

SCHOOLING FOR CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined relationships between educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce. As well, the defining and competing discourses embedded within policies and regulations were analyzed, and the position of class was unpacked to better understand day-to-day schooling experiences for children of divorce. Educators found that teaching was challenged by political and social expectations defined within educator discourse, and that their relationships with children of divorce were often different from their relationships with children from two-parent families. Divorced single mothers felt stigmatized within the schools, and felt that although their contribution to their children's schooling success was comparable to the contribution of two-parent families, their financial restrictions were not appreciated. The children of divorce stated that their school, teachers, and economic challenges changed their day-to-day schooling. Schools operate within an agenda that defines the roles and limitations of educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce, placing each in positions that determine their relationships and day-to-day schooling experiences.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Presentation of the study

This study looked at schooling for children of divorce through the lens of three differently involved groups; educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce, and how they interface when those relationships are regulated through policies and discourse embedded in government/corporate politics. Political policies and discourse construct, maintain, and extend inequality - through not only departmental fiscal constraints, education budget cuts, and resource control of mothers, but through implying that the 'parent/school partnership' discourse is uniformly possible across class. Government policies suggest that all families have the same ability to engage in their children's schooling, and when children are unsuccessful it is the family that has failed. The term 'family' is used in an ungendered and unclassed way that places severe burdens on poor single mothered families. For children of divorce, the parent is most often the mother and the discourse engages an unconscious mothering hierarchy and blame. Overall, divorced single mothers do not have the same resources as mothers in two-parent families and children of divorce do not have the same schooling opportunities. Socially we become anesthetized by the discourse, fall into the mistaken opinion that schooling solutions are available specifically at an individual level, and unconsciously participate in extending the inequality of our children and ourselves.

Me – woven throughout

I was the child of a two-parent, middle-class, traditional Christian family. My parents were young and my mom and dad often played with me. I knew that I had a great childhood. I was happy, my brother and sisters were happy, and life was good. We rode our tricycles up and down Morrison Street, played 'Zorro' and other

imagination games in the big fields around where we lived, and went to ballgames with our parents to watch our uncle and friends play for the Royals. We went camping and fishing in the summer, camping and sliding in the winter, skated on the frozen pond, and played with our dogs. We put together puzzles and played board games or Dominoes with our grand and great grand parents. My grandfather told my dad that three things in life are important: 'always keep your word, always tell the truth, and always care of your family'. His word is his honour, he is truthful in all aspects of his life, and he still takes care of his family as much as we will let him... and some when we pretend we don't want or need it. He worked hard to provide a solid home environment, and all that we would need for school. He and my grandfather taught us how to bait a hook, wade in brooks, fish the quiet pools, and when we didn't catch any fish, pick fiddleheads or wild berries to take home.

As our grandfather and dad cared for us in their ways, my grandmothers and mom cared for us in theirs. They baked every Saturday. I remember begging for the donut holes before they were dropped into the electric frying pan of sizzling grease, and the smell of baking bread and ginger cookies. I remember bacon and eggs on Sunday mornings, or oatmeal before we went to school, Campbell's tomato soup and salmon sandwiches for lunch, and meat, vegetables, and potatoes for dinner. Our clothes were always cleaned and pressed, our hair pin-curl neat, and we were scrubbed until we were squeaky-clean. Mom provided a fun home, because she was content. I remember the happy songs of Perry Como, 'catch a falling star and put it in your pocket, save it for a rainy day...' or Doris Day... 'que sera sera, what ever will be will be...' She sang to us in her sweet and clear soprano voice and told us stories before we went to sleep. I wanted to be the kind of mom she was, and how I viewed marriage and a mother's caring and responsibilities results from a secure home and

how my mother and grandmothers cared for me. This was the standard for how I felt I should care for my children – and how others should care for theirs.

I came from a home that many of my friends visited. It was where my - and the friends of my brother and sisters - would often 'hang'. Until 1989 my own children came from a home as similar to my childhood one as I could make it. When their father and I divorced, however, our one happy *home* became two unhappy *homes*, and the children were split apart. Their lives, friends, and schooling took on changes that were inconsistent with the schooling of their friends and what they received up to that time.

My religious, personal, and social beliefs on family and mothering are strong. Some have changed and perhaps will change again, but I recognize that I have a particular understanding of family, divorce, mothering, and poverty, and it was a significant thread in this thesis.

During my marriage our family was financially secure. After divorce, while my son lived with his father he was financially secure, and my daughter who lived with me was not. My son had anything he wanted, my daughter had little that she wanted. After my son moved to live with his sister and I, he also had little. My own understanding and experiences of family, home, good mother, bad mother, school, poverty, and success have influenced my understanding and interpretation of the stories of others. This research is clearly reflective of my own cultural and religious ideology, and even research through a critical lens cannot separate me from a strong heritage. To say it could, would be similar to separating me from my skin.

This was problematic for me as I wondered how I would honestly retell stories. I understood, however, that educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce

are the *other* within the institution of schooling, and that our struggles and desires for fairness and equality for children were at least similar.

Studying across implies a rough parity between researcher and researched in terms of power and privilege, or at least a willingness to create a dialogue across differences, because the researcher shares some political goals with the researched and seeks understanding that would help build alliances in furtherance of shared goals. (Kelly, 2000, p. 191)

When children of middle or upper socioeconomic conditions and two-parent families enter the schools each day, they bring with them a myriad of life experiences. For example, although 'upper class'ⁱ and/or two-parentⁱⁱ, we all had friends who came to school from alcoholic or abusive homes. Some of our friends had emotionally disturbed and unsupportive parents, parents who were over-protective, and/or parents who were religiously demanding. There were families that were very poor, families that were economically similar to mine, and families who had the first, newest, and best of everything money could buy. I knew of no divorced families and all of my friends were from two-parent homes.

When the children of two-parent, upper- lifestyle families enter the classrooms, schools have automatically looked after those children in ways that are set out in school policies and cultural norms. Children who do not come from this type of home bring with them life experiences that educators and schools may see as *separate* from the school and these children are not cared for in the same ways.

As politicians continue to redefine their educational responsibilities, educators and mothers are forced to look at their participation in schooling in new ways. Mothers may give extra time helping their children with homework, or use financial resources providing for tutors. Mothers also help their children with school fund-raising so that they have a chance to win one of the many small - but incentive-building prizes offered.

Not only do mothers give extra, but educators take to school additional treats in their lunches for the child that does not have hot lunch money or a recess treat, or brings extra sneakers and snowsuits from home. This is just one way that educators understand that family and schooling cannot be separated.

The ways schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. (Joyce Epstein, 1995, p. 1)

In the above article 'School/family/community partnerships: caring for the children we share', Epstein summarizes partnership-building guidelines that would make schooling *better* for all partners involved. She notes that partnerships cannot be built until educators 'know how to go about it'. I agree with Epstein, and add that until the discourse that defines 'partners' is unpacked, partnership building would not be beneficial to those normally marginalized. Educators, family, and community work within school institutions constructed and bound by a political, corporate, and social tripartite agency.

Governmental acts, regulations, and policies in New Brunswick place additional economic burdens on children who live with their divorced single moms. The largest group of poor in Canada is single parent mothers and their children.ⁱⁱⁱ Because I am divorced I am poorer, my children have fewer opportunities, and their changes and experiences in school urged me to research the experiences of other children of divorce.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the schooling experiences for children of divorce by examining the inter-relationships between the children, divorced single mothers and educators, and the intra-relationships within the framework of

school policy, acts, and regulations. I was interested to learn what happens to children of divorce in school when the direction of their schooling, relationships, and learning experiences are constructed through the politics of court orders, legalese, educational policies, government/corporate agenda, social effect, teacher's influence, attitudes, and the realities of two separated parents.

I was also interested in looking at and understanding the day-to-day for educators who have children of divorce in their classrooms. How do educators, whose daily work - like that of the children in their class - who work within this institution called school and under court orders and parental frustration, carry out their school day?

My third interest was the day-to-day for divorced single mothers. Mothers have many considerations in getting their children ready for school. Divorced single moms have special considerations when they 'do it alone' and the mothering discourse that requires work schooling their children is most often in direct conflict with the realities of their resources. As a divorced single parent, I was interested in hearing the stories of other moms who readied their children for school. I wanted to know where their lives intersected with educators and policies that influence schooling for their children.

In sum, how do the relationships of educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce intersect within the schooling framework, and in what ways do those relationships affect schooling for the children of divorce? As well, how do the discourses that construct and define the roles of educator, divorced single mother, and child of divorce affect these relationships? How are relationships formed within their discursively defined framework?

What brought me to the study?

Children of divorce – my children

It was the experiences of my own children and the children of my divorcing friends before, during, and after divorce, that brought me to this study.^{iv}

He said I wasn't crying and wasn't mad. I was crying and I was mad! Dad embarrassed me in front of my teachers and friends. He said I'd better go with him peacefully or he'd put me over his shoulders and carry me out and that social worker said she went to homes to get kids and take them to school and she's taken them before in their pajamas and I'd better go. I kicked the pop machine on the way out. I put a big dent in it. I was really mad and I was crying. I wasn't crying when I got to Circle School though 'cause I wasn't going to let Grant see me cry. But I wasn't laughing like dad said.^v (Personal communication, Mac, August 21, 2002)

Nearly everyday for silent reading, Sarah and I go outside of the classroom and sit on the steps. She is very sad and cries. I hold her on my knee and let her talk. She is a very sad little girl.^{vi} (Personal communication, Ms. C, August 16, 2002)

The above quotations are in part what brought me to this research. Schooling for these two children of divorce was dramatically affected because of the divorce of their parents. The first quote indicates the impact divorce had on the relationships between parents and child, parents and educator, and educator and child. Mac spoke about being mad, crying, and embarrassment. The educators and administrators did not know how to react emotionally or legally, and Mac recognizing that he was powerless over both the situation and his emotions, was embarrassed. Having no choice in his schooling and his removal in the middle of class in front of teachers and friends hurt him deeply.

Sarah's situation also highlights the educator/child relationship. Her teacher, however, was not confronted with a complicated adversarial legal situation, only a sad Sarah. She comforted Sarah's tears and where they were embarrassing for Mac, Sarah did not have to think about her reaction. Each teacher reacted differently to the children's tears and distress.

I have had much heartache and guilt recalling the schooling days of my own children, and presumed that all children of divorce suffered the same experiences. I originally only remembered all the tough times they experienced, the nights crying, the sick days, and them not wanting to go to school. Remembering all of those tough times validated my own feelings of being a 'bad' mother – the kind of mother that my religion, society, and school said I was – and a mother very unlike my own. I felt I was a bad mother because I was a divorced single mother who left a good father for my children, could not provide the things they once had, and - who also at that time - could not provide a stable mom. I was one of the many divorced single moms who suffer immense guilt and depression. Our beliefs that we are bad mothers and people may affect our children, our relationship with them, their relationships with others, and their schooling.

Some of my divorced friends, however, had different stories and as I began pouring through the saved and treasured boxes of my children's school papers, I found other stories. As well as the difficult times, I found experiences in school of success and fun, mostly because of educators.

My son was in grade six when divorce proceedings started between his father and me. He fortunately had an incredible teacher who loved her class, loved to teach, and loved to learn from her students. Her class was one of creative interaction and infectious laughter. Grade six and his move to junior high seemed uninterrupted although his parents were divorcing. He lived with his father one street away from his sister and I, two streets away from his grandparents, and still next door to his best friend. My son visited back and forth at will. Although he was visibly upset by the divorce and expressed deep hurt, he enjoyed his *Star-Wars* bedroom and new home. He also had the love and involvement of his dad, sister, grandparents, aunts, uncles,

and me. His schooling seemed to remain consistent with what he had experienced from grades one to six regarding his academic performance, daily character, and extra-curricular activities.

As he moved to Junior High and into grade seven, he continued to be well liked by his friends and teachers. Everyone knew him and he was involved in many activities. He enjoyed school until his experience in junior high when he was caught in a horrific custody battle that interrupted his schooling. He was no longer the happy-go-lucky kid he had been. He did not want to go to school, had an upset stomach many days, forgot his books, arrived late, and did not do his homework. He became sad, angry, fearful, and depressed. His only comforts were his friend next door, whom he played with by the hour, and his grandparents who remain powerfully connected to him.

As custody decisions were being made and time passed, his teachers rather than punish him for not passing in his homework, being late, and forgetting his books, became involved in his life and became his friend. By the middle of his eighth year, marks began to climb. I often was told that my great son used his comedic charismatic charm and quick sarcastic wit to have fun with his friends and teachers. When I went to school to volunteer, take treats, or attend a game, I would always hear enthusiastic yells 'hey, hi mom!' from his classmates. Teachers in his elementary and junior high years took an interest in his schooling and well-being, and worked with and for him. I expect they took many liberties with school policy and disregarded educational agenda and the regulations of institutionalized education. As he moved through junior high, he began to show signs of his old self, although problems continued at home.

It seems that administrators and educators make powerful influences in the lives of children in their schools. It was never so apparent to me though as when he

entered high school. It was to be a very different experience. Although school rules and policies were the same as in elementary and junior high, happy and productive schooling was next to impossible. No longer was his well-being of primary importance. Instead, curriculum and school standings took precedence. My son and I, most teachers and administration conflicted regularly. When I attempted to talk to an educator, he said that he 'could see that I was not a very bright woman' and that I 'did not know anything about the school and how the Department of Education was structured'. I was attending university at the time, and visited him before class wearing jeans and a sweatshirt – and had my hair in a ponytail. I felt that he labeled me a poor uneducated single parent mother. Not only did I consider him wrong, uninformed, arrogant, and rude, it seemed he in no way understood how the social and political construction of single mothers keeps many poor, marginalized, and uneducated. It seemed he also did not understand how that construction affects her children and his students. I was told that my son could not change classes, and his comedic sarcasm would not be tolerated. One of the administrators cut up his student identification card in front of us stating 'he put on a hat when his picture was taken, and hats are not allowed in school.' He would not tolerate that kind of sarcasm and defiance from 'his student'. Although his high school years were filled with anxiety, bitterness, and depression, he did enjoy one teacher who taught a class he jokingly referred to as "World of Foods'. This teacher always made a special effort to go to him whether at school, in the mall, or downtown – with a large smile on her face and ask how he was doing.

This very angry, hurt young man could hardly wait to get out of high school and he had no intention of ever going to school again. University was out of the question for him and there was no talking him into it. He saw and still sees school as a place of

distress. Very different than the boy who had a curious enthusiasm for all the world and what the school experience had to offer.

My daughter's schooling was affected in both similar and different ways than her brother's. In kindergarten she was shy but comical, and everyone's friend.

The pre-divorce period was not long, from May to the end of August, when my six-year old daughter and I moved from the home. While her brother stayed in our beautiful new home with his father, she moved into a small older home with me. A great part of my continuing guilt is wondering if she thought she was being punished for something she had done and was being taken away from her dad, brother, and new bedroom. Only a field away, however, sister, brother, and mom walked to school together. In grade one the divorce and move made her insecure and very sad. Her brother was her life and she had been separated from him. She withdrew from her friends and relied heavily on her teachers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, dad, and me for support. We held hands and walked to and from school each day. She stayed with her teachers on the playground and seldom played with anyone but her brother or cousin. She began to have night terrors that interrupted her sleep and schooling.

At school, however, with the interest and caring of her teachers, and flexible inner-school rules, my little daughter moved on in her second year with more assuredness. Her activities took on creative characteristics as she drew, colored, danced, and started writing stories and poetry. She began to move away from sadness and have fun at school. She began to play with friends again and go to birthday parties. By grade three it seemed some of her best hours were at school. Elementary educators were fantastic to both of the children through out this period. I could not have asked for more caring, concern, and attempts to introduce fun back into their lives. I also knew school rules were often bent or simply ignored as though they

did not exist. The children were not penalized for being late, forgetting homework, or failing a test. And, I as their divorced single mother was treated no differently than mothers from two-parent homes or when I was one of them. Fitting in was not difficult for us and even though we were not as well off as before, we were still better off than the single mothered families from the rural areas or lower income housing area. My children were from a divorced family, and my daughter and I were poor, but we were not yet *seen* as different or a poor single mothered family. Some divorced single moms and their children look very poor, but others - equally poor – do not look the part because of a more economically secure history or better family support system. If we do not look poor, we are not treated poorly.... and a hierarchy of divorced single mother stigma takes place. If we look well-off, we are treated well... even in school.

Once this ambitious and settled little girl started Junior High, the teachers embraced her and joked with her about being 'big brother's little sister'. 'Oh no, not another Hersey' they would tease. 'Your brother sure let us know he was around!' She became instantly popular and liked. She began writing more poems and we celebrated when one was published in an International poetry book. She also worked enthusiastically in classes. I began to tutor and help with art classes at the school and she felt special. The teachers and physical education teacher encouraged her to play basketball and volleyball, which she did and eventually coached the volleyball teams. We had very little money and I did not have a steady job, but this amazing young girl had a good time at school.

Her grandparents provided her with the clothing she needed and extra attention. I drove her and her brother to and from school each day if they did not want to take the bus. Her brother and I helped her with her lessons and attended all of her games. Her father also attended her games and she was happy. 'Well adjusted', the

experts would say. Like her brother, she won many awards in both elementary and junior high years and her school life seemed happy.

Once she entered grade ten, schooling changed dramatically as it had for her brother. Once again, she gained the reputation of being 'big brother's little sister', even in such a large school. Where it had fared well for her before, it was not to this time. Educators and administrators labeled her trouble before she began. Like her brother, she became depressed and hated school. It seemed that for high school administration and educators, their intolerance towards these two children had more to do with them being the children of a mother who could not get them to school on time, than their ability to learn or contribute to the school. I was told that it did not matter what my schedule or circumstances were, rules were rules. They were to be in class on time. When *I* did not make it before the first bell, *they* would spend after school in detention. I spent many hours crying and feeling guilt and anger. I soon recognized that certain teachers would look for them to be in their seats before the first bell while other students could come in late and not be punished. This also provided much anxiety for both children, and much fighting in our home. It seemed that the mother with the unreliable car and who now lived in an area where there was no school bus, was at fault for all of their schooling difficulties. I was a *bad* mother because I did not have the resources to provide the same kind of schooling involvement and help for my children as mothers in higher income families. I did not imagine the coolness between the high school educators and me. It was very real. I was quietly put down and my children were held down.

I was surprised. I thought we fit. We were from a middle class home – I thought... the reality was that we were no longer 'middle class' we were poor. What changed was that not only were we now a poor and single mothered family which

seemed to not matter at the elementary and junior high schools located in poorer parts of the city, we were now a poor and single mothered family in an elitist academic structure.

When I began this study, I was convinced that all children of divorce remain permanently disadvantaged emotionally, economically, physically, and psychologically. I have had feelings of tremendous 'single parent guilt' for what I perceived to be my inadequate parenting. As I poured through the boxes of memories, however, I found that school might have been the place where they not only faced challenges as children of divorce, but also grew, prospered, and had fun because of the efforts of educators.

Stats Can reported that during the year 1998, New Brunswick dissolved 1,473 marriages through Divorce. Stats Can also reported 97,040 families of married couples in New Brunswick with children in the home, 11,025 common law families with children in the home, 4,835 single fathers and 24,595 single mothers. Although these numbers do not tell us personal stories, they do tell us that a great many children in our New Brunswick schools are in transitional divorce families^{vii} and educators have new roles.

The educators

Can educators help children in flux when they come through the doors of institutions that are specifically constructed to reinforce organization and a particular social order? What roles do and can educators play in the lives of children of divorce?

Society, in essence, is the imposition of order upon the flux of human experience... beginning with language, every social institution, no matter how 'non repressive' or 'consensual' is an imposition of order.^{viii}

I found during casual conversations with teachers in art classes that I taught, that indeed teachers and other educators play a crucial role in the experiences of

children of divorce. Epstein (1995) stated 'Just about all teachers and administrators would like to involve families, but many do not know how to go about building positive and productive programs and are consequently fearful about trying' (p. 703). The experiences of my children indicated dramatic swings in teacher involvement and teachers that wanted to or could be involved. When children find themselves in a divorce situation, their teachers can play a significant role in their well-being and sense of security, and that perhaps learning – in an academic sense – is often secondary. One teacher from an elementary school explained to me – with agreement from one other elementary, and two junior high teachers:

You know, you just do what you have to do. I didn't worry too much about the school rules and I don't think the other teachers – at least the ones I know about – paid much attention to the rules. You have to get to know your students, at least I think so. I even asked other kids 'hey, do you know if something is going on with so and so?', or I would ask other parents, 'is there something going on with little Jimmy that I should know?' You have to know. There is always something happening, it could be a death in the family, or their dog got lost, or abuse or something. I missed that. I couldn't even believe it and that I missed it. One little boy came in one day with a long sleeved shirt on and it was so hot out. I asked him about it and it just clued in. I just didn't get it until that moment and I couldn't believe it of this family. I thought 'OH MY GOD', I missed that all year and I felt horrible. I could have saved that little guy from so much. I got involved then I'll tell ya.

I always told them about Maddie^{ix} and relate it back to my own experience. We do a lot of role playing and a lot of talking and building up their self-esteem. I probably over-compensate. Nothing is written about this stuff I guess. At least as a teacher, you have to get involved in your kids. While they are at the school and in my class they are my kids, they're not your kids. They are mine and I'm going to look after them. When kids' parents are going through a divorce, I sometimes just ask them if there is something I should know about and we talk. I don't worry about their work. We just work away and I know it is a time of change for them. (Personal communication, Mrs. B., 2002)

Many teachers stated that for those children of divorce who have much anxiety and distress at home, they use the school and educators as a safe haven. A teacher

can become a best friend or replacement parent. When mothers and fathers are not able to parent, teachers take that place. One teacher said,

School may be the only place of silence and stability at all. School is the only place where they may be receiving some sort of discipline and organization. (Personal communication. Ms. N., September 8, 2002)

Many educators have an understanding of the pedagogical implications that school policy plays on the diverse circumstances of their students, and recognize the importance of this changing time in their lives. Many as well, and at crucial times, cannot save their students from disruptions that will place extra burden on their school experience.

...a fact of single parent family life, the teacher is often seen by both the student and the parent as the one stable and consistent person in their lives. Drawn into a role that bridges home and school, the teacher becomes 'coparent' to the parent, and 'family' to many distressed and lonely kids. (Franckle, 1983, p. 221)

In the earlier story, Mac's grade eight teacher, the vice-principal, and the principal all stated that his father and a social worker came into the school waving a piece of paper stating that he had a legal document which would allow for Mac's removal from school. Educators and administrators stated that they later regretted not reading the piece of paper, as the school had not received a court order. Each also stated, however, that they had never had a similar incident in the school and were unaware of specific legal rights for themselves or the student. This incident brought a new awareness of problems their school might face in divorce situations.

Educators stated that there are currently legislated and policy guidelines to follow concerning the removal of children from school. They also declared that they cannot stand between a child and custodial parent, and if custody is joint that they cannot stop either parent from taking their child from school. Educators in high school admit that they do not always know when a child is being removed, as they could be

removed while in the hallways between classes, or while on or off the school grounds such as being outside to smoke, go to an appointment, at a local fast food restaurant, or at a neighboring mall. In the higher grades, students leave the classroom, school, and school property for many reasons. Educators confess that they walk a very fine line and often have limited knowledge of when an incident will take place.

Divorced single mothers

Retelling the experiences of my children's schooling did not come from a desire to retell their painful past or write up a good story. If anything, there was hesitation and reluctance to reveal pieces of their lives that remain hurtful and sad. Also as a part of the research, I reviewed the very thick files of court documents, statements my children made to psychologists, teachers, principals, counselors, lawyers, and judges and re-experienced much pain. I struggled with this research as I re-lived our stories, heard stories of other children of divorce, and heard the stories of other single parent moms, and I spent many nights crying. As I talked with mothers I recognized the guilt, struggles, and poverty that they encountered along the way of parenting school aged children. As I struggled with the stories and this thesis, both of my children continued to say 'just tell it mom. You know it best.' They have encouraged me every step of the way.

For a very long period of time post-divorce, many divorced single mothers feel guilt and their families experience poverty. I have been divorced over thirteen years and my children are now twenty-three and twenty. They do not see their father at all and continue to struggle financially. They are still poor while their father just built his second very elaborate home since the divorce. In keeping with the statistics, his socioeconomic status has increased dramatically while our single mothered family's socioeconomic position has dropped (Wallerstein, 1989.).

Schooling for our children would be very different if they had lived with their father. It is divorced single mothered homes that have poor children.

While poverty rates are high for lone-parent families headed by both mothers and fathers, 60% of "single-mother" families live below the low-income cut off whereas 31% of "single-father" families are below the LICO. When headed by single parent mothers under 25, lone parent families have a shockingly high poverty rate of 91.3 percent. (Finnie, 1993.)

As a divorced single mother I own nothing, have no pension, and no money in the bank. I, however, am much more fortunate than most divorced single moms that I know. I come from a family that has helped us and we live in a house owned by my father. I do not know of many divorced single mothers that have had the opportunities I have had. However, although I come from an upper middle class family, I have had only two years since the divorce with an income over the poverty line. The experiences during this time have been disheartening for my children as my position and place within the hierarchy of mothering changed. The lifestyle and limited opportunities for my children have been consistent with those for other children of divorce, and their schooling was drastically altered.

Carolyn Frantz, researcher of *Children of privilege and relevance of wealth* stated, 'California courts have claimed that wealth has nothing to do with the best interests of the child' (n32). I understand this claim as meaning 'best interests' such as love, stability, and acceptance; however, I have to add that while wealth may not have anything to do with the best interests of the child, poverty certainly does. Any divorced single mother will tell you that when their children cannot go on a school trip, cannot have the hot lunch program, wear poorly cleaned or old clothing, they all suffer tremendous humiliation and heartache. And, it is not economic deprivation for a few years that makes the difference; it is a constant inability to see any light at the end of

the tunnel. Divorced single mothers endure years of economic insecurity, and watching our children consistently go without, having to say no over and over until they do not bother to ask anymore, wears us down in every way. When our children do without, we also do without and we suffer tremendous guilt for not providing for our family.

This past year I worked in provincial elementary schools researching children and nutrition, and I can say with assuredness that children living in poverty in these areas of New Brunswick did not eat or sleep well, sometimes had no socks, had holes in their sneakers, and wore dirty clothes. They were not washed and smelled bad, their hair was sometimes in knots from not being brushed or cleaned, and they did not 'fit in'. They had sallow skin and dark eyes that did not sparkle. They knew they were poor, and even though had no breakfast at home, some showed signs of embarrassment during the breakfast program offered in the schools. In the lower grades poverty seemed to not matter so much for at least peer acceptance. In the higher grades, however, poverty powerfully influenced schooling for these children and carried a stigma into the classroom. It was during this research when one grade five boy forgot his 'Activity Journal' and his teacher whispered to me, 'oh, I wouldn't expect any different. He only lives with his mother.'

What comes next?

Chapter two of this thesis is the literature review. I went into much more depth than an Institutional Ethnographic study generally requires. The reason was not so much to build this research upon the findings of another study, attempt to argue or confirm, state a hypothesis based upon, or fill in holes or gaps. The literature review provided a reference for two interesting points: first, that the research for educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce uses different methodologies between,

but fairly consistent methodologies within each group, and second, that the discourse is thick and readily recognizable as a discourse that defines those of whom it speaks.

In chapter three, I discussed Institutional Ethnography, the work of Dorothy Smith, and the specifics of the methodology for the research. This section outlines interview participants, how I conducted the research, potential problems retelling narrative, complications of analyzing another's story, and possible challenges of my own involvement as a research resource. I also discussed the forms of data collection using both informal conversations and formal interviews.

