to help my children develop to their potential, whatever that was and is, and give them a sense of unconditional love. That I would always be there for them, if I could, and

be someone that they would want to spend time with. And, that very early I think I wanted my children to be independent because I learned to be independent and I value that.

For Carla, the goals of parenting are very closely linked to her own development and coming to adulthood. She says:

...at 19, I moved away to London and moved away from being very, very close to my parents, and ran a house and ran a home and worked. And it all worked. So, I was responsible enough at that point. And that's what I'm really striving for, for my boys. To be able to make the right decisions. I mean, we're all going to make mistakes, but the big decisions and how to conduct yourself and treat other people. That's what I'm striving for....

Carole says her goal is:

to grow healthy, balanced, capable, solid, upstanding people with some depth and some strong sense of themselves.

Joanne is a very goal-oriented person. Prior to being asked about her own goals, she said:

I'm always asking why I'm doing this and why I'm doing that, because for people, they must have a purpose, and they must find out what is the purpose behind them.

...you think about what you are doing and why, and you also make very deliberate choices and goals and you go off with them... I can see that.

Thank you very much for your understanding. I am that kind of person. Because we all have experiences and we don't know what the life is ahead of us, after so many years of life experience and learning. Then I tell you what is the purpose and then I find a goal, a goal for life, and I think I learned something from what I experience.

When asked directly, what the goal of her motherwork is, Joanne describes how she is teaching her children to take responsibility for their own lives, something she says she learned the hard way:

Well, happy is the most important thing, and the second thing is that they can survive on their own...self-sufficiency and independence.... Don't ever depend on others to give you happiness.... Do not ever depend on others to keep your

happiness; you have to be self-sufficient. It's very important.... Don't ever think of depending. That was my wrong thinking in the beginning. You believe that someone will give you happiness, and you believe that someone can make you happy, but I don't think that is true because everyone is different. If you depend on others, it will be very miserable in your life.

For Rita, the goals of parenting are very closely linked to her experiences and the learning that she has described in her storytelling. So that her children will not have to face the same struggles that she has faced, Rita wants to see her children

...well-educated, married and happy. That's all I ever wanted.

So they can look after themselves? That's why you want them to be educated?

Oh yeah. So they can have a good job and be assertive in life. 'Know where to go, what to do, and how to do it. So that they don't get taken.

Kate describes her goals as big and broad, so that they are hard to articulate or observe in day-to-day matters. Again, the theme of communication, interdependence and mutual respect are evident.

They're not things that are right in front of me to do today. Not right now, but more of a watch for the doors to open and walk through them type of person. So, I never kind of do that goal thing, it was kind of a struggle. But in the broad perspective? I think to have a relationship with my kids that will be easy; that they'll come back to me and feel supported by me, and have a sense of what we've been talking about. A sense of what they got from me, that they like or they don't like, and can actually decide to keep or separate.

Open communication, respectfulness and a wish that the children want to maintain the relationship with their moms by choice, as they become self-sufficient adults, are among the common themes that women expressed in their goals of care-giving or parenting.

This Wasn't Just About Us

Although I had not structured the interviews or storytelling specifically to look at ways in which women took action that contested social norms, I found, in keeping with Ruddick's (1989) views, that several women volunteered stories that identified how they acted in ways that contributed to social justice or well-being that went beyond themselves or their children. This supports the notion that Adler (see Dreikurs) and Dreikurs (1971, 1989) promoted when they developed the concept of social interest, as a way of contribution to the greater good. Further, Ruddick (1989) suggests that it is this contribution that women often make to children other than their own, that can provide a model for peace. The importance of an analysis of how women's work contributes to public effectiveness, and therefore, has the potential to contribute to social change, is also supported by Maher (1987), Ruddick (1989) and Hart (1992). What follows is a description of how several women contributed to public effectiveness through their own personal agency as mothers.

Carla tells two such stories. The first one occurs when she takes her son Matt to see a white male doctor at Sick Kids' hospital. She describes her response as part of her responsibility as a parent. (The nurse she defends, she later tells me, is a woman of colour.)

Suddenly, the responsibility of parenthood kicked in, more so than it had even having Christopher for a year....

I had an actual almost knockdown, drag out battle with the doctor in the hospital, and that's something I never would have done. I was always... whatever the doctor said went... kind of thing. And he, like I said, is a very interesting doctor, a very egotistical doctor, and I've heard that even from the very latest doctor I've gone to. He berated a nurse for an order that he told her he gave for Matt and he did not, and I challenged him on that. He really tore her to shreds and had her in

tears and, as I found out (because you live at the hospital. You're there for the ten days and you sleep and eat and everything).

And the nurses were delighted because I guess nobody had stood up for them before. He came in and I said, "You were totally unfair! You are totally wrong!"

He challenged me back because he wasn't used to it and I just went toe-to-toe and everyone was hearing and he came back about five minutes later and gave me a hug and said, "You've taught me something today Mrs. C."

That's something I never would have ever, ever done... because up until that point it was, "Yes, ma'am, no ma'am".

Here, Carla's quick action and defence of a nurse who is being treated unfairly is recognized by the male physician (at least in the moment). In this way, Carla makes a contribution to a greater level of social justice by advocating for the hospital worker: something she says she would never have done or have known how to do, prior to becoming a mother.

In a second story, Carla confronts a teacher. Matt, who had been ill a lot, was having trouble working and concentrating in school. Therefore, he did most of his schoolwork at home.

...I got a call from the school saying that Matt's English paper was too good and did his brother write it?

Matt came home totally devastated and said he knew it was probably the best work he had ever done...and...he had been working so hard...and he wrote and he wrote and he wrote, and he came in the kitchen and he was so excited...And it was amazing, and she accused him of not writing it.

... if Matt's backed into a corner he doesn't defend himself, he just gets upset, and then she made him go over it. He said, "She had me up at the front of the classroom for forty minutes..."

So, he came home and he was really upset and he was feeling so terrible, too, and he said, "Mom, I thought it was the best work I'd ever done, and she's saying I didn't do it.

Carla decided to confront the teacher in a letter.

... it was funny because I wrote three pages, I was so upset because he had worked so hard, and I think my last line was, "You are really encouraging these children to under-achieve."

Did she call you?

Yes, she did. And I was delighted that she did that, and I thanked her very much for doing that, and she said she had shown her department head my letter.

The teacher apologized for her discouraging behaviour, indicating that she had learned something from the incident. Again, Carla's sense of justice, and her subsequent confrontation of an authority figure, provides at the very minimum, an opportunity for this teacher to begin to work in a more ethical, considerate and just manner.

Kate also contributes to the greater good when she takes action to ensure the safety of her daughter's friend who was sexually abused. This story was identified in section one under the subtitle, 'Out of the mouths of babes'.

Rita welcomes kids into her home. Even though she has gone through some very difficult periods of poverty, which have been exacerbated by issues of race and class (Hemmons, 1995, Randolph, 1995, Ziegler, 1995), and she has struggled to support her seven children as a single mother and woman of colour, Rita demonstrates an amazing generosity when it comes to providing a place for kids without a home to stay. Rita says:

Seven kids have lived with us that got kicked out of their homes.

Besides your own kids?

Yes. One time we had two of them and then one was taken. I hate seeing kids on the street.

'Compassionate heart! (As long as you're not being taken advantage of.)

No way! They got kicked out of their houses because they're not being good.... Well, they don't usually give me a hard time if they've been giving their parents a hard time. They're very kind in my house...they'll do anything, they're like, come on, let's clean this place up!

Marie's way of contributing to public effectiveness centres around concerns she develops regarding her daughter's teacher. Parts of this story have been identified in 'My homework', (Chapter Three) as well as earlier in this section. Here are further concerns that Marie identified.

I knew that Mr. G. was a religious sort of man and that he had been teaching some of that and had done some prayers in school, but with this experience I began to push a little harder to see what was happening in school and as I did that, she told me... and clearly not all on that day... that there were times that Mr. G. had also told the story of Lot and Abraham in the Bible...and about Sodom and Gommorah.

Marie, who knew Biblical stories well, as a result of her own religious heritage and personal beliefs became extremely upset when she found out that the teacher was teaching religion and secondly, the very fundamental and moralistic way in which he was influencing children, a view that conflicted profoundly with her own beliefs. She goes on:

...and then later on these cities burn down and this is a punishment from God... and the punishment is because they were gay, so Elana heard all this... in grade five... from a teacher... like it was... totally unethical in my view...

This was a public school?

Yeah, and this shouldn't be happening in a public school system.

Marie goes on to describe more of the stories her daughter told her and the activities that were taking place in the school. When she tried to discuss the issue with the teacher and the principal, she was patronizingly dismissed.

And I think the thing that topped it off for me was the Gideon Bible... I don't know if this is the same in other schools, but in the public school system the children are given the option to receive a little Gideon Bible...

The thing they gave in grade five is a New Testament... a little red Bible... and in the back of that little Bible is a little verse about " accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, " you know one of those really fundamental sort of religious things and then some lines to sign and a date. So they all received these Bibles.

I don't believe he gave them any options to receive them or not, and then he asked them all to put their heads down on their desks and to close their eyes and to think about this question for a moment, and then those who were ready to please sign that page... and nobody would be watching... nobody would be watching each other... and there would be no pressure for them to do it...and when she came home in tears after that experience she said, "He made us sign it... he... he really made us sign it.... And he was watching us! There was no option! I'm really embarrassed, and I didn't want to write my name in there, because I don't like what he was doing!" and she asked me if we could 'white it out', and I said "Yes"... and the way I remember it, we didn't have any white out and we had to go to the store and buy white out and then we came home and whited out that page... so that... so that it was gone... so you know, it became symbolic of that experience....

Well, what I did then... I knew that the principal wasn't going to do anything, so I called the superintendent of the school board, and also the Ministry of Education. I had a copy of the Education Act sent to me, and of course, there wasn't supposed to be any of this, and I described the whole story to the superintendent, and eventually he...one of the superintendents or supervisors... whatever the hierarchy would be, went to observe a day of this fellow's teaching....

Marie goes on to explain why she had to take action.

I said I can't (let it go)... because it's like protecting... I mean... I am totally on the opposite side of where this guy clearly was on homosexuality and on abortion.... I can not let it go... that someone is saying this to kids ..you know... influencing a whole bunch of kids, maybe 20 or 30 kids... in a public school classroom.... So this is not just about me and my child... this guy is influencing that many children to believe some thing that I am morally and ethically opposed to!

In keeping with Ruddick's (1989) views, women who mother often do their caring work in ways that contribute to the greater good, these women describe how their motherwork goes beyond the boundaries of their own nuclear family. It is through the work of advocating on behalf of their children that these women learn to take action in ways that contribute to the well-being of people other than their own

children. Consequently, they contribute to public effectiveness through personal agency (Maher, 1987).

Reflections on Learning

According to the learning theories of Kolb (1984) and Mezirow (1991), reflection and a re-conceptualization of what has been learned are major parts of the learning process of adults. Kolb (1984) suggests that it is "in the interplay between expectation and experience" (p. 28) that our greatest learning takes place. This is because, he says, learning requires a "resolution of conflicts" (p. 29) that individuals experience. This echoes the ageless thoughts of Kidd (1959) and Sarton (1961) who speak of the pain of 'unlearning', as part of the learning process. Mezirow (1990) expands on this idea, stating that, "reflection enables us to correct distortions in our beliefs and errors in problem solving. Critical reflection involves a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built" (p.1).

In this section, I explore the women's reflections as part of their learning process. Because it is often difficult to identify learning that has taken place in the moment, I asked women what advice they would give to others who encountered similar experience. Further, I asked the women to reflect on having been parented, on who influenced them, or became their role models regarding motherwork. Then I asked them to reflect on issues of gender, race and class and on what impact these have had on their work as mothers. Finally, I asked them to reflect on their participation in this interview process.

Advice to Others

As a part of the first interview, where women told stories about significant turning point moments within their work as mothers, I asked each of them what advice they would give to others who encountered similar experiences. I made the assumption that such advice was based on their current knowledge, which resulted from their own learning.

Anna, whose storytelling centred around the ongoing and visceral guilt that she felt regarding her thoughts in an unplanned pregnancy said:

Well, umm, I don't know about advice, but I would try to reassure her that it is perfectly natural. Not everyone may have this notion, but I certainly did. And, that maybe not to fight it so much, just to acknowledge it as a kind of primal fear, or natural fear, because we... so far we've had... we've dealt with romantic love and visceral love, but there is a different kind of power in parental love. And, so, you know, it is overwhelming.

I think it's sort of like you said earlier, the visceral love...

Oh, it is. It's so physical. It's so, Yeah. I mean, you just feel that there is a part of your body out there, you know, and it's a very strange feeling. Very strange. So, I guess I'd try to reassure them, tell then not to fight it, so they don't get worked into a tizzy, almost like I was, and, umm, well, I guess just give them my example that it just washed way the moment I saw my baby. That very moment...

In keeping with the work of Michelson (1998) and Gustafson (1999), Anna describes her learning of parental love as embodied or visceral learning. This notion is supported by Irigaray (1990/1993) and O'Brien (1981), who identify a connectedness between women's capacity to bear children and their intuitive or embodied ability to provide nurture and care. Anna's own process of critical reflection is grounded in learning to let nature take its course and to let go of control.

Trusting process, trusting nature and learning to trust the self appear to be major themes for most of the women. Here are some of the responses from the other women, which centre on this theme.

Carla, who went through a period of fear and panic in her pregnancy, not knowing if she should go through with the pregnancy, advises:

"Don't feel selfish about your feelings because you are entitled to those feelings. That's probably what the Distress Centre woman said to me because I said, "I feel so guilty," and she said, "Don't, because, being a parent is such a huge responsibility." I would probably say that, and whatever decision you come to in your heart, whether it be to have or not to have, is the right one.

Sort of to trust yourself?

Trust it, and once you've made the decision, try not to question it. Don't spend the rest of your life thinking, "Was it the right thing?" It was. Because you decided at the time you needed to make the decision.

Carole, whose son had become ill due to some of the tensions that were surfacing within the family, gives this advice (something, she says, she is still trying to learn):

To slow down and enjoy things more. It doesn't matter so much about getting some of the cleaning done, or the laundry or the grocery shopping, just take time to have some fun together a little more... That's not such sage advice, but just take time to enjoy, and that's so much easier said than done.

Kate described how she learned to reclaim her position as a mother, after coming out as a lesbian and leaving her children with their father, as one of her most significant turning points. For those who go through similar experiences, she says:

I think my advice would be to keep going. Whatever the next thing is that you have to do, you just decide that thing. You can't decide the whole picture and the whole story at the outset.
Sort of moment by moment.

Yeah, sort of taking that time to understand that the next thing is what I really have to do, and then doing it. It has to be in here, it has to be so important, it has to be part of you to make it worth it. 'Cause if there's any part of you that isn't you, then you won't do it. It won't work, it's too hard.

Be true to yourself.

Exactly. It's got to be something that you've spent the time to say, "Is that it? Is that the middle of me? Is that where I am?" And that might change, but at the moment, that's what it needs to be, because you're going to need all that strength. That's your foundation, because when all the rest of it falls apart, you know, when you're not sure the money part is going to work out, or all the friends are going to be there, or how the kids are going to cope in the end, you have to have that reassurance that, "This is really what I am and who I am, and what I feel in the core."

For Rita, whose two sons were incarcerated, learning also centred around self-trust, learning how she is disadvantaged as a result of racist practises, what her rights are and how to fight for them. Her advice to others is:

Well, I would tell her, "Fight for him. Fight 'tooth and nail'...fight the system, tooth and nail. Do everything you possibly can. Don't sit back and take it because they'll walk all over you." Which they would. They would...and I would advise them...if anything were to come up, they were to take notes, and pinpoint... try and go for Freedom of Information... and try and get records... you know... I didn't know these things... but now I know... go to them and ask for record... try and find out what was said...and ask questions... try and get compensation or something....

Inherent in the women's advice to others are echoes of their learning and the pain of their unlearning, through critical reflection and a re-conceptualization of themselves as agents in their own lives. Learning self-trust is also a major theme throughout the women's stories, as they move from trying to fit into society's expectations to challenging those expectations, through contestation and critical learning (Newman, 2000). This is an example of learning that results from what Kolb (1984) identified as "the interplay between expectation and experience" (p. 28).

To Be or Not To Be (Like Our Parents)

Bates, et al. (1983) say that for generations, women have passed on knowledge of how to do the work of care-giving and mothering to their daughters, through informal methods of teaching such as role modeling. Feminist educators also promote the idea that emotions and feelings that take place in the daily experiences of living are an important part of learning (Gilligan, 1982, Belenky, et al., 1986, Neumann & Peterson, 1997). Therefore, it appeared to me that a major part of women's learning would be grounded in their early experiences and particularly in response to having been cared for by parents or other role models. Mezirow (1991) says such knowledge is often acquired in childhood, through a process of socialization at a time when children uncritically accept the norms of their environment. He says, as we become adults and reflect more critically on our experiences, we are able to determine how we have been shaped by those experiences. With this concept in mind, I asked the participants, in what ways they parented like their mothers or fathers did, or in what ways they modeled their motherwork after others.

Rita who was parented by a single mom says her mother was:

... like a father and a mother with us and we were pretty good kids. We had her as a role model, so we never were bad, never got in trouble, we all went to school, and did whatever to better ourselves and get where we are, and it's unfortunate that I didn't meet someone who had the same ideas...

(This is a reference to her ex-husband and an abusive marriage). She goes on:

...I'm like her in a way, her kindness, her generous... and her faith in God. Actually, I'm pretty similar to the way she is. I always wanted to be like her, because she is really a wonderful person, a beautiful, wonderful woman. I always wanted to be like her...

Kate says that her parents came from very mixed backgrounds and lived in a community that was very multi-cultural and tolerant of difference. She believes this shaped her as a person. At the same time, she says there was a physical and emotional distance in her home that she knew was experienced differently by some of the children in her neighborhood. She says:

...you know, with all the hugging and kissing... there was none of that. And so, that's a piece, in many ways, that I've tried to leave behind, but my parents, at least in terms of the not touching and the not expressing affection and emotion and caring and love and that sort of thing. It's something I've tried to bring to my own parenting on purpose...

Kate values the ways her parents taught her to take responsibility for herself. Despite her family's poverty, she says her parents never blamed anyone or felt sorry for themselves. In this way, she has modeled herself after them. She says:

...that comes from both of them. There was never any of that, well, "So and so did this and so and so did that. If I hadn't done such 'n such I wouldn't be in this place." They never, even regardless of how difficult our circumstances were, have I ever heard them blame that on any other person. It was just, "This is what you have, and this is what's in front of you, and you do with what you have and you make your own choices." So, if you are in a situation that is difficult or terrible or awful, then what are you going to do? You do something. Or, how are you going to handle that? That is a fairly deep value around you taking responsibility for yourself....

However, Kate tries consciously to leave room for the emotions and feelings of her children, while they learn to take responsibility for themselves.

Kate, who is a very critically reflective person, says that after she left her marriage, she began to consciously model herself after her father, by learning to take better care of herself and have enjoy life more fully.

When I did make this change, I was very consciously thinking that I'd spent a lot of years as my mother, and it's time to be a little like my father!

Very nice! You described your mother as long-suffering!

Exactly! Enough of that! And my father is not long-suffering, he very much takes care of himself, and he knows how to have fun....

Joanne, who grew up in Hong Kong, speaks of the large cultural and social gap between the way she was parented and the way she does her own parenting. Beyond the cultural differences she experienced, her notions are further supported by Arnup (1991) and Eichler (1988a), who indicate that the expectations of parenting, in the sense of its professionalization, have increased remarkably over the decades. Joanne says:

Well, my mother was a traditional woman. She didn't have to work after she married my father. We are not growing up in a wealthy family. We were poor when we were little.

My father operated a grocery store when we were young, and then my mother would help in the store. But we were quite happy when we were young, because they were too busy in their own business. They neglected us; we could go out anywhere to play in the middle of the street.

And you liked that?

Yes, I really enjoyed it.

But when you say that you feel you have neglected your daughter, then you feel badly.

I don't think my parents neglected, because they don't know what their responsibilities are.

You mean we have more of a sense of what our responsibilities are?

Because they are just trying to give you food and make you healthy, and that is good enough. And they asked us to do our homework, but they'd never really sit down with us...She just did good cooking. That was her responsibility.

She didn't look after your emotional life or the school.

Nothing. We were almost neglected children.... They don't have the knowledge to raise a child because they don't know how to.... They don't have knowledge about those things.... They don't have knowledge about marriage and they don't have knowledge about why they raise children and how.... My parents didn't care about our emotional feeling.

And you put a lot of emphasis on that now, don't you?

Yeah. It's kind of, because we have more knowledge than the previous generation.

I ask Carla directly,

Were your parents role models?

My parents? Yes. In spite of the fact that they didn't get along with each other, they never really let that carry over to us. Like I said, my dad never really told me that he loved me but I knew that. I truly believe they were always there, they drove us wherever we needed to go, they would do anything for myself and my friends. But, the qualifier very much was, "You go by my rules and you do what I say." They were very, very strong. You did not cross my mother. For as weak of a person that she seemed to be, she was very strong in her beliefs and her strengths and her expecting me to be home at this time...

The only thing I do very differently than my parents is that...that mom didn't like a lot of friends coming over to the house.

Carla is conscious of the difference in her own parenting, in that she welcomes her children's friends into her home.

As expressed earlier, Anna has modeled herself, in many ways, after her father. Retrospectively, she says, perhaps her mother suffered from post-partum depression.

So, my mother, apparently, was lying in bed. They couldn't get her out of bed. So it was a matter of making my bottles and stuff. And it became a kind of a joke, but maybe that's the way the men dealt with it to enable them to have faith and do all this. So, really, in my early infancy, my mother could not change a diaper. My father and this young uncle did it. My mother would not wake up in the night to feed me; my father and my young uncle did it.

I have a feeling that my early infancy bonding was with my father. When I first thought about this thing, I didn't know about post-partum depression, either. So, as a child hearing stories, then, of course, I felt, well, what was wrong with my mother? What was wrong with me?

The bond between Anna and her father was maintained throughout her life and she says that he is a role model for her, to this day.

Carole links her early influences to her parents and, more specifically, to the cultural ideology and religion within the community where she grew up. She says:

Having grown up when I did, which was in the sixties, and going to church morning and night on a Sunday. That was in the days when that quote from the Bible was revered and repeated, that the wife must be submissive to the husband, and he makes all the decisions. And then I saw my parents, my mother is truly a matriarch, and my dad gladly hands the reins over to her for a lot of the decision making, but, when it would come to some nitty gritty, my mother would hold her tongue. She and dad may have previously had conservations where they agree on their position, which was big time, I mean, we learned that this is how they operate. And then my dad is easy going, indecisive, he had his principles that he lived by, but there was never decisive action. Certainly not. But he would speak, he would put forth their position. The church preacher taught it!

So that became the norm for you?

Oh yes. And that our families were two-parent households, no matter how awful it was. I think I can hardly remember a household where the parents did split.

This is how Carole developed what she described earlier, as the measuring stick by which she still measures her own success. When I asked Carole specifically, how she parents in ways that were similar or different from her parents, she said:

That's a hard one, because it feels that I haven't spent a lot of time sorting about. I'm aware more with Maryanne as a teenager, that I'm parenting really differently than my parents, consciously choosing to parent differently. Partly I think because of who I have always been in my family.... I think I'm a little broader minded and more tolerant than some of my siblings, and certainly my parents. I have older brothers and sisters. And my mom, when we were all grown she said, "Well, we were a lot mellower when we were dealing with the younger ones," and I'm one of the younger ones in my family. And in hindsight, my mom said that she would have been a lot mellower with the first kids. But one never is.

Carole, who was very involved with her children in early infancy, indicates further, how she learned from her mother's learning.

I had a sense that my mother always wanted to be more involved, and she couldn't be (because she was, when she could). And I talked to my older sister, who

experienced a very different mother than I did. And I thought, "So that's where I get a sense of this... was from my mother."

In many ways, Carole says, she tried to pattern herself after her mother. However, she is conscious of some differences:

In some ways, though, when it came to disciplining and talking to my kids, no. That's where I consciously made an effort to respond differently, I felt and knew. My mother would say, "Don't say that to Maryanne, you'll make it worse," and I'd say, "No, I'm putting it into words so it's heard and it's validated." And I think it's probably part of our generation.