Chapter four is the Findings chapter and reveals the interviews and stories of participants. Educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce exposed experiences that opened or closed schooling and learning opportunities. The stories established a dimension of discourse that revealed the trans-local and hidden political discourse embedded within the institution of school. Governmental policies, acts, and regulations clearly construct their day-to-day lives.

Chapter five is the discussion/analysis chapter. As I moved through the chapter, I questioned the discourse of *educator, divorced single mother, children of divorce, the school policy, and the education act*. I also included a primitive, but perhaps effective diagram that shows the many intersections possible for these three groups of people within the frameworks of government/corporate agenda, the school institution itself, and the classroom dynamics.

In chapter six, I closed with a conclusion, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research. Recognizing my place as researcher/researched and the study being placed inside of a particular perspective, it was important to indicate how the study was limited. I also outlined recommendations for the political arena in addressing the needs of poor mothers – whether working poor

within two parent families, single parent, or divorced single parent. These recommendations were built upon my 2002/2003 research study in Sweden and I outlined the extensive social policies that provide for children, families, and mothers. I also discussed the cultural attitude that transposes *single mother*, or *divorced single mother*, to mother and parent.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I addressed reasons for what might be considered an extensive literature review in an institutional ethnographic study. The review was not only to provide the quantitative and qualitative background for divorce research, but also to reveal the hegemonic discourse of divorce, family, single divorce mothers, children of divorce, and what is accepted as 'normal' or 'abnormal'.

How does an institutional ethnographer make use of the literature?
Reviewing the literature helps researchers reflect on different kinds of knowing about their topic and how their own research would add to what is already known....The literature may speak about the topic one way, while the people on the ground will speak about it another.
(Campbell and Gregor, 2002, p. 51)

As I summarized the literature in this chapter, I attempted to reveal the wide-ranging collection of research on 'divorce' and 'children of divorce', a lesser amount available on 'divorced single mothers', and comparatively little on 'educators and divorce in the classroom'.

I also attempted to reflect the characteristics of the research itself by shadowing the research or writing style. The literature review here indicates that most of the well-known research on 'divorce' and 'children of divorce' were case or longitudinal studies, quantitative positivist, and qualitative methodologies. The studies were very often scientific where researchers presented hypotheses and quantitative analyses were carried out on the data collected. The research, written by both men and women, was generally peer reviewed and in the format of journal articles or books. The finding of results was an attempt to reveal a *truth*, as shown in the research of Hetherington, Wallerstein, and Amato.

The research on divorced single mothers was not necessarily peer reviewed, but was written by women specifically and embraced feminist research methods such

as institutional ethnography, critical theory, and autobiographical or biographical story telling. The research was an attempt to give voice to a normally silent group and to indicate *their truth* in lived stories. There were many studies and stories on mothering, single mothers, mothers and their children, and divorced single mothers. These studies were written not only in academic journals, such as in the work of Smith and Griffith, but were regular copy for mainstream and women's magazines such as *MacLeans*, *Redbook* and *Good Housekeeping*, and within women's web sites such as *singleMOMZ.com*. Many of these studies and stories were not written as best-selling works as were many of the empirical studies cited on divorce or children and divorce.

Information on 'educators and divorce in the classroom' was very limited compared to the information on the other two groups. Comparatively, I found fewer articles, some peer reviewed, but many more informal, such as 'Hitched in homeroom' in *Time* (1999), and 'Battling teacher burnout' from *Education Week's* online site at *edweek.org*. Much of the information was not in the form of academic research studies, but general stories and cautions to educators. It was clear that 'education and divorce in the classroom' was a new research area. As Bud, one educator I interviewed for this research stated, 'this is new within the past fifteen years and within the past ten, educators have to be particularly knowledgeable about what is going on. We now have staff meetings and discussions... and there are policy directives dealing with this sort of stuff'. Bud's acknowledgement of a fairly new phenomenon is portrayed by the least amount literature of the three groups.

Children and divorce

It seems one cannot research children and the impact of divorce on any level without reading of the works of Judith Wallerstein^x and Mavis Hetherington^{xi}. Nearly

every book, article, and piece of information I read referred to at least one of their many studies.

Judith Wallerstein

Wallerstein's earliest book *Surviving the breakup: How children and parents cope with divorce* (1980), situated her work in the field of children and divorce. She reported that divorce has long-standing effects on most children of divorce and is traumatic during their childhood.

Unlike adults who felt considerably improved after the divorce, the children and adolescents did not, as a group, show an improvement in their psychological health during the years following the separation. Only those children who were separated by the divorce from a rejecting or a demeaning, or a psychiatrically disturbed father showed improvement comparable to that of the adults.

There is no supporting evidence in this five-year study for the common argument that divorce is overall better for children than an unhappy marriage, or, for the opposite argument, that living within an unhappy marriage is by and large more beneficial or less detrimental than living in a divorced family. (p. 306)

Wallerstein also emphasized the importance two-parents play in developing the self-images of children. She stated that even after divorce 'their self-images were firmly tied to their relationship with two-parents who had elected to go their separate ways (p. 307).

In her work *Second chances* (1989), British Law Professor Freeman noted in the preface, 'It is children who are the real victims of divorce. When we knew very little we could believe in myths like divorce being better than bad marriage and time as a great healer... We rarely investigated its long term effects.'

Wallerstein pointed out that her research in this book completed the longest study ever done tracking the same children, adults, and families of divorce 'five, ten, and even fifteen years after the event' (p. 10). She maintained that divorce has long-

lasting effects that she did not see in her five-year study, and that both children and adults remain in pain.

The idea that divorce can have long-lasting effects comes as a surprise to many people, including many mental health experts. Most people in our culture find comfort in the belief that time heals all wounds... We have found that it takes women an average of three to three-and-a-half years and men two to two-and-a-half years to re-establish a sense of external order after the separation.

Getting one's external life back on track, however, does not begin to resolve the internal changes that people experience in the wake of divorce. Children's fundamental attitudes about society and about themselves can be permanently changed by divorce and by events experienced in the years afterward.

Divorce is deceptive (p. 12).

Wallerstein also maintained that parents often confuse their own needs with those of their children, thereby robbing their children (p. 29). She found that divorced women and their children – even those from church or synagogue families – are left to console themselves, and an absent parent and a disruption of living arrangements is a tragedy (32). It appeared that she developed a strong belief that two-parent families are needed to maintain the well-being of a child's development.

The family is the scaffolding upon which children mount successive developmental stages, from infancy into adolescence. It supports their psychological, physical, and emotional ascent into maturity. When that structure collapses, the child's world is temporarily without supports. And children, with a vastly compressed sense of time, do not know that the chaos is temporary. What they do know is that they are dependent on the family. Whatever its shortcomings, children perceive the family as the entity that provides the support and protection that they need. With divorce, that structure breaks down, leaving children who feel alone and very frightened about the present and the future. (p. 33)

It is important to note that Wallerstein found winners and losers in divorce. Most men remarried within a short time and were in a better place because of their roles at work not having the responsibility of raising the family. Women almost consistently were economically poorer, had full daily care of their families, had many

part-time or a full time job, and remained single (pp. 66–75). Men were the winners and women and children the losers. After ten years and interviewing divorced couples, she found that while many former husbands were at the peak of their professional and business careers, and well off financially, only a handful of the older women were financially secure. 'The economic discrepancy between former wives and husbands in this group is shocking and deplorable' (p. 74).

Although Wallerstein consistently found and stated that divorce is not good for children, she, as well as other researchers, concluded that adults and children may rebound with amazing resiliency and that the divorce alone may not be the sole cause of depression and anxieties children of divorce experience (p. 313). She did not, however, expand upon the other causes and continued with a focus on divorce.

- Divorce is a wrenching experience for many adults, and almost all children. It is almost always more devastating for children than for their parents.
- The effects of divorce are often long lasting. Children are especially affected because divorce occurs during their formative years...
- Almost all children of divorce regard their childhood and adolescence as having taken place in the shadow of divorce.
- Adolescence is a period of grave risk for children in divorced families; those who entered adolescence in the immediate wake of their parents' divorces had a particularly hard time... an alarming number of teenagers felt abandoned, physically and emotionally. (p. 314)

She concluded that indeed for the middle-class American and perhaps middle-class families in the post-industrial world, divorce left long-standing problems. What Wallerstein hoped for was that the strong voices of women would speak to the feminization of poverty and that society would begin to pay attention to the economic injustice promoted by divorce.

Wallerstein continued her study to the twenty-five year mark with her 2000 book *The unexpected legacy of divorce*. After a visit from a young woman named Karen, Wallerstein was amazed at how the woman had turned herself around after the sadness she reported fifteen years earlier. What would Wallerstein find if she continued the study? She concluded that the study was stopped too soon at the fifteen-year mark and began to look for those subjects she had encountered years earlier (p. xix). She also expanded the study to include children of intact but 'unhappy' homes.

Wallerstein was saddened to find that still many children of divorce, now adults with their own children had ongoing sadness from the divorce of their parents and continued to feel loss. She found that the child who grows up in the post-divorce family often experiences not one loss – that of the intact family – but a series of losses as people come and go. The divorced family has an entirely new cast of characters and relationships featuring stepparents and stepsiblings, second marriages and second divorces, and often a series of live-in lovers. Through these changes, however, she found that children are not passive vessels but rather active participants who help shape their own destiny and that of their family. Children make gallant efforts to fit into the new requirements of the post-divorce family although they hope for many years that their parents will reconcile (p. xxx).

Wallerstein stated that although divorce has life changing consequences for children and adults, she is not against divorce in marriages that are abusive and demeaning. She concluded that she 'knows of no research that says divorce is uniformly detrimental to children' (p. xxxiii), however, her concern was that we do not allow ourselves to be fooled into thinking that children do not suffer from divorce during

some period of their lives and probably much longer than had originally been anticipated or claimed. Her concern was that we find a way to 'do things better' (p. xxxiv).

Mavis E. Hetherington

In Hetherington's interview by Michael Trudeau, 'Divorce in America', she claimed that although 'most children will view their parents' divorce as one of the most painful experiences they went through', she also argued that 'this kind of distressed memory doesn't mean that it had adverse consequences in the long run in terms of adjustment'. Hetherington (2000), argued against the long-lasting negative effects of divorce that her counterpart Wallerstein insisted upon by stating that 'in her twenty-five year study of 450 families, children of divorce 'function normally' twenty years later.

In Hetherington's 1999 bestseller, *Coping with divorce, single parenting and remarriage*, many researchers discussed divorce using the Risk and Resiliency Perspective.

Chapter 4, 'Family structure, parenting practices, and adolescent adjustment: An ecological examination' written by Shelli Avenevoli, Frances M. Sessa and Laurence Steinberg, quoted the 1990 Sorrentino study to conclude that divorce nearly always precludes a set of behavioral problems for most children who experience divorce. They noted as well, the changes in various age groups.

One half of all American children will experience at least part of their lives in single parent households, and because 62% of remarriages end in divorce, these children will experience multiple home environments.

Twelve to seventeen year olds reported higher levels of developmental behavior problems than adolescents from two-parent homes. Both boys and girls had higher incidences of school discipline problems, contact with the law, and smoking behavior.

Fourteen to eighteen year olds showed more drug use, school misconduct and lower school grades.

In chapter 6 of Hetherington's 1999 book, Sarah McLanahan quoted studies from Blackenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1988, 1996; and Whitehead, 1993, that 'some analyses have argued that growing up with a single mother is the primary cause of many of the country's most serious problems, poverty, dropout, teen pregnancy, and delinquency'. Others argue, she continued, that poverty and economic insecurity are the real offenders. McLanahan further discussed these views of single parenting:

Children who grow up apart from their biological fathers do not do as well on average than children who grow up with both natural parents. They are less likely to finish high school, attend college, less likely to find and keep a steady job, and more likely to become teen mothers. (p. 118)

Although she agreed that the father's absence diminished a child's prospects to live a 'successful adult life' (p. 129), she outlined that the problem was escalated by the economic instability within the single parent home.

One half of all households held by single parent mothers are below the poverty line, compared with 10% of two-parent families. Single parent mothers have to enter the work force earlier to the detriment of nourishment and supervision of her children. Single parent mothers move more often, have loss of social contacts, and their children move to poorer schools. Economic instability, she argued is caused in part by inadequate child support or none at all, and economic instability limits ones qualifications for attendance at university. (p. 131)

Circumstances and events in the family of origin affect children long after they have left the parental home... The consequences of divorce depend on events that both precede and follow marital disruption such as parental conflict. (p. 148)

Based on the work of these and her own studies, Hetherington maintained that the consequences of parental divorce persist well into adulthood with adult offspring. Adult offspring from divorced families, compared with those of two-parent parent families, enter adulthood with less education, earn less dollars, have fewer financial

assets, poorer quality marriages, are more likely to divorce, have less affection for their parents (especially fathers), exchange less assistance with their fathers and have lower levels of well-being. However, she stated that growing up in a two-parent family does not guarantee happiness, and growing up in a divorced home does not preclude the possibility of future happiness. She further argued *against* her own research findings indicating the complexity of the divorce situation and debate.

Research indicates that the long term consequences of divorce for children are complex on the one hand, divorce does not doom most children to unproductive and unhappy lives as adults, and on the other hand, divorce is not a trivial event to which most children readily adjust with few negative enduring consequences. (p. 161)

The somewhat complimentary, and at the same time opposing viewpoints of Wallerstein and Hetherington, are continued by many researchers, including academics, psychologists, policy makers, legal professionals, social workers, and the groups studied here: educators, single parent mothers, and adult children of divorce.

Paul R. Amato

In the 2000 article, *The consequences of divorce for adults and children*, using the Divorce-Stress Adjustment perspective, Amato looked at the conflicting literature on divorce consequences for both children and adults. He asked the question, 'why do people react differently to divorce and when is it's potential to create personal turmoil high?' Amato pointed out some of the conflicting research theories and perspectives regarding divorce:

- ◆ Feminist Theory (Carbonne, 1994)
- ◆ Attachment Theory (Hazan & Shaver, 1992)
- ◆ Attribution Theory (Grynych & Fincham, 1992)
- ◆ Symbolic Interactionism Theory (Orbuch, 1992)
- ◆ Systems Theory (Emery, 1994)
- ◆ Social Capital Perspective (Teachman, Paasch & Carver, 1996)
- ◆ Life-course Theory (Amato & Booth, 1997)
- ◆ Family Stress and Coping Theory (Hill, 1949; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Plunkett, Sanchez, Henry & Robinson, 1997)

- ◆ General Stress Theory (Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, & Mullan, 1981; Thoits, 1995)
- ◆ Risk and Resiliency Perspective (Cowan, Cowan, & Schulz, 1996; Hetherington, 1999; Rutter, 1987)

He also asked 'why do alternate studies show that some individuals do not experience these negative changes, but instead experience positive ones, such as greater career opportunities, better social lives, higher self-confidence, and greater control?'

Amato researched whether divorce actually lowers peoples' well-being, or if those of lower well-being are more prone to divorce. He found that contrary to the Selection Perspective, people who divorce reported increased depression, alcohol use, decreased happiness, sense of control, and self-acceptance.

He found that both the Crisis/Distress Perspective (unhappiness, depression, alcohol consumption, and health problems generally subside two to three years post-divorce), and Chronic Strain Perspective, (unless people remarry, there is no significant improvement in people's lives) contained an amount of truth. Adjustment was also positively associated with education and a large supportive social network.

Publishing a meta-analysis of ninety-two studies Amato & Keith (1991), compared the well-being of children of divorce and children of two-parent families. The analysis consistently showed that children of divorce scored significantly lower academically in conduct and achievement, self-image, psychological adjustment, and socially. Amato pointed out that using the Crisis or Chronic Strain Perspective, that although upset during the divorce, children showed improvements during post-divorce years. He posed that a large number of studies demonstrate that divorce posed multiple problems for children of divorce well into adulthood: decreased psychological

well-being, low socioeconomic attainment, poor self-image, increased problems in new marriages, and greater chance of seeing one's own marriage fail (1999).

Using the Crisis and Chronic Strain Perspective, Amato also found that when mothers were stressed, their negative emotions were more likely to be passed to their children. Lower self-esteem, lower academic achievement, lower social competence, and internalizing problems were a result of 'inept parenting on the part of the custodial parent'. As well, mother's depression resulting in poor parenting, was related to poor adjustment in their children. In understanding the stress of the custodial parent, Amato pointed to the inter-parental hostility, and economic instability. Studies as well indicated that it was not economic *hardship*, as much as economic *instability* that most negatively affected divorced mothers and their children. Regular payment by fathers to support their children was positively related to both academic achievement and behavior and provided additional support to post-divorce adjustment. The post-divorce adjustment of children was directly related to the accumulated number of stressors in their lives such as moving, changing schools, and living on inconsistent incomes. Amato concluded that the view of divorce that suggests individuals are negatively affected over the course of a lifetime is as exaggerated as the view that divorce provides adults with a second chance for happiness and their children with a rescue from adverse home environments.

In the 1993 study, *Children's adjustment to divorce: theories, hypotheses, and empirical support*, Amato et al. stated that most research provides explanations of children's adjustment to divorce from central concepts, such as 'the loss of the non-custodial parent, the adjustment of the custodial parent, inter-parental conflict, economic hardship, and stressful life changes.

The Parental Adjustment Perspective suggests that one of life's most stressful events is divorce, that single mothers have less support than married mothers, and experience more chronic sources of strain. During the first year after divorce custodial mothers were more anxious, depressed, angry and self-doubting than were married mothers. They also showed comparatively less affection to their children, communicated with them less, punished them more, and were more inconsistent in their use of discipline'.

Amato continued with the Inter-parental Conflict Perspective that suggests 'because ex-spouses may continue to fight over child support, custody, and visitation arrangements, post-divorce conflict between parents may be a chronic strain that impacts negatively on children's well-being'. Children are drawn into conflicts having to take sides, often switching loyalties to pacify one parent, and therefore have general confusion and anxiety.

The Economic Hardship Perspective states that children living with single parent mothers following divorce generally experience a sharp decline in the standard of living which increases the risk of a number of problems such as poor nutrition and health, reduction of extra-curricular events, loss of toys, computers and books, poorer housing and school facilities, and loss of familiar friends. Amato ended his discussion of this perspective by stating, however, 'relevant studies are too few in number at this time to provide strong support for the Economic Hardship Perspective'.

It was the Life Stress Perspective that Amato found held the greatest explanation for children's problems; 'loss of contact with the non-custodial parent, deterioration of the quality of the relationship with the custodial parent, exposure to an inter-parental conflict, and a decline in the standard of living --- are stressors in their

own right'. In considering all perspectives, the study concluded that divorce poses problems for children by challenging children's development.

Yongmin Sun & Yuanzhang Li

In the study *Children's well-being during parents' marital disruption*, (May 2001), Sun & Li discussed the negative impact of divorce on children's well-being not only during divorce, but also before and after. The Continual Process theoretical argument states that families are in crisis before the divorce and certainly after. 'Obviously, children living in such a stressful environment are likely to fare less well than their peers in continuously married families. After parental divorce or separation, the disruption process proceeds into a 'crisis period'. Sun & Li found 'strong evidence' that children are affected 'continuously, even after control variables are taken into consideration. The study also agreed with the previous 2000 study of Pong & Ju that disrupted families have fewer resources, triggering economic hardship. She concluded that the economic hardships that result are a strain for both parents and children.

Reed W. Larson & Sally Gillman

Larson's & Gillman's 1999 study *Transmission of emotions in the daily interactions of single-mother families*, looked at the exchange of anxiety and emotions between single mothers and children, and examined the hypothesis that the 'well-being of children in one-parent families is especially sensitive to the stress and well-being of the parent'.

Several studies provided background for the research: husband's negative emotions towards wives, transmissions of emotions from parents to children, transmissions of emotions from more powerful to less powerful, and mothers' heightened detection of others' emotions. The researchers examined the stresses that

may be passed on to children from single mothers resulting from inadequate income, lower social interactions, hostile interactions with ex-spouses, and depression.

The findings indicated that adolescents depend in part on their mothers for security and other resources, and mothers who have less time to them-selves are more likely to pass down negative emotions to their children. Children who experience these negative emotions and feelings from their mothers have increased difficulties in their new family situations.

Madden-Derdich, Debra A., Leonard S. A., & Christopher, F. S.

The research of Madden-Derdich, Leonard, and Christopher *Boundary ambiguity and coparental conflict after divorce: an empirical test of a family systems model*, (1994), studied co-parental conflict. The daily life of the mother was determined by the day-to-day financial problems and changes in family structure, and accounted for her increased level of stress. Mothers also felt a decrease in their own mothering ability and competency, particularly within the first couple of years after divorce, feeling alone and overwhelmed. Researchers continued to point out that fathers experienced anxiety at a different level than did mothers. Economic problems and self-dissatisfaction were not concerns for fathers but instead, 'emotional intensity'. The findings of this study supported the hypothesis that 'high incidence of conflict in the co-parental relationship after divorce is one of the strongest detrimental influences on children's adjustment to divorce resulting in both emotional and behavioral problems'.

Catherine E. Ross & John Mirowsky

The 1998 study *Parental divorce, life-course disruption, and adult depression* examined the Life Course Disruption hypothesis that states there is an association between adult depression and childhood parental divorce.

Parental divorce may disrupt the life course with lifelong consequences for adult well-being in two ways: lowered socioeconomic status and problems in interpersonal relationships. Compared with individuals who grew up with both parents, adult children of divorce have lower levels of education, occupational status, and income, and higher levels of economic hardships (both current and past), marry young, divorce and remarry several times, find themselves in unhappy relationships, and mistrust people in general. These associations hold when researchers adjusted for sex, minority status, age, parental death, and parental education. The disadvantaged socioeconomic and interpersonal statuses link parental divorce to adult depression because more education is associated with lower levels of depression and because economic hardship, early marriages, unhappy relationships, and mistrust are associated with high levels of depression.

The Life-Course Disruption Theory states that because parental divorce affects familial socioeconomic placement negatively, their children experience 'relatively less education than those in two-parent families; are less likely to go to high school, go to college, or finish college.

The study concluded that reduced continued education, lower occupational status, and income and economic stress were results of childhood divorce, and did indeed affect adult depression. 'Adults from divorced childhood families feel more depressed than adults who grew up with both parents.'

Susan S. Lang

In her study *Children from divorced families less likely to attend selective colleges*, (1996), Lang looked at the relationship between children of divorce and the probability of attendance at a selective college. Discussing the work of Liliard & Gerner where 12,000 high school seniors and almost 15,000 high school sophomores were

interviewed, controlling for parent's income, employment and education, and student's grade point average, SAT scores and extracurricular activities, and identifying the top fifty colleges, she noted that the two sets of students provided striking differences. Lang quoted Gerner 'our analysis shows that it is not living without two biological parents itself that has this negative effect. Rather, it is the family disruption that influences a whole constellation of factors that are considered when students apply to college'. Gerner noted that students of divorce did not score as highly on standardized tests, perhaps as a result of instability of children's living arrangements and higher drop out levels.

The researchers found that 28 per cent of students living in two biological parent families were likely to apply to selective colleges where only 17 per cent of students living in one-parent family homes. Also, 25 per cent of students from two biological parent families were accepted, where only 14 per cent of those living in one-parent families.

Divorced single mothers

Parents are a child's first models and teachers. They play a crucial role in helping their children learn. Current philosophy is that children achieve more when schools and parents work together and that parents can help more effectively if they know what the school is trying to achieve and how they can help. In a way similar to how I used 'parents' in the first sentence of this section, I found that much of the literature and information linking mothering and schooling, was ungendered and unclassified. Instead of 'mother', the word 'parent' was used.

Research shows that effective parental involvement at all grade levels can increase student achievement, improve attendance, reduce drop out rates and increase community support for the school. (Alberta Teachers Association, 2001)

Home and school agreements provide a framework for the development of such a partnership. The processes involved in introducing and reviewing the agreement will clarify what the school is trying to achieve, and the agreement will set out the role of the school, parents and pupils in this vital partnership. (Dept. of Education and Employment, US, 1998)

In this thesis I looked at how divorce influenced schooling for children of divorce. As significant as the research on affects of *divorce* on mothers and their children, is the research on how schooling policies construct the day-to-day life for mothers and their children.

For much of this review, I looked to the work of Dorothy Smith and Alison Griffith on the relationships between the family and education system (Griffith 1984, 1986, 1987; Smith 1987 a; Griffith and Smith 1987, 1999; Smith and Griffith 1990). Griffith (1987) pointed out that mothering intensified and changed after the Second World War. As men moved back into industrial jobs and mothers needed a place to go, media, government, and 'advice professionals' began pointing to the *need* children had for their mother's care.

Post-war television and an increased number of advice books became the new arenas to distribute mothering information. Television shows such as *Donna Reed*, *Leave it to Beaver*, and *I love Lucy* showed both fathers and mothers specific parenting roles. In the 1950's *Dr. Spock's baby and child care* book became a best seller as mothers sought mothering advice. Although family forms continue to change and single mothers increasingly become sole family heads, books such as Nordling's *Taking charge: Caring discipline that works at home and at school* (1999), and Canter & Hausner's *Homework without tears: A parent's guide for motivating children to do homework and to succeed in school* (1993) continued to discuss parenting and mothering through an ungendered and unclassed lens.

Your children, of course, are the ones who must do the work – and do it appropriately. But you are the one who can help make it all possible. The *Homework without tears* program is based on the research-supported fact that your interest and involvement are the keys to your children's success in school – and that one of the most effective ways you can be involved in their education is through homework. The steps you must take to create an environment conducive to doing homework are outlined in this book. The effectiveness of these steps, and of the *Homework without tears* program, depends upon the attitude you consistently project about homework. (Canter & Hausner, 1993, pg. 5)

Not only could mothers find mothering discourse on television and in books, magazines such as *Today's Parent*, and *Family Circle* linked mother's involvement to children's educational success. Also, mothers need not subscribe to or purchase magazines, mothering discourse and advice could be found on the World Wide Web (Internet).

It is important to ensure that children are well rested, have had a good night's sleep and a good breakfast before starting school. This is, of course, important every school day but especially important during the first days back when children will need to be as rested and relaxed as a possible. Tired children tend to be more anxious, impatient and more easily upset and frustrated. (Today's Parent, n.d.)

Griffith and Smith (1985) stated that as children's needs have been redefined, so have the roles of mothers. The 'transformation of childhood is also a transformation of the social definition of mothering work' (p. 116). They as well stated that in the context of compulsory schooling, mothers have compulsory scheduling and compulsory work.

Families must ensure their child's school attendance and that they attend school during the required hours. They must also ensure that the child is able to attend in ways that are required by the demands of the local school. As an example, in many schools, parents must provide two pairs of shoes, one for outside, and one for inside. Mothers must ensure that children reach the school on time, or within a reasonable time, and stay there until the school day is over. Mothers who work outside of the

home must ensure that their children take lunches to school and do not misbehave during the recess and lunch times. Mothers who are at home must provide supervision and lunch for their children during the scheduled school lunch hour. The compulsory organization of schooling structures not only mothering time but also mothering activities (p. 4).