Further, Carole found the parents of a friend to be significant influences on her parenting. She goes on:

You know what has been very helpful to me to make a very conscious decision, different from my parents, is that I had a friend who's parents were open, and they would invite us into their home, and we would party and take over their huge room, and we smoked dope in my girlfriend's bedroom, but her mother and my girlfriend had an open relationship that I so envied. I wanted to feel that open with my mother, to feel comfortable and warm and to express it. Her mother would just tap at the door when we were smoking this marijuana, and she would come in, not entering into the room with us, but she'd stand at the door and ask if everyone was okay. Those are the parents that I'm modeling...following.

Each of the women sees some link between her own parenting and how she has been parented. This supports Bates, et al.'s (1983) notion that much of motherwork learning is passed on from parent to child (most often from mothers to daughters) in the form of informal, experiential and visceral learning.

Reflections on Gender, Race and Class

In the first interview, many of the women's stories centred around their location in relation to gender, race and class. I wanted to include, in my analysis of the women's experiences, more of their reflections in this regard. I was also aware of the fact that my own location as a white, North American, educated, heterosexual researcher could contribute to the oppression that some of the

women might experience, on account of these very issues. Therefore, as part of the second interview, I used some of the concepts that were put forward by Dei, et al. (1997), who examine issues of racism by asking people from varied backgrounds to imagine how their experiences would have differed had they been of another racial background. I wanted to explore, along with the women, how the norms of our society define anyone that is outside of the norm (Hart, 1997) and consequently, for example, how "whiteness defines blackness as inferior Otherness" (p. 191).

I further extended Dei, et al.'s (1997) concept to examine issues of gender and class. Here again, I wanted to explore participants' reflections on societal norms', to see if we could look at them both with a 'view from above' and the 'view from below' (Hart, 1992, 1998). I believed that asking the women to reflect on these issues would give them an opportunity to talk about their own location in relation to others in society, both in terms of having been oppressed, and in terms of having experienced privilege, whether or not they had considered these issues previously. My questions in this part of the interview were very unstructured and often centred around the women's previously identified stories. Here are some of the responses:

Anna, who is a white, educated, middle-class woman of British heritage, speaks of how social context of when she came of age impacted her. She says:

It was kind of the arrogance of that era.... We just felt that we had control of everything and that we could, I mean, I don't ever remember thinking that we could lead perfect lives, but there's a certain arrogance of that particular era. And I was part of that...

But if you had been a poor woman or a woman who is an immigrant from another country, a woman of colour and poor, I suspect your experience would have been quite different.

Oh, I think so.

You might not have started off with the world as your oyster.

No, absolutely, you are right. I would presume that you would be in survival mode, rather than worry about the fine-tuning of things.

She goes on:

Yeah, well it might be that this whole idea of being superwoman, of being a perfectionist, is a socially constructed thing on class levels. I have a feeling that women who are poor would maybe say to themselves, "I wish I could do this for my child, I wish I could do that," but a secondary thought might be, "But I'm doing the best I can." And there's also the matter about if you know what the best practice is for raising children, and so you're always trying to do all that, fulfill all those requirements.

That's what you're doing by researching everything?

Exactly. I mean, in my experience, in the job I have, I sometimes do deal with women where the main thing is feeding their children and, you know, it's an extra to maybe set up a homework time or a homework space for a child. In my dealings with women who are really struggling, they haven't really thought about it. It's kind of, like, I'm telling them these things and, and they're struggling already, and here I am giving them another idea with another demand. So, it's kind of like a little bit, maybe, if you don't know about it then you can't suffer about it.

So increased knowledge actually gives increased potential for feeling guilty?

I think so. I mean, I hadn't really thought of it this way, but just in speaking about it, I'm trying to work this out and I think that's possibly it.

I asked Carla, a white, married woman of Lebanese heritage, who has not worked for paid employment since her children were born, to describe how her experience might differ from that of a single mom.

Well, a single mom, it's hard. I think because I have the time and I take the time and I guess I'm just comparing it to Bill, my husband, who is working. When issues like this are brought up, I can't say he ignores them, but because he is very busy.

He relies on you.

He relies on me to do that, and I think if I was a single mom and had to work, or maybe had other kids I had to worry about, a lot of the things, particularly with Matt and the medical things, I think you let run. Because I even find with Matt there's so many things, I let run, because it's like, "Oh, here we go again". So, I think certainly, I've been able to be on top of things more, and pursued things more, because kids will let things go. And particularly kids who have extensive illnesses....

Carla values the flexibility in her schedule as a result of her role as a stay at home mom. With regard to Matt's physical condition, she says:

I can take him. If they phone and say bring him now, bring him at lunch, bring him before school, and because the poor enters into it, I have the car, I have the means that I can do these things. I don't have to rely on a bus schedule, or maybe a taxi, or things that I can't afford. I can just pick up and go.

And then, you've already experienced discouraging comments from teachers, occasional doctors and all that. Do you think those would be exaggerated too, if you were single or a woman of colour?

Well, that's the thing, and possibly so. Because there have been situations which we have talked about, where, being the mom, where, often times I have really had to exert myself to, I find more with the specialists...the men.

They put you in a category as a mom.

They do.... But yes, if I was a woman of colour, I'm not so sure the doctors would have, particularly the one at Sick Kids', would have dealt with me literally challenging him. I'm not sure.

You might never have challenged him.

I might not have challenged him.

I ask Carole, a white single mom of Mennonite heritage, how she thinks she is influenced by her location in society, and how that might be different if she were male or of a different race or class.

It would have been really different if anything, any item had been changed. I'm sure of it.

I'm sort of thinking of the whole experience of you being a mother... but you did raise the ideology of being a family; you did raise the issue of mother guilt. Do you think men are feeling that?

No!

And why not?

Because we're all here. We're so capably wearing that guilt, so why would they need to put it on! I think, I'm so aware that one's socioeconomic status matters when going into Sick Kids'. I'm so aware of that, every time I've gone.... And as a single parent, I think that because I wasn't particularly wealthy, and so what I would consider my best maybe didn't look like the doctor's best to people at Sick Kids'. But I would put it on, just to be, to look higher in socioeconomic status.

More credibility?

Yes. Very much so, because that really plays into it.

Is it spoken or is it felt? How do you know that?

How does one know? It's not spoken and it's not anything openly expressed, but it's very much couched in the kinds of questions and the way they're asked when you have that interview with the doctor to find out what's wrong. What brought you here? What's going on with your kid?

Now, what about if you, actually were a woman of colour, single mom?

I think with a single parent there is this assumed positioning of the family. A great weight is given to that, that it will "affect and disturb" the children. I think you medical people need to back off, I'm already doing that number! You're supposed to objective, and if I had been a woman of colour, I just feel that the box gets narrower and smaller and more defined, and it also squishes one into a more defined place.

Joanne, whose husband lives in Hong Kong, while she lives in Canada and looks after their children, speaks of her perspective of gender roles and how these impact feelings of guilt.

I don't think he (her husband) feels that way like I do, because I always feel guilty about myself. Whenever I talk to my husband he says that this is the reality or it is a situation that I cannot change, that sort of thing. I don't think he feels guilty about that.

She goes on:

I think men, especially Chinese men, they just think when they give you enough money for the family, then they carry their responsibility for the family.

That's their responsibility, the way they see it? Money?

Money. The financial support.

And a woman's job is?

To care for the emotional feeling of their children and then, especially, I try to make them happy all the time.

But you were earning a living too, when you were working so hard, night and day, right?

Yeah, I think that's the difference between men and women. Especially nowadays, women have more work.

Double work...

Well, I think it has given us a double-load, hasn't it, of guilt.

You did a lot of negotiating with the school and the school psychologist and the principal and the teachers. Do you think that someone who was poor or had more difficulty with the language would have been treated differently than you were treated in the school system?

I think so, because at least I can communicate my thoughts. If I was a refugee woman... if I didn't know the language very well, it would be even worse.

Kate reflects on what her experiences might have been like if she had been a lesbian woman of colour or even a gay father:

It gets even more and more complex as you go along! I haven't really taken the opportunity to give it that much thought, but my experience with women of colour that I know is that they're in a situation where they have a huge struggle, but no one else can see. You know, it's that, "Oh well, you're just black! Get over it! It doesn't bother the rest of us, really, it's all in your own head." And so there's this little invisible struggle that goes on for women of colour and certainly for lesbian women as well. Unless I declare it, no one guesses, unless I choose to dress really dramatically and then people choose to make assumptions. But then, people can make the wrong assumptions, too.

...I think that when it comes to men, gay men, they have a little double-edged sword; as men they have privilege but as gay men they have less privilege. People are more threatened by a gay man then they are by a lesbian women. But it's by and large, especially when it comes to issues around parenting, you know, they can kind of go there with women, it's okay, women are women, but they're probably all mothers somewhere along the line. If they're a little too dyky or a little too butchy, then it's maybe not so good, but they can go there. But for men...men have a very restricted culture. At least as a woman, there's a very broad range of what you can do as a woman that's comparable to men.

Rita, a woman of colour who immigrated from Trinidad, speaks of the difficulties that women from many locations face in response to the legal system, and does not focus on race or class issues, in this part of the discussion. I ask her if she thinks that white women would face the same struggles she faced, within the legal system.

Actually, I know someone who is right now, so I can't say yes or no. I know a few white people who are going through the same thing...

But I have a sense from your stories that the court system, police officers, were quite hard on your kids because they were a different colour.

Ummm, that's the sense I got. But, see, they're not all the same. Some of the cops are like that and some of them are pretty nice. Like the one who informed me of what I could do....

He was really nice, the others were treating them really, really bad. They were hungry, they were begging for food, they hadn't eaten since lunch time the day before, and this was three in the morning, and they would pass by with their food and say, "Mmmmm, this tastes good."

I ask Rita if the thinks that having been a little wealthier at that time would have made a difference to her experience.

Oh yes, I think it would...

Because the legal aid...

All that, and having no money to fight cases and doing stuff, and even if I was a bit wealthy and let's say we had a home and good background, even with me alone, even if my ex-husband had that attitude, if I were comfortable living in my own home, having the things that you really need like a phone and a good job and

a nice family. We had that, we didn't have a house, but we had the togetherness and the closeness and stuff, but we had no money either.

Although my purpose in these discussions was to explore the participants' reflections around these issues and not to generalize them to the greater society, some recognizable patterns and themes did emerge. One theme was that the women who had experienced greater struggles in relation to what they saw as what was identified earlier as the 'ideal box,' had a clearer vision of what the struggles that centred around issues of gender, race and class were. The women who were single, lesbian and women of colour had certainly experienced more first hand oppressive forces around these issues. However, it was also encouraging to hear the responses of the women who did fit into society's 'ideal box' more closely, as they and I continue to struggle to 'unpack the invisible knapsack of white privilege' (McIntosh, 1990).

Learning through Reflection

According to Chase (1995), "people make sense of experience and communicate meaning through narration" (p. 2). Because of this, Chase advocates storytelling as part of the interview process, which contributes to meaning making for individuals. This view is echoed by Hart (1998) who says, "knowledge is constructed through interaction" (p. 194), which includes discussion, conversation and critical reflection.

As the major focus of the interview process centred around storytelling, conversation and critical reflection, I closed each of the interviews with a final question, asking the participants for reflections on being participants in this study. I

asked what, if anything, had they learned as a result of their participation in this process.

Rita says:

I have thought about that, and I thought that I wished I was much more well spoken like I was here. I feel like I can talk about it now, without getting teary-eyed. I could do that now, I probably would get teary-eyed, but if I had to go, and say someone was asking about the experience, say some group asked me to go and talk about the experience, to help someone else, I think I would be able to do it now. If I didn't do this, I would still be cowering in my shadow.

Anna responds:

Well, I don't know if I'll ever be guilt free from that former one thought in terms of my son, but it would be nice to come to a different level of thinking with it, especially since he is on the threshold, he is a young adult now, and I think maybe, for me, it's time to put that somewhere. I don't want to use the phrase "bringing closure" because closure isn't always the right word. I think that, looking at him as a young adult, he's in charge of his development and destiny now, and whatever part I played, I think I can say to myself, "I didn't do everything right, but I couldn't have done it too badly because he's turned out pretty good."