'Parental involvement' in children's schooling is based on the assumption that both mothers and fathers participate (Dudley-Marling, 2001), however, 'parental involvement' is an ungendered phrase that also dismisses social class and culture (Standing, 1999). Parental involvement implies a two-parent family structure where two-parents contribute equally in the schooling process (Smith & Griffith, 1990). It is, however, mothers who do the majority of schooling, and not all mothers in the same way. Many mothers, such as single mothers, do not have the resources required to contribute to this type of parent/school partnership, some may not have knowledge of the schooling process, and some mothers may not agree with the school philosophy. It is the middle-class two-parent family which works best within the school system in ways which the working-class mother cannot (David, 1993; Reay, 1995; Luttrell, 1997 as in Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

When the institution of schooling is constructed to compliment the white, two-parent, middle and upper class families, those living outside of that paradigm are affected in ways that force the unnatural to become natural. Before children can walk mothers are busy getting their children ready for school, and divorced single mothers with limited resources cannot measure up. When single mothers cannot prepare their children in ways that other mothers can and their children fall behind, the children are instantly labeled 'developmentally slow' or 'at risk', and mothers are labeled 'inadequate' or 'bad mother'.

It is expected that children have acquired a definite set of social skills before they come to school. Middle class mothers go to great lengths to ensure their children are exposed to experiences where they learn to 'play well with others' in pre school years. (Griffith 1987, 11)

Quoting Rist (1970), Noble (1989) reminded us that the streamlining of children into university career paths begins as early as kindergarten, and it is this preparing process that engage mothers. Mothers, therefore, are not only responsible for the day-to-day caring of children attending school; they are responsible for the producing of school readiness. Noble (1990) noted that it is the schools that continue the process of streamlining by seeing and differentiating students, a deeply embedded process of an educator's work. Noble (1982) stated that as a result of women's work in the home, mothers are automatically engaged in the 'production' of children and suggested that not all mothers are adequately able to engage in this process with equal ability. The 'getting children ready for school' involves knowing the requirements – a knowledge and set of rules that have been reproduced by the privilege of class.

Griffith (1987) referred to the work of Sharp and Green (1975) on the Canadian school philosophy of 'Child-centered education', as being a perspective which links activities and learning in the classroom, and the social and emotional support children have at home. It is this philosophy that organizes the day-to-day work of mothers. Griffith pointed out that not all mothers are capable of entering into this discourse in the same way.

The mothering practices recommended in the mothering discourse depend upon the availability of personal, social, economic, and educational resources within the family – resources on which the mother can draw for her discursively organized work. (p. 120)

It is families who do not have these resources that the relationship of the mother and child to the school is challenged. Griffith found that this is the relationship between 'mass compulsory education and working-class families' (p. 120). When

poverty is increased into the poor single mothered family there are increasing impossible demands of 'mass compulsory education,' and how mothers integrate this reality into their lives. Mothers without resources do not have the same choices as mothers with, although policy makers would have us believe that 'choice' - the foundation of democratic schooling – is equally available to all mothers. To understand where we do *not* have choice is complicated and a result of the discourse and ideology.

Choice is a term that is difficult to disagree with in principle, but which has no clear meaning until many blanks are filled in. In other words, it is an almost perfect political concept. (Orfield in Barlow and Robertson, 1994, p. 187)

It is mothers who, without recourses or choices, 'coordinate and supervise children's educational activities which demands a significant portion of her waking hours, particularly in the case of mothers whose children are doing poorly in school' (Noble, 1982).

Since the 1960's educational reform in Canada – 'the implementation studies in the 1970's, the effective schools movement in the 1980's, and the restructuring initiatives in the 1990's' (Industry Canada, 2003), families have been lead to develop 'a close and intimate relationship' between the home and school, in order to 'achieve effective schooling' (David, 1992, 11). The Department of Education and Employment (1997) stated that 'parents should be available both at home and in the school to work with their children in support of their education'. Not only does this assume two-parents actively participating, but the availability of time, economics, knowledge of, and agreement with the education system. 'Parental involvement' indicates that parents have required resources – economic, physical, and mental – to help with homework, help in the classroom, read to their children, take part in activities and outings, and do

extra-curricular activities (Standing, 1999). It also presupposes that parents are familiar with computers, and have access to one in their homes. It suggests that all parents support the educational philosophy (Ibid.). It is this and more, which educational policy subscribes as being a 'positive learning environment'. The Canadian Government reminds parents of their 'responsibilities', presuming that all parents can respond in like manner.

Responsibilities of parents 18.1.

It is the responsibility of a student's parents to support the student in achieving learning success by:

- (a) causing the student to attend school as required by this Act
- (b) ensuring that the student's basic needs are met
- (c) having due care for the student's conduct at school, and on the way to and from school
- (d) encouraging the student to attend to assigned homework
- (e) communicating reasonably with school staff about the student^{xii}

These 'responsibilities' place little obligation on government itself. The mother is to 'know' what the requirements of the Act are. She is to understand the 'student's basic requirements' in the same way the Department does. She is to be available and able to control the student's conduct going to and from school and agree as to proper conduct. She is also to be available to 'communicate reasonably' with the school staff. These responsibilities in themselves would be what Smith (1988) and Griffith & Smith (1889) say is the 'parental involvement discourse'. Mothers who cannot 'support the student in 'achieving learning success' in ways the school sees as positive are what Standing (1999) said are referred to as uneducated or problem parents (mostly mothers). This expectation, she goes on, is a part of the 'mothering and parental involvement discourse'. One reason for this narrow vision, she added, may be

because school governing bodies tend to be disproportionately white, middle class, male, 'with a knowledge of the educational system shaped by their own professional (masculine) knowledges (quoted from Deem, 1991).

Together, the Parent School Support Committee¹ (PSSC) and the school establish initiatives with an assumption that all parents can 'advise', 'provide', and 'participate' equally, even in the establishment of the committee who theoretically represent all parents. The goals of the committee are:

- To advise the principal regarding the establishment of the school improvement plan
- To provide suggestions and recommendations that will assist the principal in making decisions at the school
- To provide advice regarding the development of school policies. To encourage strong relationships between the PSSC, the District Education Council (DEC) and parents
- To participate in the pupil appeals process at the school ^{xiii}

Manor Park School awarded 'good parent' awards each month in morning assembly to mothers who had 'positively contributed' to their child's learning or to the school (Standing, 1999). Standing pointed out that even though the research found that it was single parent mothers who did more schooling with their children at home than did mothers from two-parent families, the work was considered inadequate and was viewed as incompetent. It was not single parent mothers that won awards. Also, Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) found that working-class women did not show lower levels of involvement than did women from middle-class families, although their income levels were lower, they had fewer educational qualifications, less educational knowledge, and less information about the system.

Although mothers were encouraged and expected to contribute to schooling, teachers were concerned about the 'types' of mothers who were in the school, and that

their involvement should not slow down or obstruct the teacher's work (Wyness, 1996 as in Standing 1999). Standing quoted one teacher as saying: 'Mums' help can be a hindrance. You have to teach them what to do, and I tend to set very easy work first thing in the morning so they are able to help'.

Educators perceived mothers as a help or a problem, and it was the single parent mothers who were linked to words like 'irresponsible', 'lacking social skills' and 'uneducated' (Standing 1999). She reported that one educator stated: 'I don't see any difference with lone parents, but having said that, most of the difficult parents, the ones we have problems with are lone parents'.

Griffith (1987) referred to Manicom (1988) and the argument that 'children's achievement in school is a co-production of a mother's and a teacher's work'. Mothers soon learn to see themselves as educators see them. She stated that it was the mothers themselves who often talked of 'falling short and their inability to organize their mothering in the way they should'.^{xiv} Mothers often blamed themselves when their children fell short on test scores, did not make the basketball team, did not have the 'right' clothes to wear, became depressed, had no friends, went hungry, were bullied, or experienced any of a myriad of other problems. In fitting day-to-day schooling into their lives, mothers soon learned to see themselves as inadequate. As one parent in Noble's research said:

You can blame the school, but only to a limited extent. It was my attitude, too, because I didn't get involved enough. If I was working in the classroom when Darcy was smaller, I would have got help a lot sooner. (p. 66)

Mothers as well, often learned to 'see their children through the eyes of the school' and instead of the mother being the mothering expert, 'professionals' such as

educators, psychologists, counselors, social workers and childcare workers took their place (Standing, 1999).

That mothers could 'see' their children through the lens of so many 'experts' was an important concept brought out in the literature. Increased and instant mobilization of ideas have brought new arenas to mothers in which they have had various opportunities to see themselves and their children as successful or unsuccessful. Television 'experts' such as 'Oprah' and 'Dr. Phil' have familiarized mothers with child development and behavior discourse. Of the many episodes I watched, in any given episode, Oprah stated that her show reaches approximately 33,000,000 viewers per day – most specifically women. The voices of many 'experts' have had the advantage of new media formats. Mothers are exposed to powerful influences when trying to understand their place in the education of their children.

Every day, you teach your children lessons you "may" not want them to learn. Whether you know it or not... *you* teach your child how to behave — and misbehave. (Oprah, 2000)

Also mothers are able to find out what 'experts' have to tell them about their children, themselves, or their families through the use of the Internet. *Global Reach* (2003) stated that there are currently 230.6 million English language people online, 36.5% of the 619 million worldwide. This number is a dramatic increase from the 9.5 million hosts reported in January 1996 (Gray, 1996). If even a small percentage of these users are mothers, sites such as *American Psychological Association* or *kidshavestresstoo.org*. have had a tremendous and powerful opportunity and tool to reach a target audience.

At no other time in history have there been so many opportunities for mothers to view themselves and their children in conflicting and confusing ways. Most often, information offered to mothers did not take into consideration the social, cultural,

religious, and political policies and attitudes that contribute to their knowledge, health, abilities, resources and economic well-being.

Make a life decision to change things. Decisions are made in the head, while life decisions come from the heart. Decide that you are going to make your children's interests -- especially their health -- a top priority, and redesign your life accordingly. (Dr. Phil., 2003)

The research indicated that mothers have both the 'head' and 'heart' to want the absolute best for their children's education – and health – but often did not have the resourcing required – particularly divorced single mothers.

Martha Ward (1996) reported that the lack of resourcing that single mothers experience is referred to as the 'the feminization of poverty' or 'pauperization of women'. 'Pauperization of women' is explained by the social and economic conditions characterized by women-headed households with few or no legal protections, double-day house-work, and caring for children combined with low wages in the formal and informal labor force. These households are regarded as the largest definable group of poor people worldwide .

Griffith and Smith (1985) also pointed out that for the working class mother, there is a 'lack of coordination between schooling and wage earning schedules' (p. 12). Women who work part-time jobs, and often more than one, must organize their day to fit the school schedule. Schooling structures families so that families 'fit' the schooling structure.

The work of Carol Vincent and Simon Warren, 1998, explored how mothers 'become better parents' through education workshops. Not only do mothers have to fit their children's schooling into their day-to-day, they must fit in their own education, when it is presumed that they cannot provide appropriate parenting. Arguing neither for nor against parenting workshops, Vincent and Warren were careful to point out that

these courses in themselves reinforced the 'good mother/bad mother' discourse and supported the hegemonic patriarchal ideology that women 'are the natural recipients of this advice' (as in David et al., 1993, p. 53; Brown, 1992, p. 198). It is 'political momentum' which situates the discourse of mothering classes.

Together, all of these micro-policies and proposals structure a climate in which mothers are expected to prepare their children for school, then support the school once their child is a student there, whilst being solely responsible for behavioral and moral standards in their offspring (Vincent and Warren, 1998).

Vincent and Warren used the work of Antonio Gramsci to consider the 'mothering' discourse, and what Walkerdine & Lucey (1989) called 'sensitive mothering'. She noted that the mothers who attended the mothering courses she researched for her study were mainly mid-twenties to mid-thirties and the working class. And, although these courses were not specifically directed to single parents or the working poor mothers, these families were the most frequently targeted (Finch, 1984; David, 1985, 1993).

Educators and divorce in the classroom

I found that the literature specific to 'educators and divorce in the classroom' was recent and new. What are the changes schools must make to conform to the needs of separated parents and children of divorce? Bess Keller (1997) noted in *Divorce increasingly puts schools in the middle of family conflicts* that in Hilton, New York, administrators hold separate parent-teacher conferences and send out duplicate report cards. Administrators must understand legal requirements and concerns, look after extra staffing and resources, collect several addresses for children, know details of court custody orders, be aware of increased mediation and advocate services,

separate battling and sometimes dangerous parents, see children removed from school, and be flexible in enforcement of school policies.

In *NEA Today* (2002), high school teacher Marjorie Rios understood her role as a teacher in a particular way pertaining to the caring of her students, specifically students whose parents were going through a divorce.

It's never easy to deal with children who are suffering, and sometimes they don't want to tell you what is really bothering them. Many withdraw and want to be alone. Some want to talk and vent their feelings. Others are angry and exhibit hostility. Virtually all are very deeply hurt and just want someone to listen or care.

Wilcoxon & Magnuson (1999) gave suggestions for educators and counselors working within a divorce situation in the classroom. As educators address the concerns and needs of children of divorce, schools increasingly implement intervention, consultation and family programming. Educators are encouraged to include both custodial and non-custodial parent in all communications, establish a cooperative relationship with both parents, and have an increased understanding of separated parent anxiety.

In the study *Implementation and diffusion of the Rainbows Program in rural communities: Implications for school based prevention programming* (2000), Kramer, Laumann, Brunson, gave evidence of the importance of school-based programs in rural areas stating 'A weak diffusion of school-based programs may be quite serious in rural communities'. Concerns of educator burnout remained high as the researchers listed possibilities for program implementation.

How to support school staff who deliver the Program

1. To avoid burnout, it is imperative that programming duties not persistently rest on the shoulders of a single individual.
2. Provide ongoing support. To acknowledge that these are valued professional development activities, staff should receive a stipend for

- participating in training. Training needs to occur at times and locations that are convenient to staff.
3. Use volunteers or interns as appropriate. Staff overload can also be relieved by community volunteers and interns.
 4. Provide recognition and incentives. Concrete incentives (preferably money or relief from other duties) should be offered to staff members for coordinating or implementing the program. This would give a direct message to staff that their investment in the program is valued.

That educators may handle many situations of divorce in their classrooms has made for an interesting curriculum debate in the most recent literature. Should schools teach 'how to have a successful marriage' courses? Should 'health' or 'lifestyle' teachers add these courses to their curriculum? This is a hot issue in the larger cities of the United States, where many high schools have required marriage courses.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS: Adapts the skills-based programs for couples for delivery at the earliest age - primarily in high school and middle school, but interesting programs are also underdevelopment for elementary schools. These programs find that high school and middle school students can learn the skills, understand the research, and learn what it takes to maintain a skillful relationship. The premise is that this will equip them to make better marital choices and to make their marriages successful. The programs have developed curricula, manuals, and videos and each is being taught in schools across the US. In 1997 the Oklahoma Bar Association committed to providing two programs -- CONNECTIONS and PARTNERS -- to all 11th and 12th graders in the state. In May 1998 Florida passed the country's first marriage education bill, providing marriage skill-training for all 9th and 10th graders. (Sollee, 1997)

There are a number of educators (and parents) who consider that the government has no place in mandating this type of curriculum. The schools that mandate the courses are taking an alternative view, however, and offering the information in various forms. Tamar Lewin wrote in her article for the New York Times

Debate over marriage education for high school students (1998):

Given the nations high divorce rates, some educators and social policy analysts say schools have an obligation to help students think not only about relationships, but also about the role that marriage has played in

history and in the deeper human issues of love, interrelationships and commitment.

The extra work of educators concerning divorce issues in the classroom had also been recognized by the pediatric and psychiatric professions. In the journal *Young Children, The Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children*, the paper 'What schools are doing to help children of divorce' (2000), stated:

As developmental pediatrics, we have seen many children, and their parents, who have successfully coped with this (divorce) crisis and who frequently say that they have been helped by the unheralded support of teachers and schools. Educators have the advantage of being in constant touch with families who understand the developmental needs of young children.

The literature that targets educators is thick with suggestions for educator involvement. Victoria Lytle (December 1993) wrote in *NEA Today* that educators very often make the difference in the lives of children of divorce, for when students cannot get through their day and cannot cope, it is a team of educators who make a difference. It is the educator who can focus on helping students whether in their schooling or personal life. Educators, as well as teach curriculum in a way that the assessment of the class does not drop, take on the role of counselor and confidant. The role of teacher has expanded.

Yauman (1991) stated that teachers as well as parents need to receive extra training when it comes to understanding the impact of divorce on their children and students.

A number of authors recommended that to deal most effectively with children of divorce, teachers as well as parents need to receive training, education, or support, and these authors described programs designed to do so. (Cantrell, 1986; Carlson, 1987; Goldman & King, 1985; Strauss & McGann, 1987)

Hughes & Kirby (2000) researched the challenges for university professors to

establish 'facts from fiction' when it came to the difficulties of divorce for the young men and women in their classrooms. Although this study clearly discussed university aged children of divorce, the concerns of the study could be asked of middle and high school students. The authors discussed areas where educators often have concern.

If we have not had first hand experience with divorce, we might jump to conclusions about the impact of divorce on children without considering those factors that influence the outcomes. In trying to sort fact from fiction, we can start by examining our most current research in regard to these questions: If their mother remarries within a few years of their parents' divorce, how do college aged children usually fare? And when their mother has not remarried are there different consequences? In general, what are the long lasting consequences of their parents' divorce for college aged children - and what factors seem to make the most difference between the best and worst outcomes?

The above discussed research for divorced single mothers regarding increased and instant mobilization and new formats of transferring ideas and information was also applicable to educators. As mothers had the opportunity to use magazine and Internet information to assess their children's or their own success or nonsuccess, so too could educators. Just a few of the magazines that offered suggestions and information for educators on understanding divorce or their roles were *Creative Classroom*, *Teaching Pre K – 8*, and *Aviso*, with such articles as 'Parents as partners: taking education to the streets' (Himmelman, 2000), 'Learning to be a great teacher' (Haley, 1999) and 'The successful teacher: A question of balance' (Sherren, 1999).

The job of teaching had once seemed so joyful and rewarding; there had been time for recreation, laughter and exercise. Now there only seemed to be time for work, work and more work. The joy had been replaced by worry and a deep feeling of being inadequate to cope with the job. In a moment of clarity, the tired teacher's mind asked the obvious: "How long can I keep this up?" A stiff hand reached for the light switch and the teacher shuffled off to bed, haunted by the implications of this question. (Sherren, 1999)

There were numerous websites dedicated to encouraging teachers to talk to children, and vice-versa. The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) *It's my life* at

pbskids.org made use of a journal page to encourage children to ask teachers questions such as:

The fact that my parents are divorced, or are divorcing makes me feel:
When I need to talk about the divorce I feel like I can talk to:
Divorce has changed the way I see the world in that:

At *sparkisland.com*, a teacher's website of learning adventures, Justina Haesaerts, primary teacher at Marion Hunter stated:

The important thing is that children need to be able to talk about the way they feel. Sometimes they believe they can't. They are trying to protect the parent who they feel is under stress and they don't want to make that parent more unhappy. This puts the child under a lot of pressure which they bottle up inside...

As long as we know about the home situation, we can deal with the headache or the tummy ache in a much more effective way. Nine times out of ten there is no tummy ache although the child clearly feels that it has one. We are able to talk to the child and get them back on course and not have to get the parent in.

But when that happens we always inform the parent...

Going through such a difficult time at home can affect schoolwork. You generally find that the child has got so many things to take on board that he or she just stops for a while – you don't see the progress you'd expect to see.

This short section written by Haesaerts indicated that educators had to be aware of not only academic, but also mental, physical, and emotional changes in their students. They also had to remain alert to different reactions that might be displayed by ethnicity, religion, gender, and/or age. Not only were educators encouraged to be open to discussions with their students, but also parents.

The same advice was given on many family websites such as *theparentreport.com*. In an article *The effects of divorce on education*, (2001), an undisclosed author wrote:

Never hesitate to talk to your child's teacher about the situation at home; and if needs be, find a school or family counselor that both you and your child can share these difficult times with. (2003)

To help work with the changes divorce in the classroom bring, educators could find advocacy groups through their local teacher's associations, universities, churches, schools, and through the Internet. The Internet not only provided a source of information and suggestions, but self-help groups such as the one from the Alma College Education Department where *The Child Advocacy Project* outlined samples of advocacy letters (2003).

As educators negotiate their day-to-day, they are immersed in a thick discourse that constructs their relationships with each other, school boards, the community, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce – those students in their classroom.

Summary

The literature review on divorce, divorced single mothers, educators, and discourses that construct the role of each is often contradictory and confusing. In this review, I separated the literature into the three groups studied, but found it to be most difficult, for when divorce takes place with school aged children in the family, the three groups interface and relationships intersect. The literature could not be relegated to only one group any more than political, judicial, religious, corporate, or medical discourse could be considered solely it's own. Each vocabulary is strengthened by its hegemonic circulation and relationship throughout disciplines, ideologies, and day-to-day cultural practices.

The literature indicated recognition by all that divorce changes schooling for children. How to respond and appropriate roles for those involved is confusing, but continues to evolve. The literature from the three areas provided a useful backdrop for

a closer examination of the stories of these three groups to determine how the policies that define them and their roles circumscribe schooling for children of divorce.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

In the following chapter I discussed the background of Institutional Ethnography and its importance in this research study. I briefly outlined some major qualitative research methodologies and why I chose not to work with them. This chapter also briefly introduced considerations for interview participants, origin of the interview questions, the setting of informal conversations, analysis of the data, and the considerations of retelling and analyzing another's story.

Why Institutional Ethnography?

In deciding to explore the schooling for children of divorce I knew I did not want to debate the multitude of conflicting analyses of psychological, physical, academic, spiritual, and daily changes that take place for them. There have clearly been thousands of researched and written studies that both support, and contradict each other. I touched on much of this research in the literature review and knew I could not add anything significant to studies that debated the good or bad of disrupted families. I also knew, however, that there was an aspect of their schooling experiences children of divorce had not talked about, nor had those that influence it, such as educators and their mothers. I knew particularly that research had not been done considering the relationships and intersections of these groups within the constructed and determined boundaries of a political and corporate agenda called 'school'. That these three distinctly labeled groups of people must work together in a pre-determined and specifically constructed infrastructure such as schooling, molds and maintains important relationships and every-day practices that need to be explored.

Once I had determined to look at relationship intersections in this way, it was important not to do another in-depth cultural criticism of family and divorce, nor do a

pedagogical criticism of educators. Allowing children of divorce, divorced single mothers, and educators to tell their own stories in relation to the other, however, would reveal intersections of these relationships from specific viewpoints – from the viewpoint of the ‘expert’, not someone outside of their own experience. I use the term ‘expert’ in referring to self – each person the expert of his or her own experience.

As a divorced single mother I recognize that educators can be intimately connected to our experiences if they themselves are divorced single mothers. As well, an educator recognizes that a divorced single mother can know the inside limitations they work within if the divorced single mother has been an educator. The child of divorce, however, works only from her or his own vantage point. Also, although the educator and divorced single mother may have been a child of divorce, the child of divorce has not been the educator or mother. Each of these groups brings specific challenges within schooling in working with the other.

It is important to recognize that being included within each group permits and precludes a particular discourse that structures their placement socially and scholastically. Educational institutions, which are specifically political and corporate, control the availability of different types of discourse for each group.

Schools are being pressured to train students into this corporate culture, indoctrinating them in individual competitiveness and loyalty to company policy. (Barlow and Robertson, 1994, p. 89)

Foucault argues that these discourses ‘form the objects of which they speak... they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so, conceal their own intervention’ (Foucault 1974, p. 49). Who we are, Foucault claims, is determined by social discourse and practices. Children of divorce, divorced single mothers, and educators are each constructed, maintained, and most often bound by the hegemonic discourse and practices within which they circulate. Gramsci would

argue that the relationships within schools are 'headed and moved by authority and power'.^{xv} To research the relationships which impact children of divorce within an institution that constructs their knowledge and daily experiences, I thought could most effectively be done through a critical feminist methodology, such as Institutionalized Ethnography (IE).

There are many different research methodologies that have been utilized in researching the topic of divorce – many which were used in the research discussed in the literature review. I will briefly explain some of the major qualitative methodologies, and as well why I chose not to use them.

Biography is the focus of an individual life experience using stories, interviews, documents and historical context as data. This methodology did not provide a textual discourse and relationship analysis. It was important in this study to look at the experiences for children of divorce as constructed by educators, divorced single mothers, and the discourse that defines them.

A phenomenological approach was interesting and tempting as I have attempted to understand the essence or the phenomena of divorce and what it meant for my children. Phenomenology attempts to capture the personal details of a person's story. I felt, however, that I could not describe the essence of a phenomena or concept experienced by another. I also felt that the essence of relationships within the structure of schooling could not be adequately interpreted.

Grounded theory is a method used by many of the researchers in the studies I found in my literature review search. 'The self-defined purpose of grounded theory is to develop theory about phenomena of interest. But this is not just abstract theorizing, but instead the *theory* needs to be *grounded* or rooted in observation' (Trochim, 2000). Theorists use various forms of coding to draw out results for a grounded theory study

and I have to admit that I remain fully confused. I did not understand how I would apply a discourse analysis through this methodology.

Ethnography is an anthropological approach used to focus on a group or culture. Ethnography extends itself to feminist studies and collects data through observation, interviews, and participant/observation, or time in the field. This study was not to draw a portrait of children of divorce, divorced single mothers, or educators, but to instead understand the social and cultural portraits already drawn of them, and to peel back the layers of the discourse surrounding them.

As an ethnographer, I had to question my own position as a resource for the research. Institutional ethnography provides a method of researching ways of living for marginalized groups of people or individuals. My over-all experiences were similar to the experiences of other divorced single mothers in that we all encountered a socioeconomic drop, had increased concern for our children, faced stigma, and made sacrifices. As a resource for the research I was emphatic that I not confuse my own day-to-day with that of the others. To ensure respect and acknowledgement of each mother's encounters, I wrote notes of similarity and contrast. I was careful to include differences that I as a resource might have otherwise unknowingly overlooked.

Institutional ethnography 'emphasizes the connections among the sites and situations of everyday life, professional practice and policymaking. Such connections are accomplished primarily through what Smith has labeled 'textually-mediated social organization'. IE is therefore concerned with textual discourse analysis and the textual discursive dimensions that define day-to-day life experiences (Retrieved from <http://webdev.maxwell.syr.edu/soc/ieconf/ie.htm> IE conference, June, 2001).

Institutional ethnography was the methodology that could best allow examination of schooling for children of divorce and a critical analysis of my own personal approach,

ideology, and involvement. IE not only *allows* for the inclusion of a personal story, but also recognizes that to leave it out is unethical. The IE approach is not in keeping with the positivist approach of being impersonal, objective, or distant. The researcher being intimately involved does not contaminate the study and therefore the inclusion of personal experience is a necessary part of the study. To distance myself from this study would be undesirable and weaken the framework and understanding of the research. It would also hide my own involvement for the reader.

We are informed by our experience and we use that experience as our point of entry. In exploring the way social relations are organized (a large issue with institutional ethnographers), it is necessary to explore the experiential basis of how problems present themselves to people involved in institutional settings that place them outside of the ruling relations. It is that journey from these experiences into the institutional practices and policies where we find the basis of ruling organization'. (Reimer, notes, 2003)

The interest in textual analysis and discourse outlined by Foucault and Gramsci, is echoed by Canadian theorist Dorothy Smith and emphasizes the relationships and connections between situations of everyday life and professional practice and policy making. Smith brings to her work an added dimension that Foucault and Gramsci do not. Her work is specifically feminist. To work from a feminist perspective, or from 'women's experience', is to speak with authority (Thompson, 1992). Although I cannot presume to have identical experiences of other divorced single mothers, I speak from within the experience.

Feminist methodology and IE also address the ethics of research, such as 'whose interests are served' and do participants have a voice in the direction of their involvement. Thompson quotes Stanley & Wise (1982) by saying 'People's lives are not used as research fodder'. It was important to be continuously aware of the place I held in relation to others in the research.