Carla's response to the interview process is:

It's been great! I think it's helped me, because of the ages of my boys now, because these are the hard years, for sure, and every year is hard, so I think you have to put it into perspective, too. But certainly, you are wanting them to reach a stage when they are making more of their own decisions and falling down and trying to pick themselves back up.... I think its let me re-examine how I've dealt with issues.

Joanne says:

I think what I've learned is to organize my thought and try to verbalize it.... Sometimes I don't realize how I develop until it was after the questions, and I thought that, now it is so much different...so much development in myself. This process gives me some thought... I quite enjoyed that I had the chance to speak my thoughts.

And from Kate:

Well, when you see it in writing its almost a bit embarrassing. Are people going to read that and think it's me? Is that really legitimate stuff to put in writing? That's what I said. And on the other hand, to see the stuff that you sent me, it's very validating to have someone else put it down for some reason. To just take it out of

your head and put it somewhere concrete, that validates it a little bit, so that's been kind of neat.

If nothing else, it makes you sit down and do some thinking about where you're at, and how I feel about the kids and where I am with all that. I think it just keeps keeling me forward.

Carole says:

It's taken me to such a positive incline. It's caused me to see things. I've had to put on other glasses and look at all of this and sort it out and it's much more positive. Partly, I can look back and see what I've gone through and see that I've learned things and I see that I'm doing things all right!

...did I tell you that after the last time that you left, that it just moved me to a whole new place and I realized all that I had accomplished and done when Maryanne had been ill, that I had never quite recognized. I went into this fury of sending notes and being in contact with the different medical people to thank them?

No! You phoned me and said a 'thank you' to me, but not that you actually wrote notes.

It just brought some things to closure that I hadn't yet done.

Thank you for sharing that with me.

In keeping with the views of Chase (1995) and Greene (1991), it appears that storytelling has contributed to a validation of the participants' experiences. This notion is further supported by Lenskyj (1993), who indicates that all women's experiences must be "recognized and validated, for they form the raw material of feminist analysis" (p. 38).

It was very gratifying and humbling to hear that this process had contributed in some way to the participants' growth and learning as individuals. This process, too, was reciprocal in many ways. It was validating for me, as a researcher, to hear the women's stories. I learned a lot by participating briefly in

their lives. At the same time, many of them reported that this had been a validating learning experience for them, as well.

The sections in this chapter link women's experience of motherwork to adult education and motherwork literature. In keeping with Hart's (1992, 1997, 1998) views, the learning and knowledge creation that take place within motherwork have the potential to contribute far beyond the care of individual children. As Hart indicates, mothering is the work of necessity and basic human care: work which requires subsistence knowledge that is grounded in life valuing, life-affirming practice. It is clear that women's self-identified stories of significant turning point moments, their location in relation to societal norms, their experience of care giving and their reflections provide a rich foundation for the exploration for learning through subsistence-oriented work. The significance, implications and potential of this subsistence-oriented learning are explored further in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Six: What Does It Mean?

I've learned to say "I love you" more.
- Carla

In this research project, I studied motherwork as an epistemological site, from the perspective of the lived experience, learning and knowledge creation that takes place within this work. Such a study differs inherently from the conventional view of epistemology, which developed within the dominant, masculinst societal model. Within the conventional model, epistemology seeks to study knowledge as a search for "the path to one truth...or one rationality that ought to be used by all (Addelson, 1993, p. 266), and therefore, concerns itself primarily with thinking, rationality and reason. Instead, I use the concept of epistemology that emerges out of feminist theory and recognizes the diversity of knowledge within lived experience. This view claims that women's every day lived experience is an epistemeological site where informal, experiential and embodied learning takes place (Alcoff & Potter, 1993, Code, 1993, Addelson, 1993). Further, I wanted to identify and explore the major changes or transformations that take place as a result of motherwork learning, from women's self-identified perspectives. Third, I wanted to determine what kinds of contributions poesies, as analytic process and representation could make to a study of motherwork learning.

This chapter seeks some answers to these questions, identifies further significant findings that result from this study and suggests areas for more research. In section one, I summarize the major changes or transformations that participants identify. Section two explores the collective meaning of the research

findings by examining the epistemological underpinnings of the learning within motherwork. Section three consists of a layered analysis that attempts to make visible how motherwork currently contributes to public effectiveness by adding value to society in ways that continue to be undervalued and unrecognized. In section four, I develop a definition for subsistence learning and summarize the contributions that this study makes to the practice of adult education.

Beyond Mush Bucket: Transformations

In this section, I explore what some of the transformations were that the women in this study identified. I look beyond the circumstances or the moments of change, as described by the women, to what the actual transformation consists of. In other words, how did the women see themselves before this moment of change, what were they like after and what factors contributed to this change?

Beyond Long-Suffering Silence

Several women reported that their transformations resulted from conscious decisions to change from living within the boundaries of what they saw as societal expectations of women and mothers, to more authentic, self-determined ways of perceiving what they would or should be like. This echoes Sparks' (2000) notion that "who we believe we are emerges from our own understanding of self, positioned against the contexts within which we live" (p. 430).

In support of the findings of Gustafson (1998), women who mother often believe that it is their role to be the uncomplaining and self-sacrificing caregivers of children, whose own needs and actions are to be invisible. These virtues emerge out of the 'fantasy of the perfect mother' as described by Chodorow and Contratto

(1992), who believe that the high expectations of women in Western society contribute to the ideals of what a 'good mother' is to be like.

The change that some of the women in this study made, as a result of their motherwork, was to become less invisible, long-suffering and silent. For example, for one woman this meant learning to take better care of herself and make choices on her own behalf, even if this meant she would not be able to maintain custody of her children. The contributing factor to making this change was the recognition that although she was teaching her children to make authentic choices on their own behalves in spite of what other people thought, as their mother, she was not living in a way that was congruent with this teaching. Therefore, to model such authentic living and to 'live at her core' she made this painful, yet liberating change.

Fight Tooth and Nail

Several women reported that they became more actively involved in situations that impacted their children, particularly at school or within the justice system. This change appeared to result from observing their children suffer from what they perceived to be injustices or inequities. In learning to confront authority figures within these systems, these women reported a change that took them from a place of passive, invisible silence to a place of personal agency where they learned to act on behalf of themselves as well as their children. Again, the perception that the women should be invisible, passive or long-suffering results from societal expectations of the 'good mother' (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992, Thurer, 1994), a view that is continually reinforced by images of mothers in the media (Kaplan, 1992).

The change that these women made as a result of the recognition that their children were suffering required considerable critical learning (Newman, 2000) and the contestation of social norms. One mother describes herself, in earlier times, as a 'mush bucket kind of person,' and says that she let people walk all over her. Although the transformation was gradual and painful, she now describes herself as strong, able to take control of situations and able to make sure others don't take advantage of her or her children.

Another woman describes how she learned to confront people within the medical and school systems. She describes her earlier self as passively accepting the direction or decisions of others in a 'yes, ma'am, no ma'am' way. As she began to deal with bigger medical issues as a result of an unexpected pregnancy and a son's illnesses, she became more assertive and let her decisions 'come from her heart'. As a result, she has learned to fight for the rights of her children and to confront authority figures within the school and medical bureaucracies.

Beyond Supermom

The high expectations of professionalism that society places on women who mother (Eichler, 1988a, Arnup, 1991) often impacts women in such ways that they think they must be 'supermoms' in order to mother adequately. Several women, in this study, described their transformations in terms of lowering their expectations of themselves.

One woman reports that she felt tremendous guilt because she could not feel an immediate visceral bond to an unborn child in an unplanned pregnancy. She describes a moment of transformation as grounded in the visceral knowledge that resulted from seeing her newborn child, a moment she describes as 'euphoric'.

Although she continued to have high expectations of herself, the gradual change she describes involves the recognition that she does not have to be in control of everything, in order to be a good mother.

Another woman reported that she, too, had developed high expectations of herself based on the societal model that Thorne (1992) identified as the 'monolithic family'. When she became a sole support mom, she spent years judging herself as inadequate, as a result of this ideology that she says she continues to use as her 'measuring stick'. The transformation that this woman describes is grounded in learning to live within the moment, to enjoy life more, to recognize her own successes and not to spend as much time or energy trying to measure up to unrealistic societal expectations.

To What End? Learning and New Knowledge

This section examines the epistemological underpinnings of the lived experience and learning of motherwork from the perspective of what was learned and what knowledge was gained. The findings reported here are closely linked to the transformations that are identified in the previous section, as both are grounded in learning that contributes to change. However, this section looks more closely at the learning and knowledge creation that results from the transformation.

A Life-Centred Principle

What I found through the interview process, was that although I did not ask for, nor did the women explicitly describe an 'order' that channeled the decision making within the work of mothering, there was an implied process that they appeared to follow intuitively and collectively. This process was centred first

and foremost on the basic human element or on the relationship between themselves and their children, and on the well-being of those children. It was as if all the learning that took place within their work as mothers culminated around one central principle. This was a life-affirming, life-sustaining principle that echoes what Shiva (1989) has called the feminine principle. This principle focused the women's learning on the ongoing assessment of needs of each situation, and the development of corresponding knowledge and learning that would assist them in meeting those needs in order to benefit, encourage and nurture the lives of their children and themselves.

Although the women went about the relationship building process in unique ways, all of them made ongoing efforts to develop and maintain open dialogue and communication with their children. In ways that support the notions of Noddings (1984), Ruddick (1989) and Hart (1992), each of the women viewed the relationship, as well as the care and nurture of that relationship as central to the well-being of her children. The collective view appeared to be that if the relationship and open communication were in place (which they saw themselves as responsible for), then issues, illnesses, differences of opinion and other disputes could be dealt with as they emerged.

Several women also identified choice and mutual respect as key to relationship development. This is in direct contrast to the masculinist or patriarchal views of parenting, which come out of a liberalist modality of power (Brown, 1992), and include the traditional mandate that children should honour and obey their parents. Instead, these women appeared to practise being in relationship with their children in an invitational way, by maintaining levels of openness,

collaboration and democracy. The expressed hope of several of the participants was that such openness and caring would be reciprocated as a result of the children's choices, now, and increasingly as the children became self-sufficient adults.

Learning Self-Trust

As described earlier, many of the women struggled, in some way, to develop increased levels of self-trust. In examining the nature of these struggles, it was clear that all the women were impacted (albeit in different ways and to different extents), by societal expectations of the 'omnipotent mother' (Chodorow & Contratto, 1992). To add to this, all of the women reported that they experienced enormous guilt in their mothering. This guilt appeared to result from their own, as well as society's, high expectations of what mothers should be like, as has been suggested by Chodorow and Contratto (1992), Thorne (1992) and Caplan (1989). It was interesting to note that the participants did not appear to have similarly high expectations of what their partners or the children's fathers should be doing, or what their own parents should have done.

The learning that resulted in this greater level of self-trust appeared to come out of a place of reflection and a re-conceptualization of their own experiences and expectations of themselves and others. Through a struggle that required them to recognize and contest social norms that had contributed to the lack of trust in their own judgments, these women learned to trust themselves more fully.

Trusting Nature and Life's Processes

Several of the women indicated that their knowledge creation centred on learning to trust the self in relation to nature and life's processes. This appeared to be a humbling experience, as women struggled to learn to let nature take its course, as it pertained to making decisions around issues of pregnancy, sexual orientation and illness. This learning required the 'unlearning' of the idea that the women should be in control of their own circumstances and environment, a notion that arises out of the Western model of individual responsibility (Eichler, 1997).

The perspective transformation that took place in learning to let nature take its course, collectively, appeared to consist of a shift in focus from the ability to control nature and make things happen, to a 'surrender' to life, where the women learned to work in collaboration with nature's processes and where the natural processes of life were honoured and respected. This is in direct contrast to the masculinist practices of capitalism and the market economy (Waring, 1988, Mies, 1986, Brown, 1992) that seek to control circumstances including nature, nations and people in order to dominate, or for the purpose of personal control and gain. The women's learning in relation to this perspective transformation supports Hart's (1992) notion that life-centred learning takes place in the interface between women's subjective experience and their objective reality.

The common theme that emerged from the learning and knowledge creation within motherwork appeared to culminate around one central question: 'to what end'? Adult learning theories such as those of Kolb (1984) and Mezirow (1991) have looked at how and where learning takes place, and what is learned. For these women, and in keeping with the views of Hart (1992, 1997, 1998),

however, learning and knowledge creation within motherwork centred not so much around what is learned and how it is learned, as around the purpose of learning. The common purpose or goal of learning, for the women in this study, appeared to be grounded in the ongoing promotion, affirmation and sustenance of themselves and those they were caring for.

Layers of Public Effectiveness

Maher (1987) says that an analysis from a feminist learning perspective that seeks to be transformative (in the sense of contributing to societal change) must look at both "personal agency and public effectiveness" (p. 98) of women's learning. This section consists of a layered analysis that attempts to make visible how motherwork currently contributes to public effectiveness through women's individual learning and actions, and identifies areas for further research. This includes an exploration of the significance and possibilities of the learning, that is grounded in the daily lived experience of motherwork, when extended beyond the family unit, and into the workplace and the world at large.

The Daily Work of Mothering

There is no doubt that motherwork has an impact on the well-being of children. Sociologists and psychologists have, for generations, made a link between primary care of children, and their physical, spiritual and social well-being (see: Winnicott, 1964, Dreikurs, 1985, White, 1995). No where is this link made more clearly than in the huge amount of blame that is attributed to women who mother, when their children are neglected or abused, when they do poorly in school, get into trouble with the law, or behave in socially unacceptable ways

(Caplan, 1989, Choderow & Contratto, 1992, Kaplan, 1992). In such analyses, the impacts of society that include poverty, marginalization and oppression are rarely considered to be factors in the development of these children.

At the same time, women who mother adequately, or even well, rarely receive enough affirmation or acknowledgement of how they contribute to the well-being of their families or society (Caplan, 1989). This was evidenced in this study, by the huge amount of guilt that participants experienced, while all of them were clearly doing a good job of mothering. Further, several women debated whether their stories were worth telling. This indicates that they may also have absorbed society's views, which undervalue the magnitude and contribution of this work. The systemic lack of affirmation or recognition of women's contribution to society through motherwork contributes further to making the benefits of motherwork invisible so that it can be taken for granted both in the private and public sphere.

In addition to this, the double burden of work that many women experience as they provide primary care for children and work to support their children financially, overburdens many women and limits their choices, both in their careers and in their mothering (Merriam & Clark, 1991, Miles, 1996b). This is particularly so for single women who mother (Kitchen, 1997, Eichler, 1997, Crawford, 2000, Hemmons, 1995, Randolph, 1995). This is because the current societal model of parenting places all the responsibility for this work on individual families (often single women) where, according to the liberalist modality of power, it is determined to be 'natural,' and of no economic value (Brown, 1992, Waring, 1988).

Instead of blaming women for the problems their children encounter and for the problems of society, as is often experienced and represented by the media (Caplan, 1989, Kaplan, 1992), further analyses are needed on the impacts to the long-term decreased costs in health care and societal functioning, and the overwhelming benefits to society, when motherwork is done well. As Eichler (1997) suggests, such analysis could contribute to the development of public policy that supports the notion that parenting work is a social responsibility that benefits all of society.

This view is also supported by Rodin (1991), through her first-hand experience as a single mother on welfare. She says that supporting mothers who choose to care for children is a "good investment" (p. 64) for governments because it decreases social costs, as the children become adults. Chancer (1998) also supports this view as she develops a contemporary model on the much debated concept of 'guaranteed annual income'. This concept is grounded in a feminine principle, in that it provides a framework that supports all people, just because they are there and deserve to be respected, and not because of what they contribute through paid employment. Chancer's economic ideals echo Irigaray's (1990/1993) notion of the embodied knowledge of women (though not always practised by individual women) that results from the collective experience of the womb. According to this model, the self and the other are cared for and nurtured, just because they are there and deserve to be supported, and not according to gender, race or how much they contribute to the family.

Beyond the Self

As was demonstrated by several of the participants in this study, women often contribute to the social well-being of children other than their own. This contradicts the notion that the work of providing care for their children takes place in the private sphere. When women advocate on behalf of their children by confronting physicians, teachers and others who are in positions of power, these actions contribute to effectiveness that goes well beyond the self or the private sphere, and into the public domain.

Beyond that, and as Ruddick (1989) and Rich (1986b) point out, women have a history of providing care for children other than their own, in their roles as sisters, aunts, babysitters, friends and grandmothers. All of these contribute to the well-being of society but continue to be unrecognized as having social and economic value. Again, further analysis is needed that focuses on the benefits of this largely unpaid (or when paid, then underpaid) work that contributes to social well-being and public effectiveness.

Implications for Society

Motherwork, at its best, is subsistence-oriented work that contributes to the well-being of individuals, families and society because it is grounded in a life-centred, life-affirming principle. In keeping with the perspectives developed by Miles (1996b), Ruddick (1989) and Hart (1992, 1996, 1997), it is my view that if the principles and practices of this work were generalized to the greater society, this could contribute to the sustenance of the earth and to more life-affirming practices for all.

Currently, many social economists, workplace management theorists, environmentalists and adult educators agree if there is to be hope for the future, then some kind of societal transformation must also take place. Socially aware economists indicate that a transformed society must recognize the benefits of subsistence work that is done by women and others who are marginalized for their real contribution (Waring, 1988, Chancer, 1998, Ekins, 1986, Finlayson, 1996). Management theorists promote an increased focus on the human element, transparency, communication and collaboration, as crucial to the well-being of the workplace (Covey, 1989, 1990, Sharma, 1998), and advocate ending the war between the workplace and the homeplace (Senge, 1990). Environmentalists advocate life-centred practices and extend concepts of care, mutual respect and reciprocity to all life from a perspective that is grounded in a feminine principle but goes well beyond the homeplace (Shiva, 1989, Mies, 1986). Many adult educators see learning and knowledge creation as key to the transformation of society in ways that can contribute to life-centred practices, peace and hope for the future (Miles, 1996b, Hall, 1996, O'Sullivan, 1999).

While there are individuals within all of these disciplines that are promoting life-centred change, all of them have historically overlooked motherwork as a site where life-affirming learning and knowledge creation takes place and is being practised on a daily basis. If the learning and knowledge creation that is grounded within this subsistence-oriented work were to be recognized and valued to a greater extend within all these disciplines, this would contribute to generalizing life-centred principles and practices beyond the work of mothering. The value of motherwork could consequently be recognized within the business world,

particularly in terms of its social, economic and organizational contribution. Within the educational and environmental disciplines, the value of motherwork could receive greater recognition in terms of the life-centered principles of learning and knowing that emerge out of this work. If such a transformation is to take place, then further research is needed to determine to greater extents, what life-affirming work consists of, how it is learned and how its learning can be promoted. Further, such knowledge about motherwork learning and its potential contribution to these disciplines should be shared and made more visible both within and beyond the academic community.

Towards an Understanding of Subsistence Learning

This section concludes this study and contributes to the development of an understanding of subsistence learning that is grounded in motherwork. I argue that the lived experience that is illuminated by women's storytelling and art-informed representation, provides a vision for life-centred, life-affirming principles and practices that have implications for society, as well as for adult educators and researchers.

I use 'subsistence learning' to indicate the learning that the women describe because, as Hart (1992, 1993, 1995, 1997) suggests, this is learning that takes place as a result of subsistence-oriented work. I define subsistence learning in this way:

> Subsistence learning is learning that is grounded in subsistence-oriented work, which is the work of the basic necessity and care of life. This is learning that is primarily focused on life-sustaining, life-affirming principles and thus continually evolves, based on the ongoing needs of the situation and in response to the life that is being cared for.

Although, most subsistence learning take place in informal settings and therefore, could also be described as informal learning, it does not follow that all informal learning is subsistence learning. This is because, as indicated earlier, one could learn, informally, to play a game or build a bomb. Such learning, although informal, does not focus primarily on the sustenance and promotion of life. For this reason, subsistence learning and informal learning cannot be considered synonymous.

Illuminating Theory through Lived Experience

This research validates Hart's (1992, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998) theory of 'working and educating for life', from a woman identified, subsistence-oriented perspective. The primary contribution that this study makes to the development of an understanding of subsistence learning is that it illuminates the depth and complexity of subsistence-oriented ways of knowing and learning, as they are experienced by the individual women who participated in this study, through the everyday work of mothering.

Further, this study contributes to feminist theory, such as the work of Bunch and Pollack (1983), Neumann and Peterson (1997), Tisdell (1993, 1995, 1998), Maher (1987) Noddings (1989) and Ruddick (1989) who identify women's every day lived experience as sites of learning and knowledge creation. By creating greater visibility for motherwork as an epistemological site, this study seeks to make visible the learning that takes place within this work, as well as the principles and ethics that emerge out of this work.

Beyond that, through the findings of this study, I argue, along with Hart, Waring (1988, 1996), Mies (1986) and Shiva (1989) that if this work, or the

principles and practices that emerge out of this work, were to be generalized to the greater society, this would have implications that could be of benefit to life itself. All of these theorists have made compelling arguments that promote woman-identified, life-affirming practices. However, all of them have argued primarily from theoretical perspectives.

This study contributes to such theoretical perspectives by examining how individual women live, learn and practise motherwork in very practical, yet life-affirming ways. In analyzing their experiences, I explore how the women in this study focus their learning and care-giving, first and foremost on the well-being of the self and the other, in mutually respectful, reciprocal ways. In keeping with the notions Eichler (1997) and Miles (1996b), this perspective, if it were generalized to the greater society, could contribute to societal transformation that would respect all life, and contribute to ending practices of oppression and marginalization based on race, class and gender.

The Contribution of Poesies

According to Grumet (1991), if we are to use storytelling as a means of research, then we are obliged to develop methods of "receiving stories that mediates the space between the self that tells, the self that told, and the self that listens" (p. 70). Chase (1995) adds to this view and indicates that through the process of storytelling, we invite the storytellers to take responsibility for the wholeness, continuity and complexity of their stories. This requires that the listener listen to what is submerged underneath the story, and hears what is left unsaid. It is in those unspoken moments, those spaces between the lines, that the emotionality

and intensity of the stories often lie. The written transcripts of researchers often lose this emotionality.

In this study, I use poesies to develop both analytical and representational processes to capture what was left unsaid and to mediate the space between the storyteller, the listener and the reader (Grumet, 1991). I wanted to find ways to capture the intensity of the stories that maintained the intent of the storyteller, and reflected the wholeness of the story back to audiences in ways that captured their imagination and interest. Such analytical and representational processes have no maps. Therefore, I developed my own processes, which evolved as this research project progressed.

In order to do this, I let the stories and emotions that emerged from them, lead me. I did this by sifting through participants' transcribed stories, maintaining a constant focus on the emotionality of their experience. I listened for what was said. I listened for what was left unsaid. I listened for learning, change and transformation that gave me insight into what the former self had been, what the new self was like and what was learned between those spaces. I listened for the spoken and unspoken impacts that resulted from issues of gender, race and class. All the while, I maintained the storytellers' voices, using their words, their poetic language and their emotion to capture that emotionality and intensity in story and verse.

I believe that as a result of these analytical and representational processes, I have made women's lived experience and learning within motherwork more visible and accessible. Therefore, the use of creative writing within this work, both as

process and product contributes to the 'building of sharable moments of truth' through what Denzin (1997) has called 'messy text'.

This study contributes to the development of a model that identifies how poesies can be used within qualitative inquiry to bring written text to life. This way the storytellers, the researcher and the readers can experience the emotionality and intensity of lived experience. Consequently, this work contributes to making the everyday lived experience of the women who participated in this study more visible and accessible to audiences both within and beyond the academic community.

Implications for the Practise of Adult Education

We live in the midst of an economic climate that seems to indicate the disappearance of work (as it has been defined within traditional workplaces), and where increasingly mechanized and technocratic practices alienate us from the daily work of basic human care and necessity (Hart, 1992, Aronowitz & Cutler, 1998, Chancer, 1998). As a result of this societal development, much of adult education has also become alienated from life-affirming practice, as educators scramble to meet the needs of the marketplace. Beyond that, conventional research is often represented in ways that make the results inaccessible and difficult to understand. Consequently, very valuable concepts are often alienated from audiences who may be interested in new information, insights and practices but do not share the academic background of researchers.