How do 'they' see 'us'? Who are 'we' looking at 'them'? Social analysis becomes a relational form of understanding in which both parties actively engage in 'the interpretation of cultures.' (Kelly 2000, p. 207)

In this study it was important that at no time I made participants feel uncomfortable or that I placed myself above them – even though my place as researcher already defined the relationship. Although 'divorce expert' within the realm of the institutions that place me, I was not an expert within the context of those who shared their stories with me. The children of divorce, divorced single mothers, and educators were the experts and the authorities regarding their own lives (Stanley & Wise, 1982).

As a whole, IE asks the question "what's actually happening?" in a material socially organized world – the world that all human actors inhabit together' (DeVault, 1999: 49). Institutional ethnographers are concerned with institutional connections, with relations across and among various sites of activity, and with the coordination of these sites via ruling regimes and their texts (personal communication, Reimer, October 10, 2002). For instance, 'the traditional view of sociology sees the family household as a private, interior kind of place – a place of individual attention and activity. By contrast, an institutional ethnographic view proposes that household life is connected to multiple institutions outside - to institutions that organize paid work, education, health care, leisure activity, and the production and distribution of commodities. These institutional sites (and the discourses organizing them) are treated as 'the terrain on which members of family groups must operate outside their homes' (DeVault 1991, Griffith, 1995 as quoted by DeVault 1999, p. 48).

Institutional ethnographers must adopt a particular research stance, one that recognizes that people's own knowledge and ways of knowing are crucial elements of social action and thus of social analysis. Specific attention to text analysis is integral. ^{xvi}

Although children of divorce, divorced single mothers, educators, and my own positioning provide stories and intersection points, we are not the objects of the research. The object is instead, the macro level institution that determines the micro level placement and relationships, and ultimately the school day for children of divorce.

Because of schooling experiences with my own children and knowing the deepness with which they affected me, I knew that I could in no way explore and research this subject without myself being deeply embedded and further affected. To understand my own level of involvement and social positioning, I knew that I had to recognize that I was a blend of the researcher and the researched. I knew I could not hear a story about divorced children, divorced single parent mothers, or educators, without having my own particular spin. I would not be able to shut out my own memories, and my personal involvement is situated within each story through my own interpretation. The connected relationship and blurring of lines between researcher and researched, knower and known, is strongly linked with feminist research (Acker et al., 1983; Stanley & Wise, 1983).

To understand my responsibility as a feminist researcher, I had to acknowledge the trust placed in me by those who told their stories. Telling their stories was revealing their own identities and the identities of their children. Narration describes us and our experiences to others, our past, present, and future actions. 'How we tell stories, what we emphasize, and omit, our stance as protagonists or victims, the relationships that our stories establish all shape what we can claim of our own lives. Personal stories are a means by which we fashion our identities' (Kusch, lecture, 2001).

When the stories are beyond our experiences or comprehension, we break them down and make them understandable, changing them. Researchers must be

cautious of this changing and breaking apart. 'We attempt to transform the unusual and powerful into the familiar and tame – it is the domestication of meaning' (Farella, 1993, p. 10). Farella suggested it is then that we believe we can go to the second level of control as ethnographers, being able to change what is communicated (p. 10).

Experience is complex, and reflecting on experience is complex as well. We construct and reconstruct our experience, falsify it, break it up into episodes, allocate to each episode particular truths of our own and so set ourselves in conflict with others. At some stage, we decide that a particular truth will do for a particular experience and leave it at that...^{xvii}

Although Farella claimed story telling brings with it an automatic 'untruth', the story is in actuality the only truth we can know and show. How students, mothers, and educators retell their stories is *their* truth as they know it. As researcher, my job was to retell these stories as the storytellers wanted them revealed; but also as institutional ethnographer, to point out how these stories were intricately linked to a larger political-corporate order and discursively organized world.

Institutional ethnographers examine processes of ruling in the production of texts in specific workplaces (such as schools, health care and criminal justice settings, government agencies, newsrooms, professional offices, and so on) and in the uses of texts (such as official records and reports) that organize people's activities in various settings. (Smith 1996, as quoted in DeVault 1999, p. 49)

It was important to ask the question 'what is actually happening' to those voices that often do not have a chance to speak about the organizations of ruling and how they themselves fit. I knew I needed to retell stories and analyze the policies that influence and determine how life and institutions intersect. I examined how political agencies use the education institution to construct and define these relationships and schooling for children of divorce.

Interview participants

Research participants included three people from three groups; adult children of divorce, divorced single mothers, and educators. All participants were New Brunswick residents and had the following criteria:

- ◆ Adult children of divorce - students who were above the age of majority, and had been in a divorce situation some time during their schooling years.
- ◆ Divorced single mothers - those mothers who were in a divorce situation while their children were in school.
- ◆ Educators – at least five years full-time experience and as recent as 1995

During the month of August, 2002, several 'Request for Participation' ([Appendix E](#)) sheets were posted at the University of New Brunswick (UNB), St. Thomas University (STU), and grocery stores. A period of two weeks was set for replies, and then a process of random selection would take place. Within that time, however, replies were few and I turned to another method of selection. In keeping with an ethnographic approach, two 'gate-keepers' were approached to assist in locating participants. This method of selection is known as the 'snowball' technique. In approaching people who knew of the research, it was through their connections that participants were approached by me, or contacted me themselves.

The second was using the "snowball" method to identify interviewees. The snowball method asks members of the community to name others "with whom it would be a good idea to talk. (Lagerroos, Shifferd, & Graf. 1995)

My gatekeepers worked within the education system and the snowball technique proved to be successful.

One educator from a university faculty, another from a high school, and one educator from an elementary school agreed to be interviewed. The educator from the elementary school was a woman and the other two educators were men. While I

specifically asked one educator whether he would like to participate in the study after his name was suggested by one of the gate-keepers, the other two heard of the research and called me.

Two divorced single mothers saw the 'Request for Participation' and replied. Both live in upper income housing with their now young adult children, and during the time of divorce were situated in upper socioeconomic positions while their children attended elementary and junior high school. I approached the third divorced single mother, whose two sons attend a Boy's and Girl's club in the area and often play in my neighborhood. Although I was familiar with the sons, I did not know Ruth, the mom. She agreed to do the interview after I called her and asked if she was aware of the study. After a brief explanation on the telephone she stated that she would enjoy doing the research and would have contacted me had she seen a flyer. Her situation was different than that of the other two women in that her children are still in school, are young, she was one of the working poor families while married, and continues to live deprived. We set times for the interviews.

The three children of divorce that I interviewed worked together. They heard of my research from one of their co-workers. One was now a divorced father himself with a young son. His wife left him and their child, and he has not been in a relationship since. The young woman only had her mother for many years, as her biological father left when she was very young. Her mother remarried and she then lived with a stepfather, with whom she also had a strained relationship. The other young man whom I interviewed, spent much of his time outside of school playing hockey. This was something that kept his father involved in his life, although he lived with his mom. He was certainly the most financially stable. All three wanted to talk to me about their

experiences and wanted to talk to me together. This I agreed to, however, recontacted Justin and Toby after the group interview and talked with each of them separately.

Informal conversations and interviews

The informal data collecting for this thesis began long before the process of my degree in the format of a diary or journal. Over the past year as I knew schooling for children of divorce would be my topic, during art classes that I taught, sitting on the beach, or at such things as home parties, I asked questions. As we talked, I asked permission if I could use the conversations in my thesis. Also, in the past year, I carried out research for school health and nutrition with Dr. McKenna in the New Brunswick elementary schools. I often had time in lunchrooms or on the playground to talk to principals, teachers, and administration, telling them of my research. Again, I asked if I could use our informal conversations in my thesis. All said yes, and all were interested in the study.

My first *formal* task for this research was to guide the interviews of the participants. These interviews provided deeply rich stories and narratives of the local settings of the day-to-day lives of each person. The interviews also showed the deep concern that divorced single mothers and educators had for children. Interview questions (Educator – [Appendix B](#), Divorced single mother – [Appendix C](#), Adult children of divorce – [Appendix D](#)) were designed for each of the three groups to determine how and where they contacted each other through out the school day. The questions were discussed, written, cross-referenced, and rewritten in a meeting between my advisor and outside committee member. Questions were open so that the participants could ‘talk’ freely if, and when they chose. At the meeting place and time agreed upon, each participant received an ‘Informed Consent’ ([Appendix A](#)) that was signed and dated by both the participant and myself. Confidentiality was assured and

names of participants were changed. All interviews were taped on a small hand-held tape recorder with the permission of each participant, then were transcribed and erased. Transcripts were kept in a safe place, and continue to be secure. The interviews of the educators lasted the longest – approximately one and a half hours. The divorced single mothers talked approximately one hour, while my first interview with the three children of divorce lasted about forty minutes. When I recontacted Toby and Justin, we talked for another half hour, and fifteen minutes respectively. Alice was doing her internship and could not be reached for a second interview.

All three interviews of divorced single mothers took place in each participant's home. Interviews of the three children of divorce were completed at their place of work. One educator was interviewed in his office, while two were interviewed in their homes. I felt that meeting in homes was important to the trust developed between participant and myself. If it was suggested, I agreed. It was important to make them feel as much in a position of power as possible and that they could ask questions when they wanted. This way the research was theirs and could be owned by them. Participants were thanked and asked if they would like to ask me questions. Educators asked questions concerning the thesis, divorced single moms asked questions concerning my children and divorce, and my schooling. The children of divorce asked what I was finding. The questions they chose to ask me were as interesting as what I had asked them, and provided a great amount of information in what was important to them at this stage in their lives.

In your research keep them involved and informed... make it clear from the start that they are participants and co-researchers; they are not 'subjects' that you are studying. You are studying yourself in relation to them. They are central. (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996, p. 15)

Analyzing stories

I wanted to expand upon the stories, but how could I select what portion was more important than another. How could I write honestly?

When you write about others, you try to do it honestly, but you always impose a systematic lie. Not just occasional fibs and mistakes, but distortions that are an extension of you. Some lies we professionalize. In social science we write objectively and dispassionately about people, leaving the people out, take an experience and making it into something that is more pure by being more reasonable... when you try to capture people in words, you quickly discover that there is no purity (pure description is the benchmark of dishonesty) only rough edges and a few redundant themes.

The world is, after all, supposed to make sense, behave in an orderly fashion... when we can't actually physically control the world, we edit and in other ways limit how we look at it. We see this but overlook that. And of course, all we ever end up seeing is our own image in a mirror.

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I had to remember that I was writing about where relationships with each person and group of people intersected within a specific construct of schooling, and not lose their stories.

In writing the stories, I looked to the work of feminist academic Linda Eyre and her article 'Framing tales from school: Opening (or closing) spaces for social action' (2001). This article specifically addresses various ways feminist researchers may deconstruct and write another's story through the limitations and strengths of post structural, realist, critical or reflexive analysis.

She stated 'A realist frame attempts to honor the participants' voices by providing concrete examples selected and edited by the researcher. However, it also creates the illusion of a universal truth because tensions and contradictions in the voices of the participants are repressed in order to make a point. The researcher's political position as author remains undisclosed' (192). The limitation of a realist frame

appears to be the power the 'researcher' has over the 'researched', strengthening othering and inequality between the two. As a feminist researcher, the interest in allowing marginalized groups to speak should allow individuals to tell their stories, and through those stories, a common goal of fairness is understood. The universal truth is not in individual's lives, but unfairness and marginalization of oppressed groups.

Eyre continued to discuss 'Framing tales' in her discussion of a critical frame, citing Fine, 1994, as to the romanticizing and under-theorizing by critical theory researchers. In a way similar to reflexive, 'there is a tendency to avoid teasing out the contradictions, tensions, and inconsistencies in an account... and the author's subjectivity is 'whited out' (194). Critical theorists cannot afford to use theory to separate and other, or seclude their own biases. Understanding and revealing the hazy line between researcher and researched opens up areas that might otherwise be hidden.

In the discussion of a post-structural frame, Eyre discussed a shift in focus from 'social structures to forms of knowledge and relations of power' (Ibid.). She cautioned that post-structural theorists do not 'close down opportunities for social action by masking her or his subjectivity and avoid taking up the daily advocacy work that is still needed' (Ibid.). The research of schooling for children of divorce and retelling the stories of those children, divorced single mothers and educators is the beginning of opening up a space within schools and government policy for social action. Through a reflexive frame, Eyre cited Fine 1994, Lenzo 1995, and Lather 1991, reminding me as researcher/researched to 'examine my relation to the participants' (197).

As a final consideration for writing the analysis, I looked to McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (1996) 'the purpose of your inquiry is to change what you are doing in the

light of how you see yourself influencing your situation. You therefore need to keep careful records of (a) yourself and how your behavior and thinking are changing and (b), representatives or significant others, and how you feel their behavior and thinking is changing' (39).

Through out this thesis, my behavior, thinking and actions did change. Throughout the interviews, we each displayed changes in behavior, different than what I originally perceived might occur. It was important that I noted those changes and that I was cognizant of my own. Although McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead were writing about an action research methodology, their advice is important for all research projects.

CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

In this chapter I discussed how the IE methodology connects the sites of local experience and trans-local discourse. I brought to the reader the day-to-day experiences as told to me by educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce – the local data. I also explored the trans-local data, or textually mediated discourse. The discursively organized world of school policy, the Education Act, roles of parents, duties of students, and discourse from other federal and provincial departments determine how those within schools are positioned and groomed for success or failure. It is here where real experience and political priority come together to create a place for those who fit and those who do not.

The discourse assumes a uniform availability and accessibility of economic resources for all parents when in fact, policy makers would have knowledge that single parent mothers - the poorest group in Canada – are *not* equally resourced and their children would be severely disadvantaged. The interviews of educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce, as well as all literature clearly confirm that 'parents' are not a homogenous group and divorced single mothers have very limited resources. In fact, the one common thread running through all of the stories is that schooling for children of divorce is difficult and challenging because mothers just do not have enough money to provide in the ways policies demand. When government issues 'parenting' policies, and media, television and women's magazines reinforce those policies, the contradiction between textually-mediated discourse and real-life situations is strengthened. It is this contradiction and gap that force divorced single mothers to second-guess their schooling involvement and assign blame for their children's difficulties to themselves.

Background

Institutional Ethnography (IE) emphasizes the connections among the sites and situations of everyday life, professional practice and policy making. Such connections are accomplished primarily through what Smith has labeled – 'textually-mediated social organization'.^{xix}

Campbell & Gregor (2002) state that institutional ethnography is an analytical approach that begins 'where we are – as actual people with bodies located in time and space' (9). Exploring where and how we are positioned, individually and as a collective, entails at the very least identifying our day-to-day lives, our history, and the textually-mediated discourse that situates us.

Using two levels of data collecting, institutional ethnographers not only interview participants and observe the local settings of everyday life, but also explore the 'trans-local, extra, or outside the boundaries' (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 28) of the immediate. It is the awareness and analysis of the trans-local that assists in defining the 'why' of where and how we exist. The trans-local is determined, defined, and declared 'natural and normal' by a mixed hegemonic discourse within politics, religion, and business text, in the 'textually-mediated social organization' of our everyday. This 'natural and normal' defined by the ruling class, places those outside as 'unnatural and abnormal'.

As children of divorce, divorced single mothers, and/or educators, we each participate and role-play through the discourse that defines us. Via the power of organizing text, we 'activate its power' consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, through our participation (Smith 1999, pp. 148 – 51). Institutional ethnographers have at the heart of their research a desire to empower, believing that a conscious and cogent shift may occur 'when one moves from knowing at first hand to knowing in text-mediated ways' (Campbell & Gregor, 2002. p. 36).

The significance of how each participant recalled and retold the daily events that defined them cannot be understated, and during the interviews I had complete trust that the story was *truth* to the teller. Whether child of divorce, single parent, or educator, each had a passion as they revealed personal experiences. Although I used a general set of interview questions, participants were allowed to 'talk along' and stray from the line of questioning. I felt that it was this process – the gathering of thoughts into their consciousness, which provided important depth to their stories. It seemed that at times, stories or thoughts flooded, while at other times, they oozed slowly into their minds. Bodies leaned forward or away from me, eyes lowered, filled, or became brighter, and hands made gestures of despair, confusion, or comfort. At times when the evidence of pain interrupted their story, the silence spoke of a time of frustration, powerlessness, or anxiety. As well, silence brought tears as divorced single mothers recalled a compassionate teacher or their child's success at school. Once the participant seemed to 'run out of things to say', became increasingly uncomfortable, or finished a line of thought, I moved into another question. Sometimes participants were very structured in answering, not straying from what I asked. Other times, they left the question asked and talked about another issue... as did Alice, who talked about her absent father throughout the entire interview. It was apparent that throughout her life – not only during her school years – the absence of her father played a significant role in who she believed, and still believes herself to be. The absence was significant for all three children of divorce, but Alice talked about it often throughout each question. Although the single mothers did not share a common economic hardship, they did share the feeling of 'bad' or 'inadequate' mother trying to 'measure-up' and their language was self-blaming. All three educators struggled with legalities, and the

conflict between human response and school policies, even though each reacted in different ways.

Seeing and telling stories – Sites of local experience

Educators

Bud

Bud was the most experienced and highest educated of the three educators interviewed. His background included eighteen years as a school , one year teaching in Papua, New Guinea, and three years in the high arctic area around Baffin Island. His teaching experience included grades one to ten, although the bulk was in elementary school, which was his interest. Bud received a Masters at the University of Toronto, as well as a Masters from the University of New Brunswick. His school work was at a local elementary school bordering the City of Fredericton limits, with a mix of both very poor and fairly wealthy families.

As teacher, his day-to-day role and involvement with children of divorce and single mothers was different than as principal. He noted that as a teacher, he had a more limited role with the parent, as often it was the principal who cared for parental conflict within the schools. His concerns in the classroom, however, were stretched beyond the role of teacher.

Many times there are name changes and moving. There was a time when only one or two kids were from different family settings, now there are at least half. Educators have expectations that they will work with those kinds of kids. Now, teachers are more aware of what they say and do. Like art day. We choose a piece of a child's art and invite parents to come and have students walk them around. Many had parents who could not come, and for kids who could not have a parent coming, a teacher tries to find someone else – a friend's parent. Teachers are more aware and conscious.

During the divorce seems to be the most difficult for everyone. There might be academic changes – changes in routines, where they live. The younger are less aware and more open – say right out – what is.

Teachers have to keep things confidential and they do that well. They might say something mom and dad would go through the roof about, but teachers know to not repeat things. Grade three to eight kids are more aware and quieter – trying to think it out themselves. Older? Kids show more overt reactions – angry, talking to people about it and trying to sort it out. We deal with all the responses.

In the classroom, educators must deal with many children who are at different stages of parental separation. When the numbers are high the added work and stress can be debilitating to both the curriculum teaching and learning, and the well-being of the educator. Bud explained that there are many big issues, such as when parents cannot sort out their personal feelings and it affects the child both in and out of school.

Particularly at the time during divorce and separation there is a lot of confusion with changing addresses and changing routines. There are differences of opinion. When parents are together, they come generally with those things sorted out. When they are apart, they may have different philosophies about discipline as a parent. Sometimes we get confused signals from home about homework, discipline... dad might fly off the handle if we call him at work, and mom might expect that we always call, so in one case, you are in trouble if you do, and in another case, in trouble if you don't. There are a lot of those kinds of issues that teachers have to be sensitive to and deal with. There are also a lot of issues around - legal issues in school, and a lot of issues around who has access and custody and that kind of thing, and often parents will come and say 'don't let Johnny's dad pick him up', or 'don't talk to Johnny's dad about what he is doing at school'. There is legislation in place where we have to give access to the custodial parent, and the only way we could deny access to natural parents is if there is a court order. They come with letters from a lawyer – not very relevant – but very threatening kinds of letters.... but that is just the lawyers and it doesn't mean anything. An out of court order we do not pay attention to, but if that shows up ... if mom says 'well, don't let Johnny go home with dad at noon' and Johnny's dad shows up to take him home at noon – what do you do? You can't stop that parent. You can advise. The best you can do is say – we will advise – but we have no legal authority to stop them unless there is a court order. There are a lot of those kinds of issues that put teachers and principals in difficult situations. Teachers are more conscious of their need to know, and that is something as a school principal I would take up.

There are school policies in place what to do, and we advise in those cases. If there are serious custody cases, I mean, we have had death threats at the school. We have had people arrested for coming into the school and taking the child out of school when there is a court order

against them. We have advised them – ‘ you are not allowed to be here, not allowed to take that child with you’, and they basically say where to go and they will do what they want. You know there are tough issues the school has to deal with that educators are involved in that they do not want to be involved in, except for the benefit of the child. There are issues – there is a need for school personalities to become more aware. Anyone removing a child would have to have a legal document and i.d. with them. If we are in doubt we just keep the kids in the office. I keep them and call the police and let them deal with it and step out of it completely because we can't make those kinds of decisions.

It can be very traumatic for the kids and there are incidences where one parent will talk about or against the other parent and it will be investigated... but if people come into the school with the proper i.d., we can't stop them. What we often do is ask the child if it is ok for them to be alone with these people and we supervise that, or there are times when the kids choose to be alone.

We always hope kids will talk - not necessarily to us, but talk to someone. There are issues that we talk to kids about everyday – sex education and suicide and all the garbage they see on t.v., and everything they are exposed to, so we counsel kids generally, but kids who struggle anyway, we find out how we can find someone they can talk to. I think most schools try to do that.

There are alot of family issues that schools are having to deal with more and more and more... name changes, school zones, moving away from friends, legal issues, and outside agencies as well. Health nurses and family services people, and lawyers call, changing of routines is a big issue - even something like a plan for a storm day – what do you do for a storm day. What do you do? Maybe they have changed residences and they are supposed to have a different plan and we do not know that. If they close school early, you know, we don't know what to do. There is a whole myriad of things that are complicated with kids who are in different family situations... and that is without placing blame. Just complicates things.

Bud also spoke about many concerns voiced by the other two educators, such as the extra hours involved in mediating with parents, counseling students, double report cards, parent teacher with mother and father at different times, and deciding whether to follow school policy, or act unilaterally. Talking about programs that might be in place for children of divorce or single mothers, he stated: 'Schools do not have funding, staffing, or policy directive or required initiative to provide those

programs. Teachers do it as an aside.' Educators must choose between following or ignoring school policies.

I've never been one to ask for permission. Personally, I wouldn't bother much, I would just do what is right. Others would ask permission and follow school policies and district policies very specifically... I have allowed children to register under a different name which isn't legally correct, at the request of a parent under difficult circumstances, or – you know I think schools make those kinds of allowances all the time because it is the right thing to do at the time. The parent understands the consequences.

I think there are just policies in place which are more difficult to follow directly in some cases for those dealing with divorce. The zoning issue is a good one. What do you do if mom and dad separate and move out of the zone, but want the child to stay in that school? If you had to ask permission, you might be denied that because they staff on enrollment. They have to have permission of the school district, not the school, but those things go on all the time and nothing is said about it.

Ensuring the safety of the child is as much a part of schooling as is teaching.

Does this make the school a safer place for children of divorce? Bud also stated that teachers are responsible for approaching all unknown people on school property.

Supervision on the playground has a different meaning than it did even ten years ago.

Although children are observed, so too are those who enter the school property. The safety of all students is a concern, and children of divorce are at risk when two-parents use the child as leverage and use the educator or the school system to try to get at the child.

All schools have policies in place that we follow. We have meet and greet policies in the school where staff are expected to greet people they do not recognize as staff. Greet them in a friendly way 'hi, can I help you?' Introduce them to staff. But that is a security thing. RCMP monitor in plain clothes. This is for the protection of the whole school, not just the children. We get irate parents who come to the school who are angry at a teacher because six months ago a dad asked a teacher for communications about when a school picnic was and the teacher forgot and mom didn't send it to dad, so he is going to walk in and tear a strip off the teacher. So, now-a-days, you just don't know. Schools are an easy target and things happen.

We had an issue a few years ago that a mother told us that the father in Ontario was not to have any contact with the little girl. The father started mailing stuff addressed to the little girl to the school. You know, what do you do with that? It is mail. I can't open the mail. I advised the father that it was going to be returned to sender. We are not the post office. She doesn't live at that address. She doesn't get mail at that address, and then advised the mom of the situation and eventually it got to the point where the dad was not being very cooperative and the mom tried contacting him personally and that wasn't working, so we just started returning mail. If there was anything large, we would just deliver it to the mom and she would throw it in the garbage or give it to the kid, or whatever. We are not the postal services. Those are the kinds of complicated issues we get into though and you cannot just look up in a handbook what to do... those are just the kinds of things that come up in dealing with a diverse community.

There are also a lot of parents who are getting very demanding about their needs and their circumstances and having the school try to accommodate them. In some regard, I think it is unreasonably so. There are limits that the school operates under... budget. I do things out of extra time, etc., but there is a balance there somewhere.

It was clear that Bud had extensive experience with parents, other educators, social workers, lawyers, court orders, police, and children of divorce. His job as educator was persistently entangled with making decisions about written school policy, and what he considered to be 'the right thing'. He showed a concern and caring for the well-being of those he worked with, and parents – both divorced single mothers and divorced single fathers. His primary concern, however, was the well-being of the child – his student. Hanna, the second interview showed similar concerns and experiences.

Hanna

Hanna worked for seven of her eight years at the kindergarten level in one of the city's poorest schools. Recalling experiences with children of divorce was not difficult as approximately sixty per cent in the school were from single mothered homes. Some children never had a father figure present, however, most had at least the biological father and a live-in boyfriend come and go throughout their lives. Hanna

talked of the difficulties facing young children living in poverty in diverse family situations.

A little girl in my class - I think the main problem with her situation was that she was with dad 2 days, with mom 2 days, with dad 2 days, with mom 2 days and dad's a bad parent. Mom is a good one. She wears the same clothes and it affects her physically. She's not bathed. Her hair is not brushed. She never comes with homework done. She comes in at 10:00 o'clock and I know when she comes in at ten she's been with dad. Then I say 'oh, you were with your dad' - not in a condemning tone or way, and she says 'yeah, I was with dad, but it will be better tomorrow I'll be with my mom.' So see, she even sees at 5 years old. She gets confused where she's going. She goes on the bus and I'll say 'where are you going tonight hon.' And she'll say 'I'm -' you can see her going 2 and 2 and 2 and trying to work it out and remember and figure out where she is. School wise and academically, she is a very bright little girl. She's very smart. The situation doesn't affect her as much as it does some, but she is very tired.

Most of the children I deal with are in this situation of separation. It has always been mom by herself most of the time. In kindergarten we do a lot of themes and when Fathers Day comes around, I can't do Father's Day because most of them - well over 50 per cent don't even have a father or have any contact with the dad, and if they do, it's a boyfriend, and they call him dad. One little girl today said 'Oh, dad's moved into another trailer. I think I get to see him.' I don't think they get the whole picture of what family is about really. It's dad going in and out or mom going in and out. I have two that live with dad and they don't see mom at all either. So, I think for the little ones, separation affects everything and they don't understand the concept of family or going home to two at all. I'd say about 60 per cent of my kids are from single homes or live-ins for a week and then they're gone.

In low-income housing zones, teachers in this school have a lot of transient kids that come and go. I have at least one or two a year that come in and they'd say 'Oh dad's in jail'. That is not uncommon for me to hear that. One little guy in the kindergarten class that came back in September and we didn't know he was coming - the other teacher said 'You're back!' <happily> and he said 'Yeah, dad's in jail'. She said 'dad's in jail?' 'Yeah, he was beating mom.' Like he's just five and he said that and he knows that. He sees that. I didn't know I would have these problems as a teacher. Your heart goes out to these kids. I can always tell which ones come from apartment A, B or C... and then Daisy Street.^{xx} I'm sure you know the Daisy Street kids. All single parent mothers with no hope. No hope of getting out. All on income assistance and the kids suffer.