This study explores ways in which motherwork is a site of learning that is grounded in the work of necessity and basic human care. The learning that takes place in this work is not alienated from life but rather begins with a focus on affirming principles and practice. Due to the destruction that is being brought

about by war and a profit driven economy, the learning of such subsistence work is becoming more crucial than ever. If we, as adult educators are to play a part in providing hope for the future, we will do well to ask ourselves, along with the women in this study, 'to what end?' In other words, in what ways do the processes, products and learning we promote, contribute to the promotion, affirmation and sustenance of life?

Further, if we are to make the theories and principles of adult education more accessible, we need to look beyond our discipline, to more art-informed, creative and alternative ways in which messages of transformation and hope can be promoted. This is so that larger audiences can be reached, and the emotions and imagination of those audiences can be evoked. Mezirow (1990) indicates that learners will engage in the process of transformation as a result of new and critical insights. It is my view that such insights can be encouraged in larger audiences and beyond the academy, provided academic research is represented in ways that capture the imagination of those larger audiences. In this way, this study contributes to providing avenues for individual and societal change by making the concepts of subsistence learning accessible to larger audiences, through art-informed inquiry.

To conclude this study, I want to share one last insight from the women who participated in this study. This is in keeping with Noddings (1984) and Ruddick (1989) who indicate that part of the reciprocity in the care-giving relationship is manifest in the way that the caregiver also receives care and learns from the one cared-for. In keeping with this notion, I asked interview participants what, if anything, they had learned from their children. To represent the women's

responses to this question, I have written a reflective poem. As in the poetic narratives, I have used, for the most part, the women's own words, and in this case have reflected the responses of all the participants, in one poem.

Children: Our Greatest Teachers

Collectively,
we watched our children grow,
and through
attentiveness and care,
we learned....

We learned
to stop worrying,
to love living...
to be filled with
optimism and hope....

We learned
to live and let live...
to let nature
take its course,
having found that children
are not owned and
cannot be controlled.

We learned
a depth of loving
and emotion...

...of a love freely given,
unselfish,
without judgment,
filled with forgiving;
bearing no
conditions.

And through our mothering,
we grew in the knowledge
that instead of merely
teaching our children,
as we had once imagined,
the children had become

our greatest teachers.

References

Addelson, K. P. (1993) Knower/doers and their moral problems. In L. Alcoff & E. Potter (Eds.), Feminist epistemologies (pp. 265-294). New York: Routledge.

Agathangelou, A. (2000). National narratives and (dis)appearing women: State sanctioned sexual violence. Canadian Woman Studies, 19, (4), 12-21.

Allen , K., & Walker, A. (1992). Attentive love: A feminist perspective on the care-giving of adult daughters. Family Relations, 41, 284-289.

Allen, P. G. (1992). The sacred hoop: Recovering the feminine in American Indian traditions. Boston: Beacon.

Alcoff, L., & Potter, E. (Eds.). (1993). Feminist epistemologies. New York: Routledge.

Ansbacher, H., & Ansbacher, R. (Eds.). (1956). The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler: A systematic presentation in selections from his writings. New York: Harper & Row.

Ansbacher, H., & Ansbacher, R. (Eds.). (1978). Cooperation between the sexes: Writings on women and men, love and marriage, and sexuality. New York: W. W. Norton.

Aronowitz, S., & Cutler, J. (Eds.). (1998). Post work: The wages of cybernation. New York: Routledge.

Arnup, K. (1991). Education for motherhood: Women and the family in twentieth century English Canada. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto: Toronto.

Arnup, K. (1998). Does the word lesbian mean anything to you? Lesbians raising daughters. In S. Abbey & A. O'Reilly (Eds.), Redefining motherhood: Changing identities and patterns (pp. 58-68). Toronto: Second Story.

Bates, U., Denmark, F., Held, V., Helly, D., Lees, S., Pomeroy, S., Smith, E. D., & Zalk, S. (1983). Women's realities, women's choices: An introduction to women's studies. New York: Oxford University.

Barg, R. (1984). Parenting parents. In D. Brandt (Ed.), Being brothers and sisters: stories of personal need in the church (pp. 62-29). Kansas: Faith and Life.

Barg, R. (1994). Journal of anxiety: Renewed vision and thanksgiving. Optical Prism, 12, (4), 4-12.

Barg, R. (1995). Depth perception (Women's Concerns Report, 121, 11). Kitchener, ON: MCC Canada Women's Concerns.

Barg, R. (2000). Experiential subsistence learning: Researching the transformative moments in motherwork. In T. Sork, V. Chapman & R. St. Clair (Eds.), Proceedings of the 41 Annual Adult Education Research (pp. 537-538). Vancouver: University of British Columbia.

Barg, R. (2001). Rebirthing mother. In Neilsen, L., Cole, A., & Knowles, J. G. (Eds.), The art of writing inquiry (pp. 115-124). Halifax: Backalong.

Beauvoir, S. de (1989). The second sex. New York: Vintage Books. (H. Parshley, Trans. & Ed.). (Original work published 1952).

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice and mind. United States: Basic Books.

Benston, M. (1989). Feminism and the critique of scientific method. In A. Miles & G. Finn (Eds.), Feminism: From pressure to politics (pp. 57-76). Montreal: Black Rose.

Bettner, B., & Lew, A. (1992). Raising kids who can: Using family meetings to nurture responsible, cooperative, caring and happy children. New York: Harper Perennial.

Blundell, S. (1995). Gender and the curriculum of adult education. In S. Merriam (Ed.), Selected writings on philosophy and adult education (2nd. ed., pp. 225-238). Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Borone, T., & Eisner, E. (1997). Arts-based educational research. In R. Jaeger (Ed.), Complimentary methods for research in education (2nd. ed., pp. 73-99). Washington, D. C.: AERA.

Bourgeault, I. (1996). Delivering midwifery: An examination of the process and outcome of the incorporation of midwifery in Ontario. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto: Toronto.

Brand, D. (1994). Bread out of stone. Toronto: Vintage.

Brandt, D. (1997). Di Brandt. In K. Martins & H. Harms (Eds.), In her own voice: Childbirth stories from Mennonite women (pp. 116-124). Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.

Brandt, D. (1996). Dancing naked: Narrative strategies for writing across the centuries. Stratford, ON: Mercury.

Brandt, D. (1993). Wild mother dancing: Maternal narrative in Canadian literature. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.

Brookfield, S. (1998). Against naive romanticism: From celebration to the critical analysis of experience. Studies in Continuing Education, 20, (2), 127-142.

Brookfield, S. (1986). Understanding and facilitating adult learning. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Brown, W. (1992). Finding the man in the state. Feminist Studies, 18, (1), 7-34.

Bunch, C. (1986). Passionate politics: Feminist theory in action. New York: St. Martin's.

Bunch, C., & Pollack, S. (1983). Learning our way: Essays in feminist education. Turmansburg, New York: Crossing.

Caffarella, R., & Merriam, S. (1999). Perspectives on adult learning: Framing our research. In Rose, A. (Ed.), Proceedings: 40th Annual Adult Education Research Conference (pp. 62-66). DeKalb: IL: Northern Illinois University.

Calliste, A. (1991). Canada's immigration policy and domestics from the Caribbean: The second domestic scheme. In J. Vorst (Ed.), Race, class, gender: Bonds and barriers (pp. 136-168). Toronto: Garamond.

Caplan, P. (1985). The myths of women's masochism. New York: Dutton.

Caplan, P. (1989). Don't blame mother: Mending the mother-daughter relationship. New York: Harper & Row.

Ceglowski, D. (1997). That's a good story, but is it really research? Qualitative Inquiry, 3, (2), 188-201.

Chancer, L. (1998). Benefiting from pragmatic vision, part I: The case for guaranteed income in principle. In S. Aronowitz & J. Cutler (Eds.), Post work: The wages of cybernation (pp. 81–127). New York: Routledge.

Chase, S. (1995). Taking narrative seriously: Consequences for method and theory in interview studies. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), Interpreting experience: The narrative study of lives (Vol. 3, pp. 1-26). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Chodorow, N., & Contratto, S. (1992). The fantasy of the perfect mother. In B. Thorne & M. Yalom (Eds.), Rethinking the family: Some feminist questions (pp. 191-214). Boston: Northeastern University.

Chodorow, N. (1978). The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender. Berkeley: University of California.

Christianson-Ruffman, L. (1989). Inherited biases within feminism: The "patricentric syndrome" and the "either/or syndrome" in sociology. In A. Miles & G. Finn (Eds.), Feminism: From pressure to politics (pp. 123-146). Montreal: Black Rose.

Clover, D. (1995). Theoretical foundations and practice of critical environmental adult education in Canada. Convergence, XXVIII, (4), 44-54.

Code, L. (1993). Taking subjectivity into account. In L. Alcoff & E. Potter (Eds.), Feminist epistemologies (pp. 15-48). New York: Routledge.

Cole, A. (1991). Interviewing for life history: A process of ongoing negotiation. In I. Goodson & J. Mangan (Eds.), Ruccus: Occasional papers (Vol. 1, pp. 185-208). London, CA: University of Western Ontario.

Comeau, D. (1999). Lesbian nonbiological mothering: Negotiating an (un)familiar exsistence. Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering, 1, (2), 44-57.

Covey, S. (1989). The seven habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Covey, S. (1990). Principle-centered leadership. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Crawford, T. (2000, November 25). Marital breakups are financially disastrous for women and children: That's one reason so many kids are poor. The Toronto Star. pp. M1, M2.

Daly, H. (1996). Beyond growth: The economics of sustainable development. Boston: Beacon Press.

Dei, G., Mazzuca, J., McIssac, E., & Zine, J. (1997). Reconstructing drop out: A critical ethnography of the dynamics of black students' disengagement from school. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Denzin, N. (1997). Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. (1989). Interpretive biography. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Dragu, M., Sheard, S., Swan, S. (Eds.). (1991). Mothers talk back: Momz radio. Toronto: Coach House.

Dreikurs, R. (1971). Social equality: The challenge of today. Chicago: Alfred Adler Institute.

Dreikurs, R. (1989). Fundamentals of Adlerian Psychology. Chicago: Alfred Adler Institute.

Dreikurs, R., Soltz, V. (1964). Children: The challenge. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

Eichler, M. (1988a). Families in Canada today: Recent changes and their policy consequences (2nd. ed.). Toronto: Gage.

Eichler, M. (1988b). Nonsexist research methods: A practical guide. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Eichler, M. (1997). Family shifts: Families, policies, and gender equality. Toronto: Oxford.

Eisler, R. (1987). The chalice & the blade: Our history, our future. San Francisco: Harper.

Eisner, E. (1993). Forms of understanding and the future of educational research. Educational Researcher, 22, (7), 5–11.

Ekins, P. (Ed.). (1986). The living economy: A new economics in the making. London: Routledge.

Epstein, R. (1999). Our kids in the hall: Lesbian families negotiate the public school system. Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering, 1, (2), 68-82.

Everingham, C. (1994). Motherhood and modernity: An investigation into the rational dimension of mothering. Philadelphia: Open University.

Finlayson, A. (1996). Naming Rumpelstiltskin: Who will profit and who will lose in the workplace of the 21st century. Toronto: Key Porter.

Finley, S., & Knowles, G. (1995). Researcher as artist/artist as researcher. Qualitative Inquiry, 1, (l), 110–142.

Foley, G. (1991). Terania Creek: Learning in a green campaign. Austalian Journal of Adult and Community Education, 31, (3), 160-176.

Foley, G. (Ed.). (1995). Understanding adult education and training. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Fong, J. (2000). Where do they belong? The "fate" of Chinese immigrant women. Canadian Woman Studies, 19, (3), 64-68.

Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Continuum Publishing.

Fumia, D. (1998). By any (m)other name. Canadian Woman Studies, 18, (2/3), 41-45.

Gabb, J. (1999). Imag(in)ing the queer lesbian family. Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering, 1, (2), 9-20.

Gibran, K. (1993). The prophet. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. (Original work published in 1923).

Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University.

Glenn, E. N. (1992). From servitude to service work: Historical continuities in the racial division of paid reproductive labor. SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 18, (1), 1-43.

Glesne, C. (1997). That rare feeling: Re-representing research through poetic transcription. Qualitative Inquiry, 3, (2), 202-221.

Glesne, C. (1999). Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction (2nd. ed.). New York: Longman.

Goodson, I. & Mangan, J. (1991). An alternative paradigm for educational research. In I. Goodson & J. Mangan (Eds.), Ruccus: Occasional papers (Vol. 1, pp. 9-48). London, CA: University of Western Ontario.

Gordon, L.(1992). Family violence, feminism, and social control. In B.Thorne & M. Yalom (Eds.), Rethinking the family: Some feminist questions (pp. 262-286). Boston: Northeastern University.

Gouthro, P. (1999a). Good work! Redefining academic values from a critical feminist perspective. In M. Hrimech (Ed.), Passion and Politics: 99 years of Adult Education, Proceedings of the 18th Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (pp. 93-97). Montreal: University of Montreal.

Gouthro, P. (1999b). The homeplace - not the marketplace: Developing a critical feminist approach to adult education. In Rose, A. (Ed.), Proceedings: 40th Annual Adult Education Research Conference (pp. 121-126). DeKalb: IL: Northern Illinois University.

Greene, M. (1991). Forward. In C. Witherell & N. Noddings (Eds.), Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education (pp. viv-xi). New York: Teachers College.

Greenspan, M. (1983). A new approach to women and therapy. Blue Ridge Summit: TAB Books.

Griffiths-Maxymiw, J. (1999). Mothers and sons: Today's challenges and possibilities. Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering, 1, (1), 180-186.

Grumet, M. (1991). The politics of personal knowledge. In C. Witherell, & N. Noddings (Eds.), Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education (pp. 67-77). New York: Teachers College.

Gustafson, D. (1998). Embodied learning about health and healing: Involving the body as content and pedagogy. Canadian Woman Studies, 17, (4), 52-55.

Gustafson, D. (1999). Embodied learning: The body as an epistemological site. In M. Mayberry & E. Rose (Eds.), Meeting the challenge: Innovative feminist pedagogies in action (pp. 249–274). New York: Routledge.

Habermas, J. (1971). Knowledge and human interest. Toronto: Beacon. (J. Shapiro, Trans.). (Original work published in German, 1968).

Hall, B. (1996). Adult education and the political economy of global economic change. In P. Wangoola & F. Youngman (Eds.). Towards a transformative political economy of adult education: Theoretical and practical challenges (pp. 105-126). DeKalb, IL: LEPS.

Hall, P. (1998). Mothering mythology in the late twentieth century: Science, gender lore, and celebratory narrative. Canadian Woman Studies, 18, (2/3), 59-62.

Harding, S. (1993). Rethinking standpoint epistemology: "What is strong objectivity"? In L. Alcoff & E. Potter (Eds.), Feminist epistemologies (pp. 49-82). New York: Routledge.

Hart. M. (1990). Liberation through consciousness raising. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning (pp. 47-73). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hart, M. (1992). Working and educating for life: Feminist and international perspectives on adult education. New York: Routledge.

Hart, M. (1993). Educative or miseducative work: A critique of the current debate on work and education. The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 7, (1), 19-36.

Hart, M. (1995). Subsistence knowing. In S. Merriam (Ed.), Selected writings on philosophy and adult education (2nd. ed. pp. 239-248). Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Hart, M. (1996). Literacy and motherwork. In J. Hautecoeur (Ed.), Alpha 96 (pp. 33-56). Toronto: Culture Concepts

Hart, M. (1997). Life-affirming work, raising children, and education. Convergence, 9, (2/3), 128-135.

Hart, M. (1998). The experience of living and learning in different worlds. Studies in Continuing Education, 20, (2), 187–200.

Hartsock, N. (1983). Money, sex and power: Toward a feminist historical materialism. New York: Longman.

Hemmons, W. (1995). The impact of the law on single mothers and the "innocent". In B. Dickerson (Ed.), African American single mothers: Understanding their lives and families. (pp. 94-116). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Hirsch, M. (1989). The mother/daughter plot: Narrative, psychoanalysis, feminism. Bloomington: Indiana University.

hooks, b. (1984). Feminist theory: From margins to center. Boston: South End.

hooks, b. (1988). Talking back: Thinking feminist thinking black. Toronto. Between the lines.

hooks, b. (1995). Toward a revolutionary feminist pedagogy. In S. Merriam (Ed.), Selected writings on philosophy and adult education (2nd ed., pp. 197-206). Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Irigaray, L. (1993). Je, tu, nous: Toward a culture of difference. (A. Martin, Trans.). New York: Routledge. (Original work published in 1990).

Josselson, R., & Lieblich, A. (Eds.). (1993). Interpreting experience: The narrative study of lives (Vol. 1). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Josselson, R., & Lieblich, A. (Eds.). (1995). Interpreting experience: The narrative study of lives (Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kannabiran, V. (1989). Patriarchy. In Pressing against the boundaries: Report of an FAO-FFHC/AD South Asian workshop on women & development (pp. 24-27). New Delhi: Bangalore.

Kaplan, E. A. (1992). Motherhood and representation: The mother in popular culture and melodrama. New York: Routledge.

Kaplan, T. (1997). Forward. In A. Oakley & J. Mitchell (Eds.), Who's afraid of feminism? Seeing through the backlash. (pp. xiii- viii). New York: New.

Kidd, R. (1959). How adults learn. New York: Association.

Kirby, S., & McKenna, K. (1989). In experience research, social change: Methods from the margins. Toronto: Garamond.

Kitchen, B. (1997). 'Common sense' assaults on families. In D. Ralph, A. Reginbald, & N. St.-Armand (Eds.), Open for business, closed to people: Mike Harris's Ontario (pp. 103-112). Toronto: Fernwood.

Kolb, D. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Englewoods Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Laqueur, T. (1992). The facts of fatherhood. In B. Thorne & M. Yalom (Eds.), Rethinking the family: Some feminist questions (pp. 155-175). Boston: Northeastern University.

Lenskyj, H. J. (1993). The politics of feminist pedagogy: Implication for teaching women in the human services professions. In D. Martens (Ed.), Weaving alliances (pp. 35-46). Ottawa: CWSA.

Lerner, G. (1990). A working hypothesis. In S. Ruth (Ed.), Issues in feminism: An introduction to women's studies (2nd. ed., pp. 187-197). Toronto: Mayfield.

Lerner, G. (1986). The creation of patriarchy. New York: Oxford University.

Linehan, S. (1992). Giving birth the 'white man's way'. Healthsharing, Summer/Fall, 11-15.

Livingstone, D. (1998). What is informal learning? In NALL: New approaches to lifelong learning. (pp. 1-8. On Line). Available: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/dept/sese/nall/inflearn.htm

Loewen, K. (1982). Meditations: On a place & way of life. Winnipeg: Hyperion.

Lorde, A. (1984). Sister outsider. Freedom, CA: Crossing.

Luke, C. (Ed.). Feminisms and pedagogies of everyday life. New York: State University.

Luttrell, W. (1997). Schoolsmart and motherwise: Working-class women's identity and schooling. New York: Routledge.

Maher, F. (1987). Toward a richer theory of feminist pedagogy: a comparison of "liberation" and "gender" models for teaching and learning. Journal of Education, 169, (3), 91-100.

Man, G. (1996). The experiences of women in middle class Hong Kong Chinese immigrant families in Canada: An investigation in institutional and organizational processes. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto: Toronto.

Manaster, G., & Corsini, R. (1982). Individual psychology: Theory and practice. Chicago: Adler School of Professional Psychology.

Marlatt, D. (1984). Touch to my tongue. Edmonton: Longspoon.

Martins, K. (1997). Introduction. In K. Martins & H. Harms (Eds.), In her own voice: Childbirth stories from Mennonite women (pp. xiii - xxiii). Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.

Martins, K., & Harms, H. (Eds.). (1997). In her own voice: Childbirth stories from Mennonite women. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.

McIntosh, P. (1990). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. Independent School, Winter, 31-36.

Merriam, S., & Clark, M. (1991). Lifelines: Patterns of work, love and learning in adulthood. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S., & Clark, M. (1993). Learning from life experience: What makes it significant? International Journal of Lifelong Education, 12, (2), 129-138.

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. Adult Education, XXVIII, (2), 100-110.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning (pp. 1-20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J (1991). Transformative dimensions of adult learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Michelson, E. (1998). Re-membering: The return of the body to experiential learning. Studies in Continuing Education, 20, (2), 217-233.

Mies, M. (1986). Patriarchy and accumulation on a worldscale: Women in the international division of labour. London: Zed.

Miles, A. (1996a). Adult education for global social change: Feminism and women's movement. In P. Wangoola & F. Youngman (Eds.), Towards a transformative political economy of adult education: theoretical and practical challenges (pp. 278-292). DeKalb, IL: LEPS.

Miles, A. (1996b). Integrative feminisms: Building global visions 1960 - 1990's. New York: Routledge.

Miles, M., & Huberman, A., (1994). An expanded sourcebook: Qualitative data analysis. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller, J. B. (1976). Toward a new psychology of women. Boston: Beacon.

Ministry of Supply and Services. (1993). Changing the landscape. (Canadian panel of violence against women, pp. 295-280). Ottawa: Government Printing Office.

Morgan, K. (1989). Of woman born? How old fashioned! In C. Overall (Ed.), The future of human reproduction (pp. 60-79). Toronto: Women's.

Nelsen, J. (1987). Positive discipline: A warm, practial, step-by-step sourcebook for parents and teachers. New York: Ballantine.

Nelsen, J., Lott, L., & Glenn, H. (1993). Positive discipline A-Z: 1001: Solutions to everyday parenting problems. Rocklin, CA: Prima.

Nelson, F. (1996). Lesbian motherhood: An exploration of Canadian lesbian families. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Neumann, A. & Peterson, P. (1997). Researching lives: Women, scholarship and autobiography in education. In A. Neumann & P. Peterson (Eds.), Learning from our lives: Women, research, and autobiography in education (pp. 1-17). New York: Teachers College.

Newman, M. (1991). Defining the enemy: Adult education in social action. Syndey, Australia: Stewart Victor.

Newman, M. (1995). Adult education and social action. In G. Foley (Ed.), Understanding adult education and training (pp. 247-260). St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Newman, M. (2000). Control, learning and resistence. In T. Sork, V. Chapman & R. St. Clair (Eds.), Proceedings of the 41 Annual Adult Education Research (pp. 303-307). Vancouver: University of British Columbia.

Ng, R. (1991). Sexism, racism and Canadian nationalism. In J. Vorst (Ed.), Race, class, gender: Bonds and barriers (pp. 12-26). Toronto: Garamond.

Noddings, N. (1984). Caring: A feminine approach to ethics & moral education. Berkeley: University of California.

Noddings, N. (1989). Women and evil. Berkeley: University of California.

O'Brien, M. (1981). The politics of reproduction. London: Routledge.

O'Sullivan, E. (1999). Transformative learning: Educational vision for the 21st century. Toronto: Zed.

Oakley, A., & Mitchell, J. (1997). Introduction to the American edition. In A. Oakley & J. Mitchell (Eds.), Who's afraid of feminism? Seeing through the backlash (pp. 1-12). New York: New.

Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), Doing feminist research (pp. 31-61). London: Routledge & Kegan.

Oakley, A. (1979). Becoming a mother. Oxford: Martin Robertson & Co.

Ortner, S. (1974). Is female to male as nature is to culture? In M. Rosaldo & L. Lamphere (Eds.), Woman, culture and society (pp. 67-88). Stanford: Stanford University.

Out of patients. (1994). Have you been sexually abused by a health professional? A guide for health care consumers. (Brochure) Toronto: Government Printing Office.

Overall, C. (1989). (Ed.). The future of human reproduction. Toronto: Women's.

Paradkar, B. (2000, July 22). Redefining fatherhood: Today's dads want to be more involved with their children. The Toronto Star, H1, H2.

Price, J. (1988). Motherhood: What it does to your mind. London: Pandora.

Randolph, S. (1995). African American children in single-mother families. In B. Dickerson (Ed.), African American single mothers: Understanding their lives and families. (pp. 117-145). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Rapp, R. (1992). Family and class in contemporary America: Notes toward an understanding of ideology. In B.Thorne & M. Yalom (Eds.), Rethinking the family: Some feminist questions (pp. 49-70). Boston: Northeastern University.

Razack, S. (1998). Looking white people in the eye. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Razack, S. (1993). Storytelling for social change. Gender and Education, 5, (1), 55-70.

Redekop, M. (1997). Magdalene Redekop. In K. Martins & H. Harms (Eds.), In her own voice: Childbirth stories from Mennonite women (pp.183-193). Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.