Hanna was aware that teaching involves much at the kindergarten level. Some

days, curriculum is not high on the priority list. Many days teachers do more social work and counseling with students and parents, as well as support fellow educators.

As reported by Bud, legal issues arise often.

We don't even have any guidance counselors for them to talk to. The little ones, they are not afraid to tell you if they're upset or mad. Especially with the going to moms and going to dads and can't go skating because the skates are with dad and can't go here and can't go there because they left something at one house or the other. That's one of their biggest frustrations – and for the teacher.

When I was at another school and did my internship a father came to the door and the teacher said 'he can't go with him'. I said 'what do you want me to do? Am I going to tell the father he can't have his kid?' She said 'Yep. We have the legal paper'. You know that's ... when they have legal papers - the kids are scared and I'm afraid I am going to let the child go with the wrong person. I don't know what to do... it even stresses me out as a teacher because I don't want to do the wrong thing for the kid. Many times too in my school, there was no marriage, so they come waving papers that are not legal... they had a baby together and he just left and decides to come back <hands moving in frustration> so there is no actual legal divorce... nothing you can work out. Boyfriend and girlfriend. A lot of times there is no court order. Things have been worked out with a mediator between the parents. When there is no court order, it is tougher for teachers.

Understanding that this school was in a low socioeconomic neighborhood, I asked Hanna what affect it had on educators. Often educators paid from their own pockets for many children, particularly buying hot lunches, extra milk, and bringing clothing such as snow suits, skates, mittens, hats, boots, sneakers and even socks. Often times a child was washed or cleaned up and hair brushed before school began to ease the teasing by other children. As recognized by Hanna, this is a difficult and controversial decision. She pointed out that a few single moms will not accept any help from teachers, and a new snowsuit or boots have to be kept at the school instead of sent home as they are with other children. Hanna expressed angst not knowing what to do in situations where single mothers consider these expressions of concern 'gifts' or

'charity', and what was best for the child. She also attempted to understand her place as teacher and not parent.

Hanna stated that unquestioningly, single moms with only one child fared much better than if there were more. Some moms had five to six children, and those children were the most poor, often having little or nothing in their lunches. Teachers always intervened and provided food kept in the school kitchen or directly from their own lunch. Often too, she found that single children could participate in more activities, had more books, and did better in school.

It seemed clear that the kindergarten children liked the routine of doing the same things at the same time each day. For children going through the separation time, she thought the routines provided a sense of stability and security. She also felt that as teacher, she provided an emotional love the mother might not have been able to provide during that time.

I think with the kindergarten kids they seem to like the structure. At home there doesn't seem to be much structure. They come in late and go to bed late. You know meetings and moving and courts... and I think when they come to school they know there is structure and they know and we show them love. We love them and we show them support and you know, I think – and where parents are going through all that they don't have the emotional love to give and so they come and they get it at school. Especially with the little ones. They all hug me and stuff like that. That's what I see.

Hanna practiced her teaching much as she does her mothering to her elementary aged son and daughter. She found it difficult to separate the two, and thought there was no need to. She mentioned Policy 701 and stated that teachers are anxious about the confines of 'touching and hugging' a student.

How do you not hug little kids. They fall down, they get punched on the playground, or their daddy has left the home. Teachers take the risks of having a parent make false accusations, or be really angry with you because you felt empathy for their child. We just do it. We do what is best for the child. It is easier for a woman teacher to hug, than a male

teacher. If they hug girls, or touch girls, they can really get in trouble. What do you do then? There are all kinds of considerations teachers have to think about. Sometimes too much.

Hanna is an intelligent teacher and not unaware of teacher/mothering discourse. She also has a high regard for her own integrity, and attempts to 'do the right thing', regardless of the consequence.

Stuart

Stuart has been a teacher for six years, three of those years at a city high school. He stated that as a teacher of high school, he is not as aware of who is from a divorced home and who is not, remembering only two specific children. He stated that often times a teacher may have a student only one semester and then they move on. Also, curriculum is important at the high school level, particularly in grade eleven when the provincial examinations are given to students and attention is not as focused on the student's personal problems at that level as they might be in grade one or two. His involvement with children of divorce as he understood it was limited.

Last year I had a young fellow who said his parents were going through a separation and I don't know if his parents went through a divorce. I only had him for one semester and then he was gone. But, what I noticed about him was you know a little more down, a little – I don't want to say depressed – but just not as happy as what he was. There was lack of concentration in class, the type of thing you would expect. In his homework there was lack of focus, lack of interest. It was his friends that really talked about it more because his dad was really involved with him in hockey and it was one thing him and his dad did together. He was wondering how it would affect him if there was a break up – how it would affect him and his dad and the time he'd get to spend with him. But that was mostly just through his friends. He wouldn't really talk to me too much about it and you don't really pry.

Also, the second one was a kid whose parents were going through not a very good situation last year and it is still carrying over. He is in counseling, taking medication for depression and he is almost to the extreme for the results of a marital breakup for the situation itself because it wasn't really a very good situation in the first place. He ended up failing the course because of missed time. The counseling sessions. He wasn't a dumb kid, but he was having a really hard time

dealing with the break up and because of the medications he probably missed 25 – 30 days of just one semester. Then ninety-some days he missed altogether. A third of his year at least.

When children miss school time because of a home situation, I wondered how schools could respond so that the child was not penalized. I asked, 'do you think the schools could respond any differently?'

Well often if a child is going to be out for an extended period of time the teacher or the office will collect homework so that the parents can stop by and pick them up. Other than that there is nothing the system can really do for them unless they are going to get a personal tutor. Especially if the student is going to be out for an extended period of time for depression or in the hospital or something like that. There's really not much for that at the high school level. I think that if anything like that happened in the grade 11 year with math and English and P.E.'s counting for 30 per cent... If something like that happened in April and P.E.'s in May, who knows what that could do to them in June.

If the homeroom teacher tells me they are going through hard times I might pull them aside and say 'The teacher told me there are some problems going on at home. Is that true?' He'll say 'Yeah', and I just say 'Ok' and then make arrangements with him for assignments. I say 'I know there is something more important right now. Take an extra two or three days to do it you know, or write that test a little bit later. I always try to accommodate kids like that. You don't want to be so cold hearted that you say 'do it now or you get zero', but you want to balance what you think they are capable of even through the tough times. You don't want to short change them either.

I asked Stuart if he was aware whether the school perhaps provided a secure environment for children who were experiencing divorce in the family. Although he was unaware of specific students, he did say that he would notice kids 'hanging around'.

I do always notice the kids hanging around after school and want to know why they are there. I'd say 'Heading home?' and they'd say 'No, not yet.' School is a place where they can go and there is not someone screaming at them and there is no intimidation for them and it is a little more positive for them.

It seemed educators had more in their day than the teaching of curriculum... which is the yardstick for government-based school and student success.

Divorced single mothers

Lana

Lana is now forty-five years old with a twenty-four year-old son and seventeen year-old daughter. She divorced at thirty-six and left the marital home to her husband. Both Lana and her husband enjoyed careers that provided high salaries and benefits. They owned an upscale home in an affluent area of the city, and two new vehicles. When they divorced, there was little fighting and their children's best interests were of primary importance. The custody arrangements were joint and the children had full physical access to both parents, however, Lana is unsure whether they had her full emotional support.

I tried to make it as easy as possible on everybody else but me. When I look back now I see that that wasn't so. I was so caught up in my own stuff at the time I don't know how the kids did... I thought they were doing ok. They weren't crying at night or anything, they were never very talkative, and still aren't. I know now that they seem to have turned out quite well. At the time of the divorce we talked to them, we had family counseling, tried to keep life as normal as possible. I think they turned out ok. I know they did.

The custody arrangements dictated that the children would alternate months between Lana and their father. The month with their father they would spend weekdays at his home, and weekends with Lana. The next month the opposite occurred. What Lana was aware of, however, was that when the children were with their father through the week, she still was responsible for their after school care and arrangements whether she was working or in university. She made sure they had a drive from school or from the bus.

When I asked Lana whether the schooling of the children changed after divorce, she replied that at one point when she moved into an apartment – at the urging of her lawyer she attempted to have her daughter moved into another school in what would be a new school zone. The judge, however, would not allow it. Because

the house was left to her ex-husband, the children were in the schools close to his home. Lana's involvement in schooling was high before the divorce and remained high after. Both she and her ex-husband spoke to teachers, attended school events, went together to parent/teacher nights, and remained involved in the schooling of their children. As mother, however, her involvement was significantly higher day-to-day, particularly after school hours, not solely because of after-school care, but because this was the time for homework or extra-curricular activities.

We told the school about the divorce. We went to their homeroom teachers. We wanted them to keep their eye out for any change in behavior. Missy and Mark had to bus. Missy took the bus from her father's and after the divorce she had to drive into school every day with me. I also had to arrange after school care for her. I always had a vehicle so I could do that. They usually came home with me.

Missy and Mark did not encounter any significant change in their lifestyle, or economic situation, even though Lana had a significant drop in income and still worries today about her future. While at school both children were still able to participate in any activities they desired. They did not go without food or clothing and did not suffer the stigma of poverty.

Lana also stated that her children did not experience any changes academically in school. Mark was always bored, but both children did well. She felt that the children did not encounter any change in the relationship between themselves and the teachers. Reactions to her as a single divorced mother, however, did change.

But reactions to me changed. I was really involved with their schooling before the divorce and then after, I remember about the first two years I was involved with activities, fund raising days and things like that and it was always like 'well, what she's doing here? Divorcées don't do that. I felt it was different how they treated me and how I saw them talking to other mothers. It was odd. It was very odd. I was somehow worth less – that my effort there was somehow worth less than the other mothers that were right in the school activities. I think it was because I was divorced but it might have been just me. I don't know honestly, but that's how it felt. That is how it made me feel.

Lana's blaming of herself and second guessing her feelings was consistent with what the other single mothers expressed as well. There was a common acceptance of 'maybe it was just me' or 'I must have been crazy'. The perception that *others* felt she was unqualified to help at school because she was a 'divorcée' was also evident in her own feelings towards single divorced mothers.

Even I – when I think of divorced mothers – what I see – because my mother was divorced and we were very poor growing up, that is probably where I form my ideas of divorced mothers... too wrapped up in themselves to care about their kids, keeping boyfriends, spending more money on bingo than on groceries, you see what I mean? Even I see them like that but I don't see myself like that. I think all divorced mothers are different and have different circumstances which has a lot to do with how people view people of divorce.

All three single mothers considered themselves 'different' than 'the others'. Lana's ideas about single mothers were deeply rooted in what she experienced as a child of divorce herself, but I expect also from overt or covert social discourse surrounding divorce and single mothers. The most frustrating in Lana's post-divorce life has been attempting to reconcile the success of divorced fathers and her ex-husband with the long-term financial instability of divorced mothers and herself.

Men always make more money than women. Men always manage to rebound, because most men don't have custody and don't have to provide. Even in joint custody, their child raising expenses nowhere meet the expenses of the mother. They don't get baby sitters and don't do any of that stuff. They don't have to re-educate themselves after a time out of the workforce. Mothers have to keep their children and home and themselves together, and men don't have to look after anything. Even my boss won't hire any woman between eighteen and thirty-five because he won't give a years maternity leave, so to avoid the legal complications, he only hires men or those who won't cause him problems... so women do not have the financial resources. If we have no money we can't do anything. We can't work and go to school and look after our children and save some money. Men too, are never accountable for what they spend, whether on themselves or the children. That is a huge difference. Mothers live in guilt – bad mothers, lazy mothers, stupid mothers.

When Lana divorced she began classes at St. Thomas University. She had a GPA of 4.1 and was one point from the Governor General's award. Upon graduation she was offered a \$10,000 scholarship to begin a psychology Masters at Dalhousie University, with a research focus in corporate psychology. Lana is one of the brightest and most pulled-together women I know. I sat around the table with her and many other divorced mothers at STU. She did not go on to complete another degree feeling that her children needed her at home, and now that her children are grown feels she cannot afford to stop work. She has never expressed feelings of regret, however, she did recognize that if she had been the father, there would never have been a question of continuing her education. There would have been no question whether as father she could have worked, continued education, and look after children. She would have had a large pension, money in mutuals, and a Registered Retirement Savings Plan. As a divorced single mother she had to make choices. As mother, her first responsibility was to her two children and their successful schooling.

Betty

Now forty-seven years old Betty keenly remembers every detail of her divorce and the schooling of her children and speaks quickly and with directness. When she was thirty-seven, her daughter Chelsea was nine, and son Peter, four, she and her husband divorced.

While married, Betty worked in a government position with a salary and benefits, and her husband worked as a lawyer for the Department of Justice. Their financial outlook was good. When they divorced the settlement was amicable. Betty's ex-husband agreed that she could keep the house for the children although he originally thought he could live 'separate and apart' under the same roof. It took many many months for him to leave the home and not walk in when he chose. Although this

caused much stress for Betty, the children were adjusting to his absence. Chelsea and Peter had time to 'get used to' their father living at another place and realized that he would not be very far away. Also, he made sure that the children did not suffer financially. Betty got along with her ex, and the children visited their father any time they wished. Travel arrangements to and from school did not change as their father picked them up for school, and they returned home by bus. If the children were sick, Betty picked them up. She also stated that their schooling was not affected in any way that she could see.

Both children participated in school productions, dance, and theatre, which did not change, nor did the attendance of both proud parents to performances.

After the divorce Betty stopped her employment position and ended her career to be at home when her daughter finished the school day, and to care for Peter.

Although Betty did not worry about her home or the amount of child support, she stated that always waiting for a cheque worried her.^{xx}

Because we didn't fight, I trusted that he would provide the child support on time. Because too, he was a lawyer, he knew what he was doing when he said we could save money to settle out of court. *He* could save money! What he knew was that if there is no court order, then there is no enforcement order, and he could pay me when he wanted and I really couldn't say anything about it. He was never on time, not very late, but always a couple of days and he always asked me what I spent *his* money on. I had enough of that and called the enforcement office. I went to court and we had a schedule set up and he now has the support coming right out of his pay. I was always waiting for a child support payment before I could get school supplies or before I could get them new clothes for school or before I could I was just – I was always waiting. I would always go and get the least I could get away with getting - where before I would just go and get what I wanted. I always had enough when I was married. When I was in that situation I always said 'well, we will just have to wait. You know, we were always waiting. They didn't go without, but I was much more frugal. I don't think they really knew and I don't think it ever bothered them. They never really went without anything. Chelsea took ballet and Peter took theater. Both kids took whatever they wanted and traveled to France with their father.^{xxi} I don't think they were ever bothered in school

because they didn't have money. It was me who didn't have money. Child support is child support and I was often left without. Now is horrible. He has a great big job and having children never interrupted his career. Making sure they were in school, or had lessons done, or were taken to the doctor never interrupted his career. At 'meet the teacher' or 'home and school', their father would go and it would be like 'isn't he a great guy?' It looked as though he was every bit as active in the kids life as I was and nothing could have been further from the truth. And, here I am now still with nothing. Barry^{xxii} makes a good salary, but I still buy everything at Frenchy's and I just never have any money. I had to sacrifice my education and my career to be a mother. No one else did. Their father didn't and their step father doesn't.

Betty stated that schooling changed little for Chelsea, and Peter was not yet in school. Chelsea's relationships with teachers remained strong as they were before, and when Peter started school, being the child of divorce seemed to make no difference to him or his teachers. Betty thought that it might have been due to her active role in the school, being well-known in the community, and her ability always to laugh – even at the worst of times. Betty is well-liked and a 'social butterfly'. She was very popular at every level of school and like her children, active in singing and dance. Because of her outgoing character, she thought it might have helped her children.

The kids didn't get treated any differently in school by teachers. I think the kids always had a good relationship before and after the divorce. I'm not sure, but I don't think the teachers treated them any differently before and after. I had a good relationship with the school and because I wasn't working then, I did a lot of volunteer work so the teachers knew me. I was always doing hot lunch program or something and everyone knows me. I always had a good relationship with the school. I was involved in high school... there was never any problem. I met the teacher at the first of the year and gave them my phone number and they gave me theirs, and if there was ever any problem, they would know. They just went through high school with no problem. I kept the same level of participation before and after the divorce. I probably felt that I had to prove myself as a good parent because I was divorced and felt 'oh, I have to make a good impression and have a good image because I went through that and I think I tried harder to fit into the schools and with the teachers. I did that just because I didn't want any stigma attached like 'Oh, she's divorced'. It might have been just me, but I felt that.

These words 'it might have been just me, but I felt that', were also used

by Lana, and as we will see in the next interview, by Ruth.

I don't know what teachers say about their students ' this kid is from a 'quote broken home', you know, and Chelsea had never heard that term before. She came home and said, 'mom, what's a broken home'. She had never heard of it. I think that maybe the teachers spoke about that and teachers do peg them, and it is not as big a deal now as it was years ago. There are alot of divorced kids out there. Alot. They kind of find each other.

I don't think there was any big change before and after divorce for the kids. I don't think they were really affected. Maybe I am just fooling myself, I don't know, maybe they did talk to teachers about it, but if they did or wrote about it, I didn't know about it if they did.

Although Betty stated that if her children were affected, she did not know. It is likely that their lives before and after divorce were changed very little and in school they did as well after as before. Had their lives been significantly changed, Betty, with her in-school presence would have known. Also, she was close to her children and did not have to work outside of the home. When they were home, she was home. She is also a stage mom, who had been and continues to be present in her children's theatre lives. They are – like Betty – happy and very content.

Ruth

Ruth is the young mom of two boys, now seven and eleven. When she divorced at twenty-five, her youngest was three, and oldest in grade two. Pregnant at seventeen, she did not finish high school, and dropped out in her final year, intending to return after the baby was born. A bride at eighteen, looking after a baby and working part-time did not allow her to return to school, and she and her husband could never quite keep their financial heads above water. Ruth said that from day one, finances were difficult, and their joy was robbed by constant worrying.

We didn't fight about alot, just money. If we had money it would have been better. Jack - my ex always went out with his friends, and I stayed at home with the baby. I couldn't get to school, and I couldn't even go to friends. I always stayed home and I was in that apartment

day in and day out. I cried alot and never got to finish school. It seemed hopeless all the time. I had Thomas when I was 18 and then got pregnant again – stupid thing for me I suppose. Finally, my ex went out with his friends, and when he came back said he just couldn't be married anymore. He just come and go when he wanted. He could see Thomas whenever he wanted. I couldn't. I saw him all the time. He could change him when he wanted – which wasn't much. He fed him when he wanted and he walked in and out of that door more times than I could count. Mothers are always there. We don't go out. I was mad for a long time after the divorce.

The boys are doing ok. Robbie is a bit of trouble. He's the youngest and he gets into trouble in school. He is really tough, but has a kind little heart too. The teachers pick on him though and not too many like him because he is always fighting. Thomas gets along better with the teachers. He doesn't fight and is a happier kid – happier than Robbie. The teachers don't talk to me too much at all - not much. They are nice though. They are always dressed nice and I am just like this. I go to meet the teachers and we get along ok, and talk about Thomas and Robbie, so that is important. I am lucky that we live so close to the school and they can walk every day.

Ruth was certainly most worried about her financial situation and how being poor affected Thomas and Robbie in school. Both boys, however, attended a school where most children were poor and there is a large population of poor Native children who also live with single mothers. When no one has money, Ruth felt that it was easier on all of the children to accept their circumstances.

It is hard being on welfare. We don't have much money but then again, no one does around here, so it ain't so bad. Thomas and Robbie don't know they are really poor. They think you are rich because you have a new car and a house.^{xxiii} When you live like us, you don't have a car, or a house. If I don't get to school and get my grade twelve, I will never get a job. No one is going to hire a dummy. Even my boys are starting to think I am not smart because I can't help Thomas with his lessons anymore. Sometimes though they think I am the smartest mom in the whole world. They love me alot and we are affectionate and they hug me alot. I hope they always love me. I would die without them. I try hard to help them in school, but I just can't and you know, it hurts me a lot. I want my kids to be smart and do better than me and their father. It is hard though. Really hard and teachers don't stay behind anymore to help them. Especially the math and science is hard. There are assistants for other kids, but some kids are just left out. I almost got my grade twelve, so I can read good, and can help with the other stuff. We

got a second hand computer and so I can help them with the computer. I taught myself.

Dreams of returning to school herself seemed remote, as Ruth discussed the possibilities as grim and unlikely. Again, her struggles with money surpass her opportunity to return to school, and she opened up about being on 'welfare'.

I want to go back to school, but guess I will have to wait until the kids are done. How could I ever support them? My child support is paid through the welfare, but only sometimes.^{xxiv} When you are on welfare, you still only get the same amount of money. Whatever I get from their father – whenever he pays because he don't work much – well, that same amount is taken off my welfare cheque. It really stinks and the government is cheating women and children of what is rightfully ours. They make it so that we have to cheat them. If we can get any little bit of money extra, we have to do that to survive. Even if we got child support and had a job, the welfare would take that money from us too. What is the incentive to work or to try to better ourselves? The government should have to live like we do for just one month. They would not let their children live like our children live. I love my boys and it hurts me a lot to see them have to go without and I don't mean them brand name clothes, I mean food.

Like I said though, they don't know how poor they are. Everyone is poor, and the Indians are poorer than we are. The boys play sports at school, but they don't play sports after school. We don't have money for stuff like that. Thomas has skates that we found, and Robbie slides on his boots out back here. My kids will never have hockey gear, or take music lessons. It doesn't seem fair for them that some kids get so much and some don't get anything. Not that I mean other kids shouldn't have things, just my kids should have things too, and the kids in the apartment building here – you know what I mean.

I do not fully know what Ruth means. I have been poor and am still poorer than I have been in the past, and I want the best for my children – as Ruth does - but I have never been *that* poor. I have not had to be on income assistance, not because of a great job or wonderful child support, but because of a dedicated family support structure and ability to look as though I 'fit' into this social system. Unsuspected. I continued to talk with Ruth about her daily concerns and the boys daily activities in school. 'How does a lack of money affect schooling for Thomas and Robbie?' .

It is really hard you know. The teachers I think sometimes must give the boys money for hot lunch. I can't, but sometimes they come home and didn't eat their lunch and say their was one left over or something. I don't think it was left over because it happens alot and some of those teachers are God sends you know.

Ruth tells herself that she is less than an adequate mother and that the reason for her children's success or happiness in school comes from the effort of teachers and the help of her parents. Unlike Betty and Lana, Ruth has always been very poor and at the young age of seventeen did not have time to develop an understanding of her abilities and skills, nor how to use society, corporations, or government to benefit her - as many of us have. She now is extremely poor and depends upon the contributions of her parents and friends to help her with purchases of gifts, school supplies, new clothing, and food in her cupboards for her boys.

Accepting this help necessitates in a 'trade off'. She listens to the periodic lectures her parents give and has to account for how she spends her money and her time. Ruth's self-esteem is bottom of the barrel as she is beat down by the system and those who 'assist' her.

Children of Divorce

The children of divorce requested an interview at work as a group. As mentioned earlier in the methodology chapter, this could be problematic in that one may not give a full account if s/he felt their story was too different or shameful. I was not so worried about this as the three were quite distinct, but I did go back and talk to Toby and Justin again separately. How they remembered and retold their stories in the midst of other 'children of divorce' was as significant as how they remembered and retold their stories in a private interview. The stories were not different, but had more breadth and depth.

Toby

Toby is an adult child of divorce and a single divorced father with one young son. He had a difficult childhood and wants to provide a better home and memories for his child. He is very soft spoken and reserved. His memories of his schooling were painful, as were the memories of his childhood.

My dad and mom were separated when I was young and divorced when I was in grade two or three. I lived in Saint John and when my parents got divorced we moved to Hamilton, Ontario and I went to a different school there. I lived with my dad. I was in different schools. I think it was very painful for my dad - the situation and he chose to be with his relatives to get some support. I love my dad, but he didn't know how to be a dad.

I imagine my teachers found out my parents were divorced from my dad. He was the responsible one and looked after that stuff. When I went to school before my mom left, it was just great. I loved school and I loved being there. When she left, it was totally different. I hated the world, I was going through a grieving process that my family didn't know how to deal with. I became very – I rebelled against authority – I felt that – anyway... I think my teachers treated me differently than other kids. I grew up in a different generation than these guys. Twice their age almost and when I grew up – Roman Catholic school and a single parent father trying to raise a boy. They looked at me in a different way than if there was two-parents there. I was pitied, but looked down on I think.

For me after divorce, everything changed because I was ripped away from everything I knew. I kept all my feelings inside and isolated and had a hard time getting close or intimate with anybody and the only way I got close to people was through sports. Friends changed for me. I haven't talked to my mom maybe five times since I was 7. My dad and I are starting to build a relationship, there is a lot of healing that needs to be done, but after the divorce the whole family went into a shell and we never talked very much. My mom never had any contact with the school because she never had any contact with me. My mom wasn't there through school, so the only thing was no one to walk me to school, no one there. It was traumatic. I was like the taboo kid. You stay away from the single parent child because they are different in the Roman Catholics eyes.

Toby's entrance into a public Roman Catholic school provided an extended and specific religious textual discourse in which he lived out his day-to-day life. Not only was he in *school*, he was in a school that condemned his situation. The stress of

schooling was escalated by the stress of being the child of judgement, and a child whose mother left him to be raised by his father.

Toby also stated that his home was an abusive home, and though he knew his dad 'loved him', just 'didn't know how to be a dad'. Only today are they trying to 'mend' their relationship. Toby stated that his mother is still an 'active' alcoholic and although he accepts her as she is and recognizes today he is not responsible for her life, he did not know that as a young boy. He also felt a responsibility for his father. Toby's physical loss of his mother and what he described as an emotionally absent father, affected him deeply and his schooling suffered, as did his personal child world. He stated that he returned home from school each day to an empty home, and although his father worked long and hard as a welder to provide food, clothing and other necessities, he was very alone.

It seemed that schooling for Toby was a place of isolation and a place where he found no comfort. With no help from home and no help from school, his child existence was 'very bad, very sad, and very angry'.

Toby is well educated today and said he chooses to work at the Boy's and Girl's Club because he wants to 'give something back to society and to children who are hurting and poor like he was'. The Boy's and Girl's Club where he works is in a poor area and most of the children are from single mothered homes. He said he feels connected to the children there and wants to help them build self-worth and have a person they can talk to.

Justin

Justin was in his third year at the University of New Brunswick and worked part time at the Boy's and Girl's Club with Toby and Alice. Justin did not struggle with his story or as a child of divorce as did Toby.

I was twelve and going into junior high, so I was moving schools anyway. I was around eleven or twelve I think. I don't remember the divorce a whole lot. All I knew was that I was going to go with my mom no matter what. I remember the circumstances surrounding the divorce. There was alcoholism and violence. It was done behind me. I don't remember a lot. I couldn't remember them ever getting along. My cousin's mom and dad just got divorced and they told me it would be better, so that made me feel a little bit better about it. We moved, but we moved closer to the school we would be going to anyway, so it didn't affect it too much. I don't know if my teachers knew I was from a divorce. I'm not sure.

Unlike Toby, Justin found that he had more success in school and made new friends. He also played hockey and formed relationships with teachers and coaches.

I know I did better at school after the divorce. I don't think my school treated me any differently.... I don't think they treated me any different than other kids. I always played hockey and that didn't change too much. No one ever came up to me and I was never singled out. We never had a whole lot, but we had enough I guess. I played hockey and mom paid for that. Any trips I went on though dad usually went so he would cover all those costs. Things financially didn't change a whole lot.