Reich, W. (1970). The mass psychology of fascism. (V. Carfangno, Trans.). New York: Harper & Collins. (Original work published in 1946).

Rich, A. (1986a). Blood, bread and poetry: selected prose 1979-1985. New York: Norton.

Rich, A. (1986b). Of woman born: Motherhood as experience and institution. New York: W. W. Norton.

Rifkin, J. (1995). The end of work: The decline of the global labor force and the dawn of the post-market era. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.

Rodin, R. (1991). Going it alone: A handful and a footful. In M. Dragu, S. Sheard & S. Swan (Eds.), Mothers talk back (pp. 161-166). Toronto: Coach House.

Ronai, C. (1995). Multiple reflections of child sex abuse: An argument for a layered account. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 23, (4), January (395-426).

Rosenberg, H. (1987). Motherwork, stress and depression: The costs of privatized social reproduction. In H. Maroney & M. Luxton (Eds.), Feminism and political economy (pp. 181-196). Toronto: Methuen.

Rubin, H., & Rubin, I. (1995). Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ruddick, S. (1989). Maternal thinking: Towards a politics of peace. Boston: Beacon.

Ryckman, R. (1989). Theories of personality (4th ed.). Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole.

Saadawi, N. E. (1997). The Nawal El Saadawi reader. London: Zed.

Salillari, S. (1999). Videotaped testimonies of Refugee Mothers from Kosovo. In Mothers and education: Issues and directions for maternal pedagogy. Symposium conducted at the 3rd Annual International Conference of the Association for Research on Mothering. St. Catherines: Brock University.

Salter, P. (1991). Raising Fraser: A special needs child. In M. Dragu S. Sheard & S. Swan (Eds.), Mothers talk back (pp. 103-110). Toronto: Coach House.

Sanford, L., & Donovan. M. (1984). Women & self-esteem. London: Penguin.

Sarton, M. (1961). A small room: A novel. New York: Norton.

Schroeder, A. (1990). The Mennonites: A pictorial history of their lives in Canada. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

Senge, P. (1990). The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization. New York: Doubleday.

Shapiro, S., Skinulis, K., & Skinulis, R. (1996). Practical parenting: A common sense guide to raising co-operative, self-reliant and loving children. Toronto: Parenting Education Publications.

Sharma, R. (1998). Leadership wisdom from the monk who sold his Ferrari: The eight rituals of visionary leaders. Toronto: Harper Collins.

Sheppard, M. (1998). The "astronaut" family and the schools. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto: Toronto.

Shiva, V. (1989). Staying alive: Women, ecology and development. London: Zed.

Smith, D. (1987). The everyday world as problematic. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Sparks, B. (2000). Informal learning in community: The role of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. In T. Sork, V. Chapman & R. St. Clair (Eds.),

Proceedings of the 41 Annual Adult Education Research (pp. 428-432). Vancouver: University of British Columbia

Spradley, J. (1979). The ethnographic interview. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Spock, B. (1954). The pocket book of baby and child care, as cited in Thurer, S. (1994). The myths of motherhood: How culture reinvents the good mother. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Spong, J. S. (1982). Born of a woman: A bishop rethinks the birth of Jesus. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Stewart, S. (1991). A lesbian mom re-invents the extended family. In M. Dragu, S. Sheard & S. Swan (Eds.), Mothers talk back (pp. 191-206). Toronto: Coach House.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park: CA: Sage.

Thorne, B. (1992). Feminism and the family: Two decades of thought. In B. Thorne & M. Yalom (Eds.), Rethinking the family: Some feminist questions (pp. 3-30). Boston: Northeastern University.

Thurer, S. (1994). The myths of motherhood: How culture reinvents the good mother. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Tisdell, E. (1993). Feminism and adult learning: Power, pedagogy, and praxis. New Directions for Adult and Contiuing Education, 57, Spring, 91–103.

Tisdell, E. (1995). Feminism and adult learning: power, pedagogy, and praxis. In S. Merriam (Ed.), Selected writings on philosophy and adult education (2nd ed., pp. 207-223). Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Tisdell, E. (1998). Poststructural feminist pedagogies: The possibilities and limitations of feminist emancipatory adult learning theory and practice. Adult Eduation Quarterly, 48, (3) Spring, 139–156.

Tough, A. (1971). The adult's learning projects: A fresh approach to theory and practice in adult learning. Toronto: OISE.

Turner, J. (1999, March 14). Should we need a license to be a parent? The Toronto Star. pp. A1, A4.

Walters, S. (1996). Gender and adult education: Training gender-sensitive and feminist adult educators in South Africa - an emerging curriculum. In P. Wangoola & F. Youngman (Eds.), Towards a transformative political economy of adult education: theoretical and practical challenges (pp. 293-320). DeKalb, IL: LEPS.

Waring, M. (1988). Counting for nothing: What men value & what women are worth. Wellington, NZ: Bridget Williams.

Waring, M. (1996). Three masquerades: Essays on equality, work and human rights. Auckland, NZ: Bridget Williams.

Wehking , C. L., & Janzen, G. (1999). Will the real mother please stand up: A selection of myths and folktales about mothering. In Mothers and education: Issues and directions for maternal pedagogy. Performance conducted at the 3rd Annual International Conference of the Association for Research on Mothering. St. Catherines: Brock University.

Weiss, E. (1989). Mothers talk about learning disabilities: Personal feelings, practical advice. Toronto: Prentice Hall.

Wilson, S. J. (1996). Women, families and work (4th ed.). Toronto McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Winnicott, (1964). The child, the family and the outside world. Markham, ON: Pelican.

Witherell, C., & Noddings, N. (1991). Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education. New York: Columbia University.

Working group on women's health. (1990). Working together: A framework for the development of policies and programs. In Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group (pp. 1-52). Ottawa: Government Printing Office.

White, B. L. (1995). The first three years of life: The completely revised and updated edition of the parenting classic (Rev. ed.). New York: Simon & Schuster.

Zacharias, P. (1976). Reinland: An experience in community. Reinland, MB: Reinland Centennial Committee.

Ziegler, D. (1995). Single parenting: A visual analysis. In B. Dickerson (Ed.), African American single mothers: Understanding their lives and families (pp. 80-93). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Appendix A: Participant Letter

Date

Dear

I am a student in the Adult Education Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (University of Toronto), where I am currently working on my doctoral thesis with my supervisor, Dr. Budd Hall. I am writing to you today to ask for your assistance. I am conducting a research study on the experience, knowledge creation and learning of motherwork through women's storytelling. In order to do this I would like to ask if you would like to participate in this research project and/or if you would assist me by referring me to other women who mother, and who might be interested in participating.

If you would like to participate, I will arrange for an interview that will last about one and a half hours. During the interview, I will ask you to provide me with some relevant demographic information. I will then invite you to tell me several significant stories that involve "turning point moments" within your experience and work as a mother. Then a short semi structured interview will follow. This is designed to explore the knowledge creation and learning that has evolved as a result of your experience. In order to transcribe and document the interviews appropriately, I prefer to tape the interviews. The transcriptions of the interviews will be shared with you, so that you may clarify, revise or correct the information. The transcribed interview will then be used, along with those from other participants to provide a collective analysis of the experience and learning of motherwork and to determine ways in which this experience, knowledge creation and learning can contribute to adult learning theory.

If you prefer not to participate, but would like to suggest other potential participants, please ask them if I may send this letter to them. The criteria for the selection of participants are that they have been and are involved in the primary care of a child or children, and at least one of those children is currently an adolescent or teenager. Further, I am looking for women with varied backgrounds with regard to socio-economic circumstances, racial/cultural/religious origins,

family structure and nature of experience. Names and identities of participants will be kept confidential, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you for your time in considering this study. I will be in contact with you within the next two weeks to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Rose Barg

Appendix B: Interview Consent Form

I, _____ hereby give permission to Rose Barg, researcher and doctoral student in the Adult Education Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto, to interview me and to tape record our discussion on this day _____. I understand that the purpose of the interview is to collect information regarding the knowledge creation, experience and learning of motherwork, as I have experienced it. I also understand that I will have a chance to clarify, correct or revise the transcription of this interview prior to the completion of this research study. I understand that the information I provide in this interview will be used, along with the information from other participants to provide a collective analysis of the experience and learning of motherwork and to determine ways in which this experience, knowledge creation and learning can contribute to theories of adult learning. I further understand that my identity as a research participant will be kept confidential, and that I may withdraw from this study at any time.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Researcher's Signature

Appendix C: Guide for First Interview

1. Personal/demographic data:

    - address (general area)
    - telephone/fax/email address
    - age group (general)
    - cultural/racial/ethic/religious backgrounds
    - family structure
    - number of children/ages/sexes
    - highest level of education attained
    - occupation(s)
    - any other unique personal/demographic information

2. Invitation to tell stories of significant moments (turning point personal experience stories) that involved their work as mothers.
   The researcher will:

    - extend an invitation to explore stories individually (between stories) or after all the stories have been told (see item 3)
    - note points of conflict
    - note significant moments
    - note points of change/conflict/growth/decision making
    - ask for clarification
    - summarize
    - probe
    - normalize
    - offer empathy and encouragement

3. Exploring the knowledge creation/learning within the stories.
   (These questions will be used in a semi-structured way to guide this part of the interview. Only questions relevant to the personal experience story will be used.)
    - what part of this experience/story is most vivid to you, as you think back on it? What about this moment stands out for you?
    - how did you make sense out of this experience for yourself?
    - how and in what way did you change as a result of this experience?
    - what would you say you know now, that you didn't know before, as a result of this experience?
    - how do you think you learned that? (focus on process)
    - how has your understanding of what it is to mother changed as a result of this experience? (Did you experience any contradictions regarding what you thought mothering

would/should be like and how it was/is for you, as a result of this experience?)

- what support persons/resources or programs did you access to get help during the time you had this experience? In what way did accessing these support persons/programs help or hinder you?
- when did you feel powerless/overpowered/empowered?
- at what points in this experience did you feel valued/undervalued/taken for granted? By whom?
- what did you learn about yourself, your assumptions, your power to take action, as a result of your experience?
- what did you learn about society and its power structures as a result of your experience? how did this learning impact you?
- what else do you think you learned from your experiences?
- reflecting back on your experience, if you were to give advice to someone in a similar situation today, what advice would your give them?

4. For the next story:
   - follow items 2 and 3 above

5. Is there anything else regarding your experience as a mother that you would like to tell me?

6. Closing
   - thank participant for the contribution
   - clarify when and how we will be in touch
   - ask if there are any questions/concern/reflections

Appendix D: Guide for Second Interview

1. You have read the transcript of your interview, and some of the (draft) creative writing I have put together.

   As a researcher, I'm afraid I will never be able to do justice to your lived experience, feelings and learning. Therefore, upon reading the interview and the stories/poetry, what are some of your initial responses to your experience/the stories/this process?

2. I am including some of the analysis of the transcripts from the perspective of gender, race, class, and ethnic location.

   From this perspective

   - In what ways do you think your experiences were influenced by your location within these frameworks?
   - How do you think your experiences might have differed if you were of a different race or ethic group? (i.e. white? black?)
   - If you were male? (i.e. feel guilty all the time? feel/be powerless? worked as hard at change? maintaining relationships?)
   - If you had more/less money (were married, with supportive husband/ were a poor single mom?)

3. Specifics questions that relate to first interview:

   I noted that in your stories there was a strong theme of _____. and an ideology of _____.
   - How do you think your heritage contributed to this theme/ideology?
   - How do you think the structures in our society contribute to this theme/ideology?

4. Tell me a little about your heritage....
   - Father
   - Mother
   - Your own childhood
   - Siblings
   - Ethnic/religious/cultural ideology

5. Would you say that you parent in a similar way to the way you were parented?
    - How similar? How different?
    - Did you have other parenting role models?
    - How did you make choices regarding your own parenting in relation to your role models?

6. What would you say are your overall/conceptual goals in parenting?

7. What/how do you hope that your children will remember you and the work you did as a mother?
    - What do you think they will remember?

8. Learning
    - Overall, from your stories, I would say that you learned _____ as a result of your motherwork. Can you comment on this?
    - What, if anything do you think you have learned from your children?

9. What if anything, did you learn from this process of self-reflection, storytelling and turning point moments within mothering?