I guess for mom, they changed. She never seemed to have any money and worked a couple of jobs. I don't think my dad paid any support, because he didn't have any money. So, I guess I had hockey and there was enough for that. I don't know who even bought my equipment, mom or dad. Dad went to hockey with me, but my mom went to everything else when she could. She just worked a lot and didn't go out much.

Even though Justin played hockey and his dad was involved in that particular aspect of his schooling, Justin stated that he did not 'get along' with his father. And now, never talk. The majority of his home schooling was done by his mother, and although worked and was not highly active in school activities, was a presence.

We never talk, but mom and I are pretty close. Even now. Still are. My dad and I never had a good relationship. We would go to hockey and stuff as far as that goes, but we never were close. I don't know if my parents were close with any of my teachers. I think my mom might have called once in awhile, but she was not there.

Justin was very quiet during the interviews and seemed not to consider the

divorce of his parents to be disruptive to his schooling. He remembers his schooling experience as 'better' after the divorce, and hockey as a major force. He knew that because he played hockey he was more popular than he might have been if he had not, and because his father paid for and attended his training and games, there was a certain amount of pressure taken off his mother. He knew that he did not suffer the same stigma Toby and Alice did, and unlike them, had many friends.

Alice

Alice is also a student at the University of New Brunswick and shared her story with me.

I was probably one (year old) for the first one, and my mom married again when I was six and they divorced when I was in grade nine. The second one I remember the day she told me I was very happy. She sat me down and told me that she and my step-dad were getting a divorce and I cried for only one reason and that was because I couldn't keep the dog. Other than that, I was very happy he was leaving. I went to maybe nine different schools. One when my biological father and mother got divorced. From then until I was six years old I went to quite a few different schools and then when she got together with my step-father I also went to many different schools and then when they broke up I asked my mom to let me stay in one spot. I stayed there even though she didn't want to live there anymore. In grade one my teachers all knew because I had a really hard time not having a dad. Everybody – all the teachers everybody knew, but when my step-father and mother broke up it wasn't a big issue because I was in high school. Right up until grade eight, I was the bad kid in school, throwing things and – until I got a male teacher in grade eight and – my first male teacher and he pretty well turned me right around. A lot of people connect that to not having a male figure in my life and that changed everything. He paid a lot of attention to me. Then when my stepfather and mother broke up, there was no one there again, she had to work, and I got into a little bit of trouble, but I was always really good in school. I think there was a lot of sympathy for me and my mother. If I got into trouble, my good teachers were always very supportive, 'oh, she's a child who comes from a single mother... they were pretty sympathetic towards everything. I played a lot of sports, but I think obviously if I had have had the father figure, I would have done more sports, but with my mother, she didn't have enough time to do that with me.

Alice remembered that poverty played an important role in her schooling.

She felt that she was unlike many of her school friends. First, she did not have many friends. Not only was she the new kid *many times*, she was the 'poor kid' who had to go to school dressed poorly and try to make new friends which she thought was difficult. She was often alone, isolated, and saddened by her and her mother's circumstances.

I used to hear my mom crying at night because she couldn't put me in the school ski trip or put me in activities at school, everything was so expensive, and my biological father never paid child support his whole life. Even friend-wise, because you can't be friends with the rich kids who had so much. Any of my friends though had parents who were together. I seemed to seek out the mom and dad thing and go over a lot and suck it all in and pretend I was one of them... even up to now. Most of my friends are from two-parent families. My mother was the only thing I had, so that was the person I would have for the rest of my life. During the divorce when she got a new husband I hated him and I hated all her boyfriends. I just wanted my mom. And with my biological father he was in and out of my life the whole time and my step-father I don't think I ever had more than one conversation with him and they were married for nine years.

When Alice felt teachers took an interest in her, she experienced changes in her desire to be in school, her academic success, and basic day-to-day outlook.

Although interest displayed by a teacher to any student might have the same effect, for those who feel isolated, neglected, and marginalized, the expression of attention could have a significant effect.

My grade three teacher and my mom were close, and my grade eight teacher and mom were close. My mom was in school as much as she could be, but she had to work alot. The hardest part of school was when kids made Fathers Day gifts or after summer vacation and they said my dad my dad my dad and I couldn't. I just think with a father we would have better finances so my mom wouldn't have had to work all the time. In my high school years, I basically lived on my own. All the sports - my father was in the sports hall of fame, and I think if he would have been there, it would have made a big difference for me. There are a lot of kids with this problem now in schools – man and woman, mother and father, grandmother and grandfather all the time... even kindergarten books could be written for single moms and single dads. I see that now and that schools could address the issue better.

Alice knew that she was seen as 'different', and stated that she tried very hard to make sure she got the attention she craved. She knew and spoke about how her family was different than two-parent families, how her mom could not provide enough for her no matter how many hours she worked, and how her mom had to be absent from school.

As Toby, Justin, and Alice spoke, they each recognized that although they had similarities, they also had differences based on the absence of one parent, the educators, and their economic security. They also recognized at this point in their lives, the difficulty their custodial parent had in assimilating their divorced lives and schooling their children.

Disjuncture

Divorce is an experience that happens daily in the everyday world and affects many players. Children of divorce, divorced single mothers, and educators are only a few who find themselves entangled in the decision two people ultimately make. Campbell and Gregor (2002) state that the people involved are not all located in the same way towards what happens.

It takes a number of differently located people to enact the event. These coordinated actions generate local experiences that create for those in the setting what Smith calls a disjuncture... the knowing something from a ruling versus an experiential perspective... the learning about the disjuncture is sought by interviews, observation, first-hand experience, or casual conversations (48).

All three groups of people, educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce have different experiences of a common event – divorce. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, all use the intra-mixed patriarchal discourse of politicians, society, religion, media, business employers, lawyers, and education. At each relationship intersection – educator to child of divorce, educator to single mother, child of divorce to

educator, child of divorce to single mother, single mother to educator and single mother to child of divorce, experiences and understanding of experiences are different. Within a larger macro framework and discourse, these personal relationship intersections become a site of the problematic.

I discussed at the beginning of this chapter that institutional ethnography uses two levels of investigation – the local or micro, and the trans-local or macro. It is in discovering the trans-local discourse that we move out of a neo-liberal blaming philosophy and into an understanding of 'textually mediated social discourse'.

Rather than treat a knower's location as a problem of bias, we believe that it reveals something about whose interests are served. And that is an issue of power. To explore how knowing relates to power, institutional ethnographers study how ones knowing is organized --by whom and by what. (Campbell and Gregor, 2000 p. 15)

For children of divorce, single mothers, and educators, the institution called school is used politically, corporately, legally, and socially to map out and define roles and relationships. Schooling and our social lives are mapped out to be organized in a particular way to serve the interests of a particular philosophy and ideology. This organization works in particular ways for the ruling class. The taken-for-granted forms of power set up a form of hierarchy and domination. Imbalance and inequity are focused on the micro rather than the macro level of power increased through the 'colonization of linked institutions' (Foote, 1986; 44).

It is crucial to do a second level of investigation and discover the discourse in which we are all engaged. The rules of formation of discourses are linked to the operation of a particular kinds of social power that situate educators, single mothers, and children of divorce socially and economically. 'Discourse is a political commodity' (Foucault, 1976; 122). A major textual discourse that defines these three groups is the School District Policy Manual.

Sites of the Problematic: Trans-local Discourse

School District 17/18 Policy Manual

We must recognize at the outset that the policies for schooling although determined by the government in power, are a linked discourse passed from government to government and therefore maintain the imbalance and rules of power. The government approach to schooling does not create an environment of equality, for inequality breathes and thrives in school environments. That there is a policy manual dictating acceptable behavior towards multiculturalism and human rights, employment equity, school admittance, teaching plans, operating budgets, acceptable curriculum, etc., indicates that there is inequality in each instance, and that the *acceptable solution* to the problems is to follow the departmental prescriptive formula. The government approach to schooling is rather to create an environment that maintains and preserves the status quo of the ruling class.

Any person involved in the institution of schooling in Canada, is governed by broad and deep policies and regulations. Within the School Policy Manual alone, District 17/18 in New Brunswick operates under approximately ninety-four policies. Those policies structure finances and administration (101 – 132), human resources (201 – 215), educational services (301 – 319), facilities (402 – 410), transportation (501 – 512), teacher certification (601 – 619), health and safety (701 – 709), and data, IT and records management (801 – 803). Amidst these policies are regulations and control for:

- ? Contribution of Resources by Parents (132)
- ? Admission to and Placement in Kindergarten (301)
- ? French Second Language Programs (309)
- ? Provincial School Calendar (313)
- ? Graduation Requirements (316)
- ? Pupil Protection Policy (701)

- ? Positive Learning Environment, Suggested Topics for Inclusion in the School Positive Learning Environment Plan, and Characteristics of Positive Discipline for New Brunswick Schools (703)
- ? Crisis Planning (705)
(Government of New Brunswick, 'School Policies', 2002)

Not only are there the above school policies that attempt to define and mandate the relationships between educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce, there are government regulations at the federal and provincial levels. The 1997 New Brunswick Education Act is particularly specific in constructing and maintaining a particular brand of schooling.

New Brunswick Education Act

The Act defines the roles of 'parents' using an ungendered, unclassed, and neoliberal language and philosophy. It is important to read 'mother' when the word 'parent' is used, and to consider what label becomes attached to mothers who cannot respond to such demands. It is this discourse that defines mothering competency such as good mother or bad mother, and places families who cannot respond equally in the 'at risk' category. The discourse is double-talk that presumes homogeneity, but instead constructs families in a hierarchy of possible compliance defining and pointing out those who cannot adhere as 'abnormal', 'vulnerable' or 'at risk'. All 'parents' are to support, encourage, communicate, attend, ensure, and care uniformly, but these demands placed on them further splinter, separate, and fragment an already unequal group.

Roles of Parents

13(1) In support of the learning success of his or her child and the learning environment at the school, a parent is expected to:

- (a) encourage his or her child to attend to assigned homework,
- (b) communicate reasonably with school personnel employed at the school his or her child attends as required in the best interests of the child,

- (c) cause his or her child to attend school as required by this Act,
- (d) ensure the basic needs of his or her child are met, and
- (e) have due care for the conduct of his or her child at school and while on the way to and from school.

The Act not only places demands on parents, but also defines how students must participate in school. A shift in power takes place, however, as parents have *roles*, and pupils have *duties*. As with mothers, these 'duties' further splinter, separate and alienate an already unequal group of students, placing those who cannot or do not measure up in those categories which give government a free hand in their regulation.

Duties of pupils

14(1) It is the duty of a pupil to:

- (a) participate in learning opportunities to his or her potential,
- (b) accept increasing responsibility for his or her learning as he or she progresses through his or her schooling,
- (c) attend to assigned homework,
- (d) attend school regularly and punctually,
- (e) contribute to a safe and positive learning environment,
- (f) be responsible for his or her conduct at school and while on the way to and from school,
- (g) respect the rights of others, and
- (h) comply with all school policies.

The Act defines: when a student may be employed (17.1), deviant or improper conduct (22), when a student is not allowed to return to school (24), and compulsory schooling days and hours. The Act as well, strictly defines the roles of teachers (27), Parent School Support Committees (32), and Parent Advisory Councils (33).

(Government of New Brunswick, Education Act, 2002)

It is critical to note that the language of both the School Policy Manual, and Education Act imply that ones adherence to 'parental responsibilities' and 'pupil duties' are an act of only the will and not ability. Larger circumstances involving social and economic supports are not considered.

Divorced single mothers and children of divorce may have difficulty with many sections of the Education Act when trying to negotiate schooling requirements and their

day-to-day lives. Both the ideology and language set the stage for 'good mother/bad mother' and 'at risk' child discourse.

The province has skillfully through its guidelines, policies, and regulations taken the power of determining the best needs of the child away from the mother and placed it in the hands of the school district. This was evident when one educator told me that I was not bright, did not know how the system worked, and therefore did not know what was best for my child. Mothers who do not conform to school board policies are treated as 'uneducated' or 'not very bright'.

11(1) *The superintendent concerned shall determine the placement of pupils in classes, grades, programs, services and schools according to the needs of the pupils and the resources of the school district.*

If a mother chooses to reject a program, service, or course for their child due to ideology or limited resources, they are 'violating' section 15(7), 'committing an offence', and are therefore 'punishable'. Mothers who do not have adequate resources are by that time terribly punished by self and social blame. They have already bought into the bad mother discourse. Ruth indicated that her sons could not take part in nearly all school activities because she is not adequately resourced, and she suffered because they suffered. At the high school level, this could be even more problematic. For example, if Thomas and Robbie are required to take a graphic art computer course and complete assignments, their home would have to have a computer with the capacity to complete the assignment. If it is not available and homework is incomplete, not only is the child punished, but the mother blamed. Even if the computers were available at school, once school buses left the school, Ruth would have to have the resources to provide for her children's transportation. This portion of the act would indicate that when children do not participate in mandated 'programs, services, and courses, it is defiance, and a willful act of rebellion.

15(7) *A parent who violates or fails to comply with subsection (6) commits an offence punishable under Part II of the Provincial Offences Procedure Act as a category C offence.*

6.1 *A District Education Council may, in accordance with the needs of the pupils and the resources of the school district for which the District Education Council is established and in accordance with any provincial policies established by the Minister,*
(a) subject to the approval of the Minister, provide for the development and delivery of instructional programs, services and courses unique to the character and economy of the community, and
(b) select, from among the optional instructional programs, services and courses prescribed by the Minister, those to be offered in each school in the school district for which the District Education Council is established.

Most children of divorce live with their mothers and most mothers have to give up the family home due to limited finances. School placement after divorce is not always convenient for the child or mother. Zoning is based on the amount of available resources within a district or specific school and in no way considers what is best for the family. A policy such as this holds a power over the mother and forces her to make concessions that are extremely difficult.

15(1) *Except as provided in section 16 and subject to subsection (2), a child is required to attend school in the school in which the child is placed by the superintendent concerned under section 11*

When Mac was taken from school by his father in an attempt to move him to another zone, he would not return to school until there was a court order. In this instance the mother stayed in the schooling zone with her children, while the father moved and attempted to take his son away from his sister, friends, and what was familiar. Mac stated that he would not move. In joint custody situations where two parents do not agree, complications such as this are often the case, and children such as Mac become caught in the middle. Divorced single mothers are often in conflict over the school their children must attend if she must move from the family home into another school zone. At the beginning of the year, children are also assigned to a particular bus and cannot take alternate busses. Mothers may not have the resources

available to transport their children themselves to another school. For the superintendent to have the power to refer the mother to Family and Community Services means that for divorced single mothers, their children may be removed from their homes and placed into foster care. This reinforces a neglectful mother ideology through the choice of words such as 'neglect' and 'refuse'.

19 *Where a parent neglects or refuses to ensure that his or her child attends school as required by this Act and, in the opinion of the superintendent concerned, the child's security or development may be in danger, the superintendent shall refer the matter to the Minister of Family and Community Services for investigation under the Family Services Act.*

There is no question whether parents are to support the school. Support is demanded and reinforced by the Act, which *demand*s a Parental Support School Committees (PSSC) for each and every school.

32(1) *There shall be a Parent School Support Committee for each school under this Act.*

One New Brunswick High School has fourteen members on the PSSC. Of these members, one is a City counselor, one is the vice-principal of the school, one a student representative, one a teacher representative, and of the ten left, all are upper income parents, and ninety percent from two-parent families. PSSC would in all probability not adequately meet the needs and concerns of divorced single mothers when only one is on the committee. Although the discourse of the committee indicates equal opportunity, participation, and fairness for all parents and students, not all are represented equally. Divorced single mothers are not generally nominated to these committees, and if they are, attention must be paid to class, tokenism - and whom of the single mother hierarchy they represent. Not all classes of single mothers appear on parental support committees in elitists or wealthy schools.

32(3) The majority of the members of a Parent School Support Committee shall be parents of pupils enrolled in the school or persons nominated by parents of pupils enrolled in the school as representatives of those parents.

Other departments

Not only are educators, divorced single mothers and children of divorce defined and maintained by education acts and policies, they are maintained within all government departments. The following government agencies are all involved in one way or another in defining available and accessible resources for divorced single mothers and their children.

Federal

- ? Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC)
 - Employment Insurance
- ? Indian and Northern Affairs (INF)
 - Social Assistance
 - Social Services
- ? Department of Justice
 - Child Support Guidelines
 - Family Law Assistance Services

Provincial

- ? Family and Community Services
 - Social Assistance
 - Housing
- ? Department of Justice
 - Family Support Orders Service
 - Families on Social Assistance

The textual social discourse that defines and constructs each of us is deeply embedded in a neoliberal, colonialist, and masculine ideology that marginalizes groups of people and widens the gap between ruling and oppressed, or simply put, the *haves* and the *have nots*. This is the same discourse that separates mothers and children in two-parent families and single mothered families. It is the discourse that breeds labels like 'unfit mother', 'welfare cheats', 'deadbeat dads', and 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' children. Those who have resources are open to opportunity and a living experience full of possibilities. Those who do not have resources will encounter few choices, fewer opportunities, and even fewer possibilities.

Summary

I have shown that 'parenting' is not homogenous and that there is extensive discourse that defines divorced single mothers as 'bad mother', 'inadequate mother', 'negligent mother', and 'uneducated mother'. Each mother interviewed indicated they were aware of the discourse that defined them and they felt stigmatized in the schools. Educators explained the 'problems' with divorced single mothers both in how they cared for their children in the home and their lack of abilities to participate in the classroom. The lives of these mothers provide fodder for 'at risk', 'vulnerable', and 'poor child of divorce' discourse. This ideology is evident in both personal interviews and textual regulations.

The 'data' collected for this thesis was broad and deep and provided a great deal of rich information. In the next chapter, I move into a further discussion of the divorced single mothered family ideology, and regulated resources that define schooling for their children.

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION (ANALYSIS)

In this chapter, I begin by discussing educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce by listing words or phrases that each participant considered to impact their schooling, or the relationships and schooling for their students or children. I also revisited and unpacked the discourse that assigns individual responsibility for mothering, and challenged the language and ideology of 'at risk', 'vulnerable', 'developmental', and 'enriched'. To do this, I examined the political and economic context in which families are actually resourced in relation to the ideology of parental responsibility. I closed the chapter with a simple, but interesting diagram of relationships and intersections for educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce within a framework that does not support them.

Where the rubber hits the road

To attempt to understand the daily lives of each group, I first wanted to list words or phrases that were important to educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce. I found that each used a similar language and experienced similar events, but from different vantage points. It was interesting that those in each group were influenced by – and recalled not only similar – but different circumstances or events, although divorce, children of divorce, and schooling was common. I also asked similar questions but the responses were quite different.

Bud and Hanna recognized that their classrooms held many children of divorce and felt that schooling was often difficult for both educator and student. Stuart, on the other hand, could only remember a couple of students, and did not recall many difficulties. Educators did recognize, however, that their involvement with children of divorce was - and often had to be - different than with children from two-parent families.

They also recognized that the resources available at home for successful schooling was different for these children.

Lana and Betty felt that their children did not have any adverse affects in school because of the divorce, for their economic situation, support of both parents, and school involvement remained stable. Ruth was poor during marriage and after. She did not recognize a *change* in the schooling of her children after divorce, but felt that their schooling was very different than that of children from two-parent or economically secure families. She also knew that *her* day was different than the days of mothers in two-parent families. All mothers felt that their participation in school was different than mothers from two-parent families, and that although they had to try harder were stigmatized at any rate. Ruth recognized that her involvement was limited by her access to financial resources and blamed herself for not measuring up to mothers in two-parent families.

Toby and Alice had difficulties in school post-divorce that they did not have before the family dissolved. Toby felt his problems were multi-dimensional. He had an abusive home situation, was in a Catholic school, and was being raised by his father. He stated that he held a lot of anger. Justin felt his schooling did not change for the worse, but was in someway better – his father was involved in his hockey, he did not move far away, and he did not notice a big drop in the family finances. Alice lost her father when she was very young, and could not compare pre and post-divorce with her father, but with her step-father, said that she did not miss him. She always missed her father being at school and would seek out friends of two-parent families. She recognized that she was poor, and that she did not have what her friends from two-parent families had. She also thought that she would have done 'better' at school if

she and her mom had more money to work with, her mom could have been available more for her school activities, or her father did not leave.

Educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce agreed that teachers played a significant role in schooling regardless of whether children were from one or two-parent families, but that the actions of teachers were critical for children from divorced homes.

This response remained consistent with what I remember of my own children's schooling. My children had teachers who impacted them in ways that they either were excited to go to school and learn, or they dreaded it, particularly after the divorce even though my financial resources were consistently non-existent. Educators played a crucial role when neither their father nor I were emotionally accessible.

Not only is the role of teacher significant, so too is the role of mother. My own mother readied me for school by singing to me, telling me stories, and helping me every night with my homework. She walked me to school when she thought I needed it – such as the first day of a new year. There was always a hot lunch for me when I got home at noon. She provided me with the *right* clothes and made sure I was *groomed* from head to toe. She attended all parent-teacher interviews and never missed school plays. This type of involvement is often impossible for single moms, and although I have never heard a single mom *blame* a mother of a two-parent family for their ability to be involved, it does provide a powerful image for us, and we feel guilt and despair when we cannot measure up and our children go without.

Listed below are many of the words or phrases I heard in my interviews. As you read them through the lens of your own experience you can probably add to this list. At a different level than my own life experience could have provided, this process

rendered an incredible visual display of educators' work in shaping schooling or themselves, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce.

EDUCATOR	DIVORCED SINGLE MOTHER	CHILD OF DIVORCE
Extra hours	Teachers don't stay behind	Hanging around
Meet the teacher	Meet the teacher	
Name changes		
School zones	Moving	Moving away from friends
Mediating/counseling	Family counseling	
Theme day		Theme day
Absent father/parent	Absent father	Absent father or mother
Academic changes	Did good	'Rebelled', or 'did better'
Changing routines		'Everything familiar ripped away from me'
Parents fighting	Fighting	Parents fighting, abuse, Alcoholism
Custody and access	Importance of regular and on time child support	Father never paid child support, father paid for extras
Threats		Abuse
Outside agencies	Welfare	
Health services		
Family services	Child support	
Lawyers	Lawyers	
Court orders	Court orders	
Storm days		
Report cards		
Double work		
No funding		
No staffing	Teacher assistants	
No policy directive		
RCMP		
Mail for students		
Demanding parents		
School budget		
Homework	Homework	Homework
Curriculum		
Personal problems		Tough, fighting, getting in trouble, Isolation, depression
Bussing		
No concentration		Grieved
Provincial Exams		
Failing		
Accommodate students		
Short change students		

Poor	Poor	Didn't have alot
Bath, hair, clothing	Clothing	
Hot lunch, snacks	Hot lunch, snacks	
Instability in parenting	'doing it by myself', 'no help'	Unstable home
Low-income housing zones	Poor	
Beating mom		Abuse and violence
No hope	No hope	
Assistance	Assistance	
No guidance in K-5		
No money	No money	
No skates	No skates	
Scared of making a mistake		
Children teased	Children don't know how poor they are	Stigma
School routine and stability		
	Personal stigma	Personal stigma
	Self blame	Self blame
Bad father, bad mother	Bad mother	
	Sacrifice	
	Frenchy's	
Extra-curricular	Extra-curricular	Extra-curricular
Volunteer	Volunteer	
	Good image	
	No car	
	No house	
	School supplies	
	Trade-off	
		Loved school
		Hated school
		Hockey
		Music
		Pitied
Heart goes out	'caring teachers'	Sympathy
		Never singled out
		Good teacher
		Bad kid
		Wanted attention
		'child of single mother'
		Mom worked alot
		Dad worked alot
		'broken home'
Emotion, hugs, love – as opposed to policy 701	Hugs, love	Acceptance, love

I saw from this table that schooling means many things, and to children of divorce every experience of the educator and mother impacts their schooling. I also saw that educators may deal with 'it all'. For instance, if approximately fifty percent of marriages

dissolve, the children from those marriages are in the classroom. If only a handful of the challenges listed above happen each day, I wondered where teaching curriculum falls, and I wondered *what* curriculum is most important for the well-being and success of each student, or what curriculum is mandated by our government because it is good for business and good for the ruling class.

Curriculum directly validates particular points of view and teaches assumptions about privilege and power through the topics it evades as well as those it addresses. (Barlow and Robertson, 1994, p. 125)

When what we know doesn't make sense

How do educators fulfill academic requirements within their class when the demands of the class are not academic? How do divorced single mothers fulfill mothering and educational demands when schooling requirements are written to accommodate two-parent financially stable families?^{xxv} How do children of divorce integrate their mothers' limited resources, standardized corporate-focused education, the demands placed upon their teachers, and labels that restrict them into their changing and often unorganized day-to-day? These questions must be addressed by policy makers, and a critical response is crucial. If the system does not change significantly, educators will burn out, divorced single mothers will continue to struggle with self-blame and poverty, and children of divorce will be lost in the dust as policy makers attempt to sweep problems under the School Policy and Education Act carpets.

Educator discourse: working with 'children at risk'

The everyday work of the classroom teacher cannot be separated from the reproduction, transmission and control of knowledge(s). The omnipresence of the teacher, and the expectation that they 'know' everything, is caught up with the role of the teacher in defining what is valid and relevant information and in deciding how that information should be packaged to students. (Coffey and Delamont, 2000)

Writing about educators and the discourse that surrounds their daily work was most difficult. I wrote from the discussions and textual research to find both comparison and conflict with the experiences of my own children. Our experiences with educators worsened as my own children moved from elementary to high school. As I spoke with educators, however, they told me that they are compassionate towards children of divorce at all grade levels and attempt to work with them balancing expectations and 'short changing'. Educators indicated that their teaching was challenged and that they were often frightened of parents and at a loss dealing with the poverty some children endured. Educators 'felt sorry for', 'pitied', and recognized children of divorce as vulnerable and at risk stating that the district was not adequately resourced to deal with the challenges children of divorce bring into the classroom.

There was indeed a sense that educators struggled as they attempted to juggle curriculum, school expectations, the Education Act, School Policy Manual regulations, court orders, children's problems, parents' expectations, their own philosophies, and their own well-being and family life. They also recognized that they were powerless to discuss the challenges of the classroom with others, for as civil servants they could not speak against any policy of their employer, the government (thesis discussion, January 27, 2002). This meant that educators, parents, and government representatives could not discuss a common goal for children in the schools of New Brunswick. That educators are silenced in this way is a powerful reflection on our political ideology of democracy and freedom of speech. It would appear that working for the government indicates an ownership by the government of one's personal freedoms.

To discuss educators as 'all the same' would have been a disservice to the personal and professional lives of teachers. It was evident that teachers of elementary, middle and high schools have different sorts of work, and that teaching philosophies

and life experiences differ amongst age, gender, race, religion, and even geography. These differences, and others, not only bring to the classroom contrasts in value and moral judgments, but fluid teaching styles and ideologies.

There must be an awareness that the educator cannot be 'all things to all people'. Using educator discourse, Epstein (1995) set out 'Expected results of the six types of involvement for students, parents, and teachers', stating teachers should:

- ◆ Understand families' backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children
- ◆ Increase ability to elicit and understand family views on children's programs and progress
- ◆ Be ready to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school
- ◆ Better design of homework assignments
- ◆ Be aware of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions
- ◆ Be aware of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction
- ◆ Be knowledgeable with helpful referrals of children and families to needed services
- ◆ Be aware of parents' talents and interests in school and children

Epstein also tabled additional 'expected results', which looked encouraging, particularly for divorced single mothers and children of divorce. As we saw in the interviews of educators, however, the incidences that affect their daily teaching are many and what Epstein advocates is not always possible in the class. Moreover, what about the educator who chooses to have a life outside of school or simply wants to teach curriculum? What about the teacher whose teaching philosophy is that s/he is in school to provide the best academic education possible? When would this *other* allow time for teaching? There is an additional burden on educators that I have not

discussed. We must remember that certainly teachers and schools are not assessed at the provincial or federal level on the complex emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of those within the institution walls. Perhaps they *should* be, but as of this writing I have not yet seen well-being take precedence over testing scores and scholastic rankings.

My findings challenge the discourse that educators work under that defines single mothers and their children, specifically at risk families. When educators recognize that many in their class will be from divorced homes, they might also presuppose that there will be 'at risk' children in their class. I mentioned in the beginning of this thesis that to accept children into a class as a *report*, rather than an individual, is dangerous and puts the child *at risk* whether s/he was before or not.

At risk discourse was predominantly used in the Department of Justice and has seeped its way into all areas of government. Policy works best if it is uniform across departments, and the terminology, ideology, and aim is circular. Children are now classified as at risk by psychologists, police officers, teachers, counselors, judges, lawyers, social workers, childcare workers, religious leaders, employers, and virtually any person involved in their lives. At risk constructs them to already be something...

(They) truly don't have the skills - social, educational or professional - to be successful in any way. These youths are considered 'at-risk' students; at risk of failing, dropping out, or being expelled because of their behaviour. (Morgan, 2002)

Children that educators consider to be at risk will place blame and additional burden on divorced single mothers. This is the same discourse that forces divorced single mothers to 'measure up', and this is the same discourse that was embedded in the teacher's mind who said 'oh, that's what I would expect. He only lives with his

mom'. I will unpack this discourse further as I discuss divorced single mothers and children of divorce below.

Should educators then throw out the at risk discourse? My suggestion is that educators, and other professionals explore the in-between and apply it to the children in the classroom. What is available between the ideologies of 'at risk' and 'exceptional'? The danger lies in the extremes and when the use of this discourse further marginalizes and attempts to expose a person or groups of people, when the discourse becomes an incentive for government policy makers to advance their own political careers, or when the use of this discourse provides 'proof' that a particular political party has the answer for groups of people that they have no contact with in any way and know nothing of their challenges.

Any person working in a field where two people are in close contact and a relationship or trust takes place, a greater awareness of the other's circumstances is necessary. Expectations must be levied with sense and support, and political discourse needs to be re-evaluated. How intimately involved should educators be with their students and their work? As a divorced single mother, I have a new respect for their work, responsibilities, and placement within an institution and social structure that defines them meticulously and with restriction. I also have a new appreciation of the concern they have for their profession and students.

I live in the same community I teach in. It is very difficult for me to go completely off duty even once I leave the school grounds. In the private world I am still a school teacher. When I meet my students in the community I will greet them, hug them and chat with them about what they are doing. Later, back in the classroom, it is beneficial to connect with the other students and share our experiences outside of school. Also, I never go off duty because I bring my students' needs and interests home with me to think about. (Ward, 1987, p. 17)

Education is about knowledge and the ability to think for oneself. Educators live

in a teaching world contradictory to education policies. When educators are forced to accept policy and are programmed to carry them out without an opportunity to discuss and make clear the difficulties involved with their employer, policy and day-to-day in schools will not be complimentary. Teachers must be able to exercise their ability and right to be critical thinkers and to apply a critical pedagogy to their profession. Without it, challenges will increase in New Brunswick schools and our children will be the losers.

Parenting/mother/divorced single mother discourse: and political priorities

Women will make up the difference

Lone motherhood is not neutral and apolitical; it is shot through with political and moral evaluations. (Edwards and Duncan, 1999)

The discourse on parenting, mother, and single mother is extensive, and experiences of friends, those I interviewed, and my own left me with a great deal of information. The restrictions and demands I observed that are placed on mothers are significant when one recognizes that the majority of parenting is done by mothers, the schooling of children in two-parent families - almost exclusively by mothers, and in single mothered families – exclusively.

Mothers assume the main responsibility for their children's education at home, whether they are single or partnered, working or middle class, employed or stay-at-home mothers. (Dudley-Marling, 2001)

Mothering implies looking after your children, and looking after your children seems to leave out no part of their waking or sleeping hours – including the many hours they spend schooling their children. In this discussion, unless the word 'parent' is from a quote, I will replace it with 'mother', because of the specific mothering work involved in 'parent/school' partnerships.

The denial of the gendered nature of parental involvement works discursively to obscure the work that mothers do in relation to their children's schooling, constructing it as 'natural' and part of the mothering role. It also gives equal emphasis to the role of fathers as parents, even when the father may not be present, let alone involved. (Standing, 1999)

- Parenting/mothering

I first found myself asking whether I thought mothers *should* be involved in the education of their children. My answer was a firm yes, however, on a level determined by the mother, child, and educator, not politicians who form policy based on the 'hot political topic' or 'fiscal restraint' of the day. Government and social expectations of mother/school partnerships allow politicians to make cutbacks and reduce their own level of academic and fiscal responsibility. Deep cuts to the education system and increased parent/school partnership philosophy speak loudly of government's decision to opt out of their own social responsibility and the value they place on children's needs.

In a climate of fiscal restraint, parent involvement is attractive to educational reformers and policy makers seeking cost-effective ways to enhance learning as a means of boosting student achievement.

There are few indications that, prior to the 1960's teachers expected parents to take an active role in their children's schooling. The partnerships being advocated by educational policy-makers included the expectation that 'parents' should be available both at home and in the school to work with their children in support of their education. (Dudley-Marling, 2001)

In 1996, New Brunswick school boards were replaced with School Parent Advisory Committees, District Parent Advisory Councils and Anglophone and Francophone Provincial Boards of Education (Caines, 2000, p. 3). The reason given – at least publicly - was for increased parental involvement. Increased parental involvement was not common, nor natural and I recalled that some educators preferred

to *not* have *certain* parents in the classroom. To school at home was preferred, and then only if the mother knew what she was doing. If not, tutors were preferable.

Mums' help can be a hindrance. You have to teach them what to do, and I tend to set very easy work first thing in the morning so they are able to help. (Standing, 1999)

The change for Parent Advisory Committees was both favoured and criticized. The term 'parent' was presumed and demands on mothers both in and out of the labour market escalated whether they were or were not familiar with the education system.

Parent involvement refers more often to the work of women in support of children's schooling. The coordination and supervision of children's educational activities often demands a significant portion of mothers' waking hours, particularly in the case of mothers whose children are doing poorly in school. (Ibid.)

In 1998, the Parental Governance Structure Review Committee was established. The results of the study stated that increased communication and interaction was needed between the Minister, parents, students, school personnel and the community (Caines, 2000. p. 3). The government took the position that each 'family' *should be* and *is* directly responsible for the success of their children, and reinforced the ideology by taking full advantage of media, policies, parenting programs, and committees. 'Family' remained ungendered and unclassed and educators and mothers had concerns regarding 'appropriate involvement and parenting skills. A guide for Parent/School partnerships comes from a Faculty of Education, UNB. and Department of Education initiative. Again, 'parent' is ungendered, unclassed, and is written under the assumption that two-parents – a father and mother take part in the schooling partnership. The discourse is thick and the ideology is individualizing.

'Parent-School Partnerships': an ideological prescription

Parents are recognized as a key factor in the delivery of a quality education to children. Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. Every classroom teacher recognizes the

importance of family life and parental support on student performance. Parents realize that a good education requires more than simply delivering children into the care of professional educators. Forging strong partnerships with parents and schools leads to greater community support for schools, a better climate for innovation in teaching, and greater continuity between student learning experiences in school and at home.

When parents are involved, they are showing by example to their children that education is important. Such involvement may take many forms, including parenting, communicating, volunteering, supervising homework, and belonging to a parents' group such as the Home and School Association.

Members of the Minister's Forum on Education participated in the preparation of a policy statement on community involvement in schools. This statement was recently released by the Minister, who also made a number of commitments for action. These include communication of the statement to school boards, who are expected to work with schools, Home and School Associations and others to ensure immediate implementation; the assignment of responsibility for parental involvement to an individual in the Department; and the launching, with other educational partners, of a promotional campaign to encourage parents to become more actively involved with their children's education. (Innovation Team, UNB)

Administrators, teachers, and children spend most of their day in a politically defined schooling institution and, to state that parental involvement is responsible for the success of the child places unreasonable expectations and obligations on the mother. As students from two-parent families maintained schooling success under these guidelines, single mothers in my findings were targeted as uneducated and/or uninvolved. Educators have similar resources within a school to teach, however, mothers do not have access to the same economic or social resources to support the schooling of their children... and if they did, may not share the same educational philosophies.

Fewer demands may be placed on the parents of students who do well in school. Ironically, parents of children who do well may be credited with high levels of involvement in their children's schooling... parents of children who experience difficulties in school however, may be accused of not being sufficiently involved in the education of their daughters and

sons even though these parents tend to be more involved in their children's schooling. (Dudley-Marling, 2001)

Single mother

I found the above quote true with the parents I interviewed, the experiences of my friends, and remembering my own experience. My days were filled with 'schooling' and the level of schooling involvement increased during the divorce period. When the children did well, I did not feel I needed to be involved at the level I was when my children were having difficulty with the divorce. My involvement increased whether I worked full-time, or went to school full-time and worked part-time.

Lana and Betty had high levels of in-school involvement and had a good relationship with teachers both before and after divorce, each had a car and the resources required to form a mother/school partnership. Lana and Betty did not have to spend as much time with their children schooling them at home, because they did well and suffered no significant changes. Ruth, on the other hand, felt uncomfortable in the school because of her appearance, had to walk to the school, and had no resources to build an in-school partnership. She did, however, spend all of her after-school hours helping her children – even though she thought they might think she was 'dumb'. She suffered great amounts of stress and guilt thinking she could not measure up. Statements below are from other single mothers who felt they were to blame.

It consumes you when you are afraid, when you are so afraid for your kid. It consumes you and you feel so useless and there's not anything you can do.

I wonder if (my daughter's) poor performance is a reflection of my poor performance as a mother... (Dudley-Marling, 2001)

This self-blame is common in how mothers see themselves, and encourages them to contribute more while the government pulls resources from education.

Accepting this philosophy is as easy as falling off a log. We are seduced into a neo-

liberal individualist ideology, and accept that success is truly 'survival of the fittest'. The success philosophy is prevalent in everything we read and hear. Griffith and Smith (1985) state that mothers 'orient towards the texts (whether in books, women's magazines, television, radio, or by participating in 'second-hand' textually organized processes such as courses, church meetings, etc.), in how they do their work in relation to their children's schooling, in how they measure what they do in terms of its standards, and in how they interpret and orient to what other mothers do. While middle-class mothers have resources to support their children's schooling involvement, single mothers with few or no resources unfortunately and unfairly hold themselves to the same standard. And, neo-liberal leaders continue to increase the market place value of fathers and decrease the market place value of mothers – particularly single mothers. As a baby-boomer and mother of a young son, I read comments regarding a speech of Margaret Thatcher's (1979) where she indicated that inequality was good. 'Don't worry about those who might be left behind in the competitive struggle. People are unequal by nature, but this is good'.^{xxvi} Although British class structure is quite different from the Canadian, but the ideology is common.

Policy makers show little understanding of the sacrifices single mothers make for their children's schooling success. The realities of their lives are defined not only by Department of Education regulations, but also by all government departments. For instance, Family and Community Services policies penalize single mothers who want to work, and scrutinizes their lives. Policies insist on programs such as 'name the father' for single mothers on assistance, and use discourse such as 'welfare cheats'. Mothers on assistance live regulated and monitored lives and although assistance does not provide enough for their children, they are unable to add any additional financial or other forms of support.

Every time they (the social workers) come, they see your bank book. They have a release form, so (they) have access to your bank account at any time. Others recalled 'interrogations' because they had received a gift of furniture, groceries, or clothing from a friend or relative. Others have had their cheques withheld if they are not home when the social worker makes a surprise visit.

Single mothers in North Bay have to be aware of the 'bingo police' or social workers who attend bingo events, take account of the winners and then automatically subtract the amount from the Family Benefits cheque.

I had to try my boots on in front of them (social workers) because I took size 11. It was so humiliating.

Social workers have been known to check for tire tracks in the snow, examine fridge notes, search for hunting equipment and evidence of dogs, stake out parking lots at night, throw sand on the doorstep in order to trace footprints – all in an effort to confirm that a man is living in the home.

There's an awful lot of social stigma. People know what side of the tracks you are from and they never forget it. (Little, 1994)

I remembered that Hanna stated she could tell whether the kids in her class were from low-income apartments A, B, or C, or whether they were from the low-income housing on Daisy Street. For Hanna and educators to recognize when children are poor is inevitable in a society that defines them. These families Hanna recognized as children 'at risk'. When children are at risk, it is perceived to be because of a lack of parenting skills of the mother. This discourse shuts down single mothers and dictates their mothering. When they do not meet the demands, 'intervention' policies come into place for these targeted families.

The Department of Justice, National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention published a news release entitled *New Brunswick Strong Families – Strong Children Project*. This article clearly defines families to be targeted for intervention by seeking out families that do not meet the standards. For single mothers living in poverty, this release could cause much fear and anxiety. It is important here to

consider the double-edged sword of words and phrases such as 'nurturing environments', 'stabilize family functioning', 'intervention', 'home visits', and 'specialized programming components'. 'The focus of home visits' provides powerful images of a political savior for the poor uneducated mothers who do not know 'the right way' to cope or function. Similar to the 'parent/school partnership' discourse, the term 'family' is ungendered and unclassed, and these policies target the working poor two-parent families, and single mothered families.

A combination of programming interventions with the child and his or her family will be implemented and evaluated to determine effectiveness in supporting the development of healthy, pro-social behaviours in children and nurturing environments in families.

The project will help families recognize their competencies and develop the necessary skills to stabilize family functioning. Children will be referred into the program by schools, police (for children under 12 engaging in criminal activity but too young for criminal justice interventions), doctors, churches, community agencies and self-referrals by families. A family worker will be assigned to each family and will help develop an individualized service plan that will include home visits and specialized programming components delivered on site at Moncton Youth Residences Inc. Family workers will also act as advocates and liaison agents to access the support and resources families need to meet their challenges.

The focus of the home visits will be:

- to enhance the well-being and preserve the integrity of the family;
- increase family cohesion;
- improve parenting skills;
- prevent unnecessary out-of-home placements;
- link the family with appropriate community resources to create an ongoing support system; and
- strengthen the family's coping skills and capacity to function in the community.

(Department of Justice Canada, 'Strong Families', 2002)

When this type of directive is announced in a culture that already values upper income families, poor single mothered families once again are told in a 'measuring up' discourse, that they are inadequate and to blame for their children's difficulties. This directive is specific in its mission and frightening in its ability to shut out and shut down particular mothers and families.

The Department of Justice also restricts schooling for children of divorce not only through their defining discourse, but also by limiting the financial resources of their mothers... For divorced single mothers with children in school, waiting for a child support cheque that is late or non-existent is absolutely devastating. I recall sitting around the table at St. Thomas with sobbing and frantic divorced moms because an ex-husband had stopped support, refused to pay, claimed bankruptcy, changed jobs, left the province, or threatened the mother... and they had examinations to write or papers due, and they tried desperately to protect their children from their stress. Not only do finances affect the schooling for our children, it affects our own.

Although Lana did not worry about her child support Betty did, and when it did not come on time, she had to go to her ex-husband and ask for help. Rather than answer his questions about how she spent *his* money she most often just waited and went without. These mothers were trapped in an extensive political and social framework. Researching my undergraduate thesis, I asked one mother what it was like to go to the Family Services office to pick up her cheque.^{xxvii} She replied:

I feel stupid, lazy and am always in tears. I go for my cheque and it is not there – the government needs time to process the cheques, the office needs time to process the cheques, and when I ask why it is late, they look at me like I have a turnip for a head. I feel guilty that I go pick up a cheque and do not work. No one is rude to me, but when I ask the officers why his cheque isn't here or his arrears are not caught up, I'm met with indifference. That's it – it seems like they don't really care whether I am there or not. It's very humiliating – and maddening. It's a long walk down that hall – after you spend time looking for a parking

spot – then you get there and there is no cheque. I always start crying. I know I have to go and walk back to the car – crying down that damn long hall is terrible. (Hersey, 1994, p. 43)

Courts determine spousal support to be maintained for a period of only two years expecting that mothers can become self-sufficient and able to support their children in that period of time. For the mother that has taken time from employment to raise her children or has not worked outside of the home, this amount of time is unreasonable - particularly if the mother is older, education was limited, or abuse was prevalent. Many times, employment is nearly impossible, particularly at a level that supports her family, and her children suffer. In the courtroom, mother's lives are not viewed in light of their history, day-to-day, future, or policies that restrict them.

Women's lived experiences are in no way reiterated as reality, but transformed into a patriarchal jurisprudence list of facts, figures and appropriate legal discourse. Men judges see women as men see women, and even female judges must work within a patriarchal system of legalese. (Foote, in Hersey, 1994, p. 63)

The court system needs to recognize that for mothers, it is hard to be an independent equal when she is not equally able to be independent (Foote, 1989: 16).

Children's schooling is affected when their mothers are harnessed through control by the courts under the regulations of court orders, custody expectations, fit or unfit parenting guidelines, support benefit formulas, the enforcement ordinance, and mothers' forced compliance with Income Assistance 'assignments'.

Many government departments shape the schooling for children of divorce, particularly First Nations, disabled, and/or immigrant by the limited resources allocated to, and the ideology that defines them. These differences are important and that I did not include them in this thesis was not an over-sight. It was instead a limitation of me the researcher. As a 'white-abled Canadian' I could *not* retell their stories. It is my hope that the study might be carried on by those who can.

Children of Divorce: and the role of labeling and classing practices

Children of divorce are also enmeshed in particular linking discourses: 'children of divorce', 'children of single mothers', 'Daisy Street kids', 'at risk', 'developmentally delayed', 'enriched', 'special needs', 'vulnerable', and 'school readied' are some, and the discourses that define their mothers, define *them* as well. Many of these words have only recently entered our vocabulary and are based on 'expert knowledge' about children who have been assessed by standardized measures, particularly in mass compulsory schooling (Griffith, 1987).

Sorting, classing, and labeling begins with infants who, as they grow are often separated into groups as determined by their social and verbal skills.

The teacher's first impressions of a child are used to assemble the ability groupings that will be consequential for the rest of the child's school career. In fact, in a particular classroom, after eight days of observation, the teacher was able to divide the children into three ability groups. (Noble, 1990)

As young as day care, teachers begin to streamline children into university career paths, and have expectations based on a standardized assortment of materials such as stacking toys, puzzles, and blocks (Noble 1982). Some children move rapidly from developmental stage to developmental stage that *experts* have defined for them, while others who do not, are labeled 'slow', 'developmentally delayed', or 'mentally challenged'. We have yet to recognize that perhaps 'all younger members of society may not benefit from living within our constructions of *childhood*' (Canella, 1997).

I have already address the discourse of children 'at risk', but 'at risk' of what? The literature would tell us at risk of depression, increased incidences of or thoughts about suicide, increased teen runaways, increased criminal activity, increased drug abuse, increased tension and stress, increased pregnancies, and lower academic scores. The Canadian Institute of Child Health, Canadian Association of Family

Resource Programs, Canadian Child Care Federation, Child Welfare League of Canada, and Family Service Canada however, tell us that 'at risk' is strongly tied to poverty, whether at risk family, at risk mother, or at risk child.

- ◆ There are 40,000 children in substitute care and hundreds of thousands of families served by child welfare services on any day of the year in Canada.
- ◆ 20% of the children are Aboriginal, rising to over 50% in the Prairie Provinces, yet they represent only 3% of the child population.
- ◆ At least half of the children in care come from very poor, mother-led single-parent families.
- ◆ Incidence of child abuse is estimated to impact 1 in 5 children. Because of under-reporting, actual incidence is likely much higher than this.

As the government shifts society's attention to at risk families and children, they are able to effectively hide policies that place them there - such as cuts to welfare, employment insurance, health benefits, and education (Canadian Child Care Federation).

I did not know if any of the children I interviewed were considered at risk by their educators, or by their parents. I also did not know if Toby, Alice and Justin were aware of those labels at that time. Today, Alice would be at risk because of the number of times she moved, and because her mother was often not at home while she worked two jobs. Toby, as well would be considered at risk not only by the church, but socially because his father was raising him, and his mother was not at all involved in his life. Because Justin was a successful hockey player whose father attended his games and mother took care of him, I expect he would have escaped the discourse – whether or not he had difficulties.

The lengthy literature review in this thesis indicated a number of indicators that *experts* tell educators and mothers to *look for* to determine whether their students and children are 'at risk'.

- ? developmental behaviour problems
- ? discipline problem
- ? low school grades
- ? unsuccessful social integration
- ? low self-image
- ? decreased psychological well-being
- ? poor child adjustment

I am not so sure what 'poor child adjustment' means and I suggest that classifying children 'at risk' is risky in itself. Educators and professional practitioners must be skeptical when children come to them as a report, rather than a person with different abilities that may or may not fit inside of what is - for the moment in time – a normal classroom. For instance, the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY) for the first time made measuring and analyzing developmental outcomes possible.

Thus, we can begin with the empirical observation that a child has a significant problem in some developmental domain. We have decided to refer to children who are experiencing an episode of poor developmental outcomes as vulnerable.

... This book asks whether we can significantly improve the quality of life for vulnerable children and ensure that all children achieve their potential. Can we help them meet the challenges they face? (Willms, 2002, p. 4)

There is an inherent danger when children are measured against a standardized scale, and there should be an alarm that goes off in our heads when we allow the political/corporate arena to define the quality of life for children. Achieving full potential perhaps comes in allowing each of them to develop differently, not similarly.

Does it not seem peculiar that we would send our children to school at the ripe old age of five already labeled 'vulnerable' because of testing done as an infant or baby? And, if this label is attached at birth how would the child ever escape? This concern extends to children not only in two-parent Caucasian middle class families, but

particularly to those in diverse families; poor, ethnic, differently-abled, Native, same-sex, grandparent, group-homed, single fathered, and single mothered families.

With this discussion I do not suggest that all testing be abandoned, or that we discontinue to recognize when children need help or protection. An assumption of that nature would be absurd. It would be naive and an indication of an uncritical response to the challenges of the discourse and the realities of being a child, or a social being in an unequal society. Educators and those who work with children, however, must be aware when testing limits, and labeling closes rather than opens opportunities.

Often, it is the kinds of attention a child of divorce receives that define their path and determine how they respond to schooling... and the kinds of attention given to children in two-parent middle class families and the kinds of attention given to children of single mothers is essentially different.

The suggestion that schools contribute even unconsciously to the perpetuation of inequality based on gender, class and race is furiously denied. That the choices of students who are secure and well-to-do are as predictable as those students living on the margins does not seem to shake our faith in free-will or in the political neutrality of school.

In theory, aptitude determines choice, but socioeconomic class turns out to be the variable that makes the difference. Children from dominant-class backgrounds are disproportionately represented in the growing number of elementary-level enrichment and second-language immersion programs, while lower-class children predominate in the expanding slow-learner, behavioral and learning disabilities classes. (Barlow and Robertson, 1994, p. 125 – 127)

I have examined how educators understand divorced single mothered families, the discourse of self-blame that single mothers accept, and the political policies that restrict those families. Educators report that children of divorce who are economically disadvantaged experience difficulties in school that children from two-parent families do not, and educators *must* treat them differently to treat them fairly. Divorced single mothers discuss the pain they feel when they cannot measure-up or provide for their

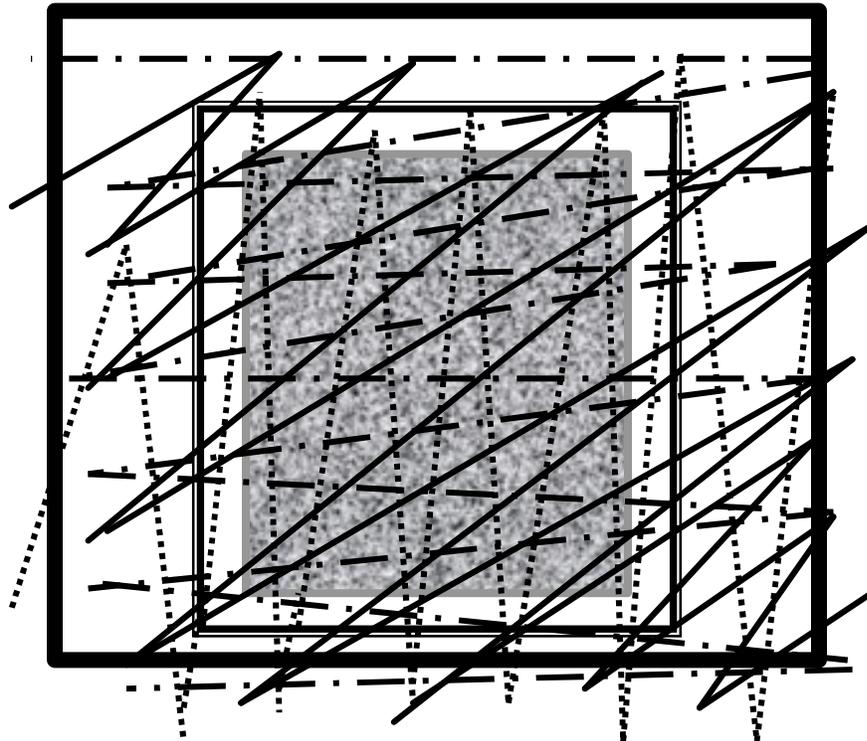
children. Even Lana and Betty, who were middle class, felt humiliation and stigma. Ruth, certainly did. Dependent upon available resources and social classifications, these mothers were attached to a mothering hierarchy. More resources were perceived to mean increased involvement, which translated to better mother. When mothers cannot be involved in the 'parent/school partnership' as defined by school policy, the Education Act, and the PSSC, their *home* involvement is not acknowledged, appreciated, or accounted for, and 'bad parent' or 'neglectful parent' defines them. Involvement of the father, and sufficient income allow children of divorce, such as Justin, Chelsea, Peter, Missy, and Mark an escape from the stigma and humiliation that Thomas, Robbie, Toby, and Alice did not escape. It is with caution that educators (and mothers) should accept the discourses that define children - particularly children on the margins, such as the children of divorce.

Summary

I argue that the ideology of single mother incompetence and bad mother ignores the reality of low-income families' lives and the role of government in shaping their everyday experiences. The ideology of assigning individual responsibility evident in the Policies and Act, further subjugates and disadvantages divorced single mothers, and deepens the stigma experienced by them and their children.

The simple illustration below indicates intersections between educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce within a particular political/corporate climate that define parent/school partnerships and mothering ideology. The lines and intersection points reveal confusion and chaos.

When what we do doesn't make sense



Government/corporate agenda - NB schools work within this framework and increase the probability of schooling success for children from two-parent families, and decrease the probability of schooling success for children 'other than', such as children of divorce



Schooling ideology – The Education Act, School Policy Manual, and written and unwritten rules and regulations frame the relationships inside of the classroom.



Classroom – School relationships are acted out dependent on the discourse and resources that define the players, or a critical understanding of assigned roles.

Educators work within the discourse of these frameworks that construct 'parent/school partnerships' and 'children at risk'.

Children of Divorce _____ intersect with educators at points determined by a hierarchy of socioeconomic placement assigned to their mothers

Divorced Single Mothers ____ . ____ . ____ Divorced single mothers work within a framework that constructs them as 'other'. Their voices are not represented, their work is unacknowledged, and when they cannot provide for their children due to inadequate resourcing, they feel stigmatized and assign self-blame.

The illustration above is under-developed and does not adequately represent the intersections that take place during a day for educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce, nor does it indicate how these relationships are coloured through the 'bad mothering' discourse and inadequate resources which define schooling for children of divorce. It does, however, indicate the complexities of achieving schooling success.

Within a political framework, schooling provides a vehicle for teaching and maintaining a particular political ideology and the discourse that defines its members. When policy is not driven by a truly democratic concern for the good of the whole, education will continue to dissect and marginalize. Not all children of divorce will experience life-altering challenges. It seems, however, the education system will.

Policy then, seems driven by economic conditions which, when mixed with political agendas and institutional complexities, results, it seems in institutional inertia or even gridlock. (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, Taubman. 1995, p. 683)

In the concluding chapter, the discourse on single parenting is evaluated in relation to a society where vast inequalities have for the most part, been eliminated.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION – SIMPLE OBSERVATIONS

Successful schooling for children of divorce is largely dependent upon the work and resources of the mother. Children of divorce, divorced single others, and educators found that the difficulties and challenges of their schooling relationships were most often caused by lack of resources and cultural stigma towards the poor or single mothers. Schooling discourse suggests that through 'parent/school partnerships' all student success is possible, while the discourse in itself stratifies and places students on unequal levels. Also, what is not addressed is that while policy and discourse work under the presumption that all mothers are adequately and samely resourced, the interviews and statistics on child poverty indicate that they are not. There is no homogeneity amongst single mothers within or across class. Some mothers have, and some do not. Resources – both economic and social – vary greatly for Canadian divorced single mothers.

When I began this research study with a proposal I had no inclination that I would be able to observe schooling for children of divorce in another country. I have, however, and since felt that for this study, I could offer what I see to be strengths of the Swedish system that allow children of divorce to experience schooling in very similar ways they did pre-divorce, and the same as children from two-parent families. Swedish social policies provide that children are cared for by the state and community in ways that indicate mothering work and childhood are valued – not by lip service, but by mothering pay.

Paying Moms to Mother?

In 1994, I wrote a thesis 'Deadbeat Dads': Enforcement Ideology and the New Brunswick Family Services Enforcement Office'. My findings were that children of

divorce were harshly affected by poverty, and the reasons for that poverty were insignificant to the child. Poverty meant difficulties at school and therefore a challenging life satiated with stigma and restricted opportunities. Whether fathers *could not* or *would not* pay child support did not change the fact that children were poor. Also, changing monies from one government department to another, such as Social Assistance being paid from the province transferred to child support collected by Family Services, made little difference in the levels of poverty (Hersey, 1994). The debate was whether it was of benefit for divorced mothers to be dependant. My thought then and now is that *mothers* should *not* have to be dependent upon former husbands, but *children should be* dependent upon their fathers and fathers should not be able to opt out of parenting responsibility. Mothers should have the same opportunities for financial and emotional freedom as fathers, but they do not and the lack of income and resources affect the well-being of their children.

It could be argued that if women's economic circumstances are more negatively affected by a divorce than men's then this is a severe limitation of women's freedom of action... Since most children remain with their mothers after a parental divorce or separation, the deterioration in economic circumstances in these new households (in part, an effect of custodial mothers taking greater responsibility than non-custodial fathers for their children's provision), and the possible consequences of these circumstances, also affects many children. (Gähler, 1998)

Although Canadian politicians have considered, debated, and written promises for the escalating problems of families and children living in poverty, and what difficulties that produces for the future, they have not yet taken the steps to reduce that poverty and make provision to equalize standards of living.

Less than a year before the World Summit for Children, the House of Commons passed a unanimous resolution to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Promises have not prevented an increase in child poverty. In 1989 one child out of every seven was poor. Ten

years later almost one in five, or 18.5% of all children, experienced poverty.

Government policy has been central to the plummeting fortunes of family. (UN Special Session on Children, 2000, pg. 4)

Through withdrawal of funds to education and health, policy makers are in fact, placing more personal burden on poor people who must withdraw resources from shelter, food, and clothing to make up the extra in education and health. Also, the very poorest of the poor, have had tremendous cutbacks in social assistance and employment insurance. Recalling Ruth's story, for those mothers who are the sole supporters for their families, these cuts have proved devastating.

The federal government relinquished its role in shaping family and child poverty in 1995 when it eliminated the Canada Assistance Plan. The reduction of federal transfers to the provinces by an estimated \$1.2 billion through the Canada Health and Social Transfer in 1996 had a major impact on the income supports and social services helping families and children.

Changes to the Employment Insurance Act were perilous for workers in low wage and marginal jobs. The tougher eligibility requirements to qualify for benefits disproportionately affected women who dominate the part-time workforce.

Between 1991 and 2001 welfare benefits for families with children dropped more than 19% (in constant 2001 dollars). The average family on social assistance receives an income that is below the LICO in all provinces.

Affordable, high quality early childhood education and care is key to an anti-poverty strategy. Programs that deliver seamless childcare and early childhood education can enrich early development and support parents both as parents and as participants in the labour force and training.

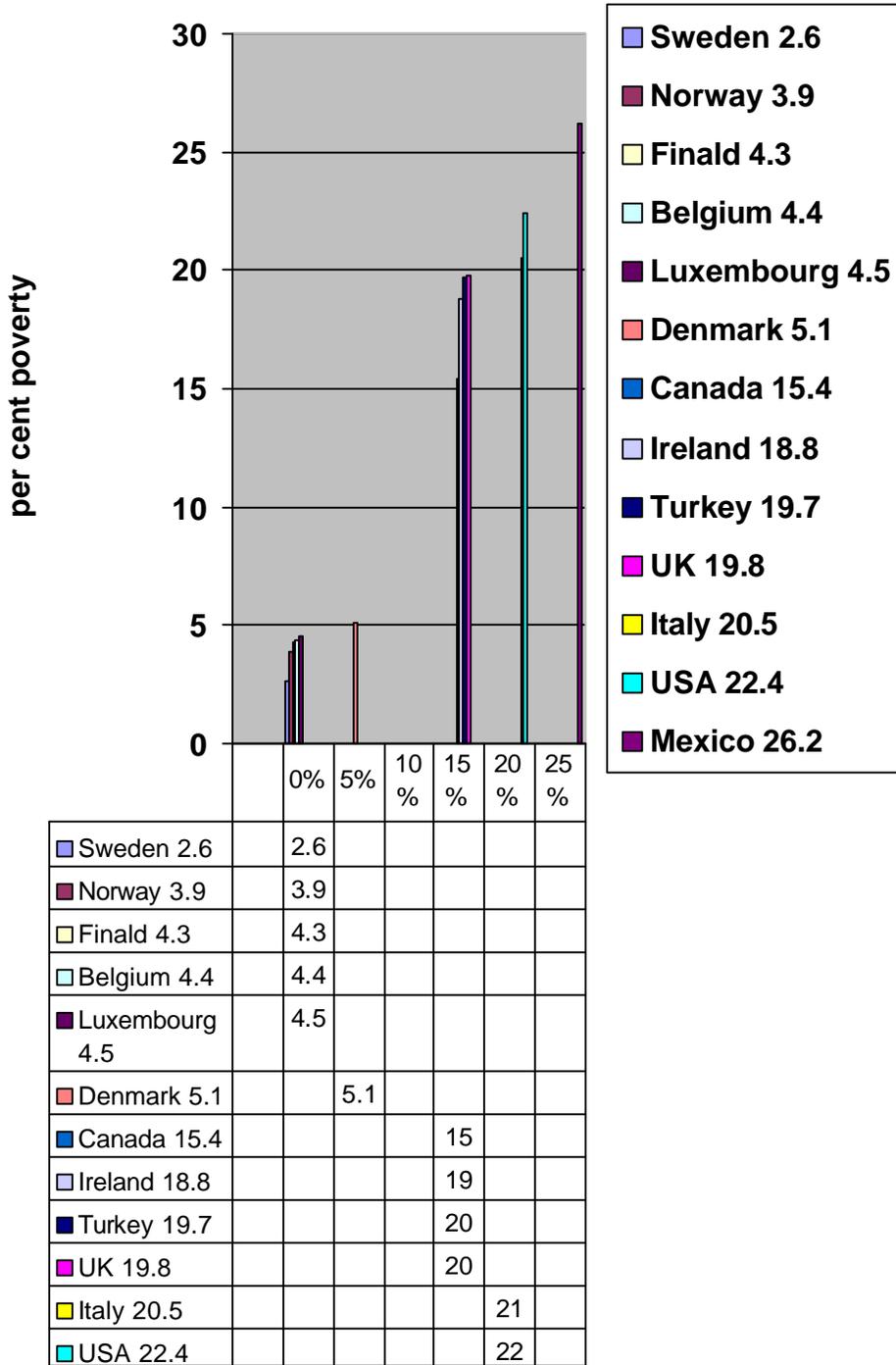
The steady withdrawal of federal funding for post-secondary education over the past decade has had serious limited accessibility for lower and middle income Canadians. (Ibid, pp. 4 & 6)

Canada has not fulfilled its promises to eliminate child poverty, and have failed

to decrease it or even keep it constant. Policy makers cannot decrease child poverty while simultaneously decreasing provisions for mothers. This logic is no more prevalent than in the child poverty statistics and socio-economic well-being of mothers in Scandinavian countries where child poverty rates are very low and the many social policies for mothers and 'parenting' are extensive.

The chart below indicates child poverty percentages in fourteen Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Nations. Canada shows a high rate of child poverty which, since this research was printed in 2000, has risen to over eighteen per cent - becoming critically close to the US numbers.

**CHILD POVERTY IN SELECTED OECD NATIONS
JUNE 2000**



(Ibid, 12).

How should policy makers address the continuing increase in child poverty? If one considers the Scandinavian model, a universal provisioning to provide for parents – whether two-parent or single mother - is crucial. In 1994 I made the suggestion that policy makers consider 'paid parenting'. It sounded crude and simple at the time, and people said to me 'how could the government pay mothers?' I provided a simple web diagram that showed how I felt the government could not only pay mothers for mothering, but benefit in the process. Politicians must provide solutions for the limited resources available to single mothered families if they are to see Canadian children become educated, healthy, and available to work towards building a strong Canada. When mothers have resources to make choices regarding their employment and education, so too will their children.

The outline below indicates how *paid parenting* can benefit mothers, children, and build a stronger nation.

PAID PARENTING

- **Less Social Classification/ more join middle class**
 - **Healthier children**
 - **Higher educated women and children**
 - **Fewer poor children**
 - **Less financial stress in the homes**
 - **End to degrading 'pink' ghetto jobs**

- **women have choices – stay at home**
 - **work outside the home**
 - **end to gender specific roles**
 - **androgynous climate**

- **benefits, security pensions**
 - **widows no longer poverty stricken**
 - **proper housing & health care**
 - **increased mobility**
 - **economy stimulated**
 - **tourism boosted**

- **job creation**
 - **lower unemployment rate**
 - **mothers spending on housing, education, and health**
 - **market stimulation**
 - **broader tax support system**

- **economic support for battered women and children**
 - **opportunity to leave abuse situations**
 - **no economic reason to accept ex-spouse demands**
 - **less dependence on unpaid child support**

- **women with more bargaining power**
 - **change in male dominance**
 - **higher self-esteem/new lifestyle**
 - **end to isolation and discrimination**
 - **friends, community support**

- **women financially independent**
 - **reduced need for Social Assistance**
 - **reduced 'monitoring' of single mothers**
 - **fewer children in foster homes**
 - **\$ to provide self and children extras**
 - **ability to educate themselves and their children**

Not only would mothers and families benefit economically from a paid parenting policy, but also corporate Canada would benefit, the country's children would benefit, and therefore the country. I never thought that I would see what I envisioned being practiced.

Mothering in Sweden

I mentioned in the introduction that I would be doing a small comparative study based on my current research in Sweden. In the past several months I have had a great opportunity to live and study in Sweden researching Swedish social policies that allow single mothers – whether divorced or sole – and their children to be educated at the same level as two-parent family members. I have been able to interview Mr. Bengt Göransson, former Minister of Culture, Bror Tronback, Director of Centrum för lättläst (Easy to Read Centre), professors, students, and many mothers whom I sat beside on busses, subways, and trains. I also spent considerable time interviewing Dr. Michael Gähler, who wrote his dissertation on divorce in Sweden. The discussion with Dr. Gähler allowed me to sort out significant differences in the two welfare states that talk about the importance of caring for children. A course entitled *The Welfare State: Challenges and responses* by Dr. Diane Sainsbury was extremely beneficial in understanding social policy, provisions, difficulties, and the state of single mothers and their families in Sweden.

Sweden is clearly ahead of Canada in delivering social welfare policies that allow single mothers to be educated, enter the workforce in high-end positions, stay at home with children, and have access to regulated and inexpensive child care significantly increases their financial status and therefore, the well-being of their children. Policies that place children first provide for the physical and emotional well-

being of the child's care-taker, generally the mother. The Convention on the Rights of the Child ensures child allowances, parental insurance, child-health care, quality child care, high quality schools, housing allowances, parental leave, and protection for the youngest in society. Swedish family policy is designed to give women and men the same opportunities of combining family and work. An overriding goal of the school system is a nationally equal education for children, young persons and adults.

My blind acceptance of Canadian policies and political discourse that keep divorced single women and their children marginalized was interrupted when Mr. Göransson discussed 'conditions for democracy'.

Mr. Göransson pointed out that most countries that state they are democratic, are indeed not.

How do you create freedom? You must be able to discuss it, not only ask people whether they want freedom. Everyone wants freedom. You must be able to discuss it. To the social democrat it is important to say – freedom, equality, brotherhood; the French Revolution's three key words, and seeing that there is conflict between the three, and then you can see – if we do not work for equality, freedom will no longer be possible. Are we prepared to abandon a bit of the luxury to create freedom? You have to focus basic ideas. In the social democratic party, you can say the three ideas are freedom, equality, brotherhood. The liberal might say the same, but for the liberal, freedom is always more important than equality and brotherhood, and the problem for a social democrat is that you have to face another type of conflict than the liberal party. The liberal can always say freedom is more important, but if we say the three are important, the internal conflict is worse, because if you accept equality, you are forced to accept that you cannot have full freedom, and that, of course, is a problem. To present that problem to the people is an important task to the politician. How are we going to solve this question of social welfare?

Too much of politics today is discussed in yes and no terms, which is impossible. In democracy, you must learn to lose, but you do not lose all the time. Quite a few people believe that the best democracy is when everyone gets what he or she wants, but everyone cannot get what they want. The family of five, for example, cannot decide upon the menu and time for dinner tomorrow without at least two of them losing what they want. Why should complicated matters discussed in parliament be easier to decide than the decision for the dinner

tomorrow? We have to realize that the complexity of society must be handled in politics. And we try to find solutions that are as good for as many as possible. (Personal communication, October 5, 2002)

Canada is only democratic in that its policies provide for those who have an influence on those policies. Poor people do not have the same opportunities and choices as those who have sufficient resourcing, and therefore do not live a democratic life. This extends particularly to single mothers and other marginalized groups.

There are many social policies in Sweden that strengthen the well-being of single mothered families, but I found too a cultural ideology and attitude about parenting as a whole, and the rights of children. Children cannot be properly cared for without economic, parenting, and community support. It does not matter if the child lives in a two-parent, fathered, or mothered home, support is crucial from the state, community, and both parents. 'Mothering' is not of utmost importance, 'parenting' is, and it happens that in single parent homes, most children in both Canada and Sweden are primarily in the homes of their mothers. Fathering, however, has a completely different reality in Sweden. Fathers care for their children whether within the marriage, or outside of it. I asked Dr. Gähler how the state ensured fathers pay child support. He replied 'why would they not? Why would a father not take care of his children?' Why indeed?

Looking back at the suggestions in my undergraduate thesis for 'moms to be paid for mothering', I was not too far off, for mothers in Sweden are well supported by the state, and their economic well-being spreads to the well-being of their children, the education system, and the state itself. Some policies Mr. Göransson stated that exist for mothers and fathers *for the well-being of children and the family* are:

1. There is same work opportunity and equity for women and men.
2. Half of all high paying jobs or posts in Sweden are occupied by women.
3. Gainful employment plus parenthood are possible for both women and men.
4. Parental Insurance System – 18 months parental leave, 12 months paid at 80 % to 90% of wages and additional employer benefit defines mothering and fathering as important jobs, and provides financially for them.
5. Government, community, and business encourage both parents to take parenting time with newborns. 'Daddy month' requires the father to take one month with his child to set a standard for father/child relationship.
6. State and business provide 120 days compensation for parents to stay at home with sick children.
7. State/business/community regulate and subsidize child care to allow any parent to enter the workforce without worrying about her/his child. Parents pay only 10% of fees and single parent mothers moved to the beginning of the queue for positions.
8. Tax exempt child allowances are payable to all children up to age 16.
9. Study assistance for children in post-secondary is paid for ages 16 to 20.
10. Housing allowance is an additional amount for families with children.
11. Sick pay, unemployment benefits, and parental insurance benefits are 'pensionable income'. Pension points are also given to the parents of small children and to those studying or doing compulsory military service.
12. Free tuition for six years post-secondary education make it possible for even the poorest to be educated.
13. Universal child benefits are paid to every family and are therefore not associated with welfare or charity.
14. Employee sick pay and the public insurance system cares for 90 days of pay at a rate of 80% the normal salary.
15. By law a maximum working week is 40 hours. By law every worker takes five weeks of paid vacation, whether full time, part time, or casual.
16. Unemployment benefits of 80% of regular pay for 300 days, 450 days for people aged 55 – 64 are paid, and those who are laid off receive full pay between jobs

Why does Canada *not* provide for its children? Unlike Swedish policies and a Swedish political ideology supporting and strengthening equality, Canadian policies and political ideology support a society built on, maintaining, and encouraging inequality.

You can do all the research you want in Sweden, and you may come up with some interesting facts, but it won't make any difference in Canada. Sweden is surrounded by the EU and is part of Europe. As Canadians

we live beside the United States and have always followed their lead. We follow the US 'prosperity model'. (personal communication, Canadian federal politician, August, 2002)

Following the US 'prosperity model', as the politician suggested that day in his office, may be partial reason that our child poverty rates have continued to climb, becoming close to the rates in the US, who although are the richest country in the world, have the highest rates of child poverty in a developed country. Sweden has the lowest rates of child poverty (UN Special Session on Children, 2002, pg. 12).

This apathetical response from a federal politician who has held office for a lengthy period of time was extremely disturbing to me. It is, however, the neo-liberal ideology that separates the rich and poor, two-parent families and single parent families, 'whites' and ethnically diverse, Caucasian and Aboriginal, 'abled' and 'disabled', 'normal' and 'abnormal'. As Mr. Göransson said, liberalism in no way indicates freedom but rather imposes oppression. The politician standing in front of me that day defined and reinforced stratification, and class and gender inequality. We can be sure that his children are open to more opportunities than are children of divorce.

The Canadian response to poverty of single mothered families has only *increased* poverty levels, and will continue to do so as long as the focus is taken off the political neo-liberal policies that target single mothers as the site of blame and insist that education is the responsibility of parent/educator partnerships. That Canadian politics mixes neo-liberal with conservative political typology intensifies and strengthens the rich/poor gap. The Canadian political system is built on patriarchy and hegemonic discourse whereby the services *provided* by the government define themselves in a political campaign technique as *saving* 'at risk' single mothers and children. We should not need to be *saved*. We want and need equality, equity, and recognition of our unpaid mothering labour. We can then save ourselves and our

children. Single mothers can change the face of politics thereby changing the future for our children.

I mentioned earlier on in this chapter that the Swedish ideology and cultural attitude is significantly different than in Canada. Not only is that ideology displayed in the Swedish Rights of Children Act, it is displayed in how Swedes *talk about* divorced single mothers. They don't. They do not talk about difference and that is significant in caring for children in diverse families. Dr. Gähler stated:

We don't place people into these categories. These categories are not a living part of our mind so to speak. My feeling is that it is not fruitful to make that kind of distinction ... when it comes to single mothers, Swedes don't think about that because there are so many single parents. You would have a problem if you think about that all the time. I am from divorced parents and my mom had a hard time being divorced but it was not because of stigmatization. It was because of divorce. It is a hell of a lot harder if people have moral problems with it. It is a double burden. (Personal communication October 6, 2002)

Summary

I have a limited understanding of the Swedish Welfare State and have seen while here that there *are* poorer single mothers (both divorced and sole) even in the midst of extensive welfare state policies and contributions. I have found from my research to date, however, that a large percentage of poor single mothers are immigrant or refugee (Personal communications, March 15, 2003).

Immigrants and refugees are among the ones that are facing growing difficulties in entering the labour market... The currents of migration, processes of marginalisation and patterns of segregation, which has profoundly transformed Sweden during the 1990s, tend to make immigration almost synonymous with social exclusion. (Sernhede. 1999)

Also, many poorer single mothers live in rural areas outside of the main cities. Rural areas make up more than half of Sweden with a rural population of one and a half million of the over 8 million Swedish inhabitants. Of those in rural areas, over half live in particularly sparsely populated and harsh areas

(Swedish National Rural Development Agency, n.d.). My understanding is that single mothers in these areas may possibly have acutely difficult lives. My research to date is incomplete and that single mothers experience difficulties even in the midst of broad social policies is an area for further research.

There is strong evidence and substantial research, however, to conclude that although there are divorced single mothers that experience a lower socioeconomic level of well-being than other divorced single mothers or mothers in two-parent families in Sweden, this group is small and most single mothers whether divorced or sole experience a high socioeconomic standard of living.

The Swedish welfare state is distinguished by a number of characteristics which have both a direct and an indirect influence on the economic conditions of the divorced. High priority has been given to full labor force participation in Sweden, and as a consequence, a broad taxation base has been constructed. Public transfers are strongly income redistributive, many societal institutions are heavily subsidized or free of charge, transfer- and insurance systems are often universal and few allowances are means tested. A fundamental principle of the Swedish welfare state model has been the aim to equalize living conditions, between individuals and over the individual's life cycle. The policy has also aimed at leveling out differences between family types.

Swedish women are often better prepared economically for a divorce or separation. (Gähler, 1998, 44)

As mentioned above, my understanding and research of Swedish welfare state policy and divorced single mothers is limited, but my experience with the *results of* Canadian liberal/conservative politics is extensive.

As a rich developed country, the Canadian government brags when it should be ashamed of their policies that place children in poverty. Until they put our money behind the rhetoric concerning the poverty of families, mothers, and children, they will never address some of the crucial concerns of education and children.

We, as Canadian consumers of our government's social policies must examine the situations formed by power relationships. Power is not held in government policy or in schooling institutions, but through our unquestioning participation.

One sees why the analysis of power relations within a society cannot be reduced to the study of a series of institutions or even to the study of all those institutions that would merit the name 'political'. Power relations are rooted in the whole network of the social. (Foucault, In Faubian, 1994, p. 345)

As educators, divorced single mothers and children of divorce, we become apathetic and numb to the powers that suppress us not through force, but through a slow steady seduction that leads to apathy.

What gives power its hold, what makes it acceptable, is quite simply the fact that it does not hold as a force which says no, but that it runs through, and it produces things, it induces pleasure, it forms knowledge, it produces discourse. (Foucault, (1979f, p. 36)

Academic, social, and lifetime success for children of divorce is shaped by the knowledge and response of educators and their mothers, willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, and economic well-being. Awareness of the political commodity schooling provides is crucial for a critical understanding of learning and the educator/mother/child partnership. Awareness, however, is not enough to influence change.

The government understands the power of schools to influence social and economic outcome. Schooling institutions not only provide an arena for government and corporate ideology, they provide the arena for social change. As an increasing number of single mothers become aware of alternatives and possibilities - such as policies which financially support mothering - women's committees, agencies, and groups can bear down on politicians to provide universal economic stability and rid single mothered families from the welfare stigma. Women's groups must also insist on

affordable education and childcare so that mothers can combine mothering, education, and employment without the stigma of 'neglectful mother'. Only when single mothers are adequately resourced, educated, and cared for as a *family unit* will we be able to better our children's schooling.

The creation of institutions such as social insurance, free schooling, school meals, child benefits, taxation allowances for dependant family members, progressive taxation, health care, and subsidized housing are all examples of measures freeing the family unit from exclusive responsibility for its own well-being. The more a family is left to fend for itself in terms of economic security and resources for well-being, the more class inequality is likely to be found in society. (Montanari, 2002, pg. 6)

Suggestions

It is clear that both an ideology shift and change in resource allocation targeted towards single mothers must take place in Canada for child poverty to be eliminated and successful schooling for poor children to be realized. Policies and discourse need to run parallel, not perpendicular, to each other. Change will not begin with politicians unless there is a clear voice of intolerance for their policies that provide for and increase the widening gap between resourced and unresourced, rich and poor. The voices of intolerance and building blocks could begin in education.

- Educators at the university level consider a critical pedagogical approach to educating students, raising issues of discourse and policy analysis
- Educators at the university level recognize the importance of urging students to think out their own classroom policies that might come in conflict with school board policies and recognize pre-teaching restrictions placed within the institution

- Educators, mothers, and adult children fiercely urge political policy makers to change policies that restrict civil servants from speaking freely against policies and the Act, and to reframe educator/government partnerships and encourage parent/educator/community/government open debates concerning education
- Mothers teach mothers to recognize their own oppression and their children's through their knowing or unknowing, willing or unwilling participation in political policies that define them.
- Grouped mothers appeal to political policy makers at the municipal, provincial and federal levels to rethink and rewrite policies that place children in positions of poverty.
- Women's agencies appeal to political policy makers at all levels of government to recognize that the poverty of children will continue to escalate unless mothers are cared for. When mothers become educated and financially stable, children will become educated and financially stable, and not until then can the Country become secure and a place of growing strength for children.

Limitations of the research

As I re-read the thesis and recalled the process, I recognized that I would do some things a little differently next time. Although my journal, interviews, and transcribing were done before I went away, much of my thesis was written while I was in Sweden many thousands of miles and a couple of latitudes away from my advisor and committee. The challenges of working in a foreign country, limited contact with my advisor, and writing about a difficult time in my children's and my life without being physically close to them was often difficult. The difficulties, however, were balanced by

the incredible opportunity of observing a culturally and politically different Welfare State... one that works towards the rights and freedom of children, and equality of gender, class, ability, and race.

My study was small and focused and although grounded in the literature, pushed off with personal knowledge of education and children of divorce. It is clear that this research could be carried further to understand schooling for children of divorce, schooling for educators, and the impact of education policies on divorced single – or sole mothers.

This study was carried out within a fairly homogenous area. Although First Nations, African American, Anglophone and Francophone are represented in the area, the study included only English-speaking children of divorce, divorced single mothers, and educators. Although this was not by design, it might be attributed to using the snowball technique in a small geographic area where the large majority of Anglophones reside. Also, I am Anglophone and did not post the study in specifically Francophone schools. Although First Nations is highly represented in one area where the study was posted, it did not request their participation specifically. There are very few African American families in the area, and I was not surprised that none responded.

The study also did not include a variety of religious beliefs. All interviewed formally, or those in informal conversations were Jewish, Christian, or admitted to no religious belief, although they were from a traditionally Christian heritage.

The study represented diversity in class, however, the study could be extended to include only one group, such as very low income or very high income. A study could take place that compares two groups of divorced single mothers, those with very high support and those with very low, or those with high income jobs and those without.

White-collar workers or professionally placed women such as lawyers, professors, or psychologists could be a complete study in itself, whereas this group could also be compared to pink-collar or ghettoized mother workers.

The study could be replicated from province to province where the sample for Newfoundland and New Brunswick, the poorer provinces could be compared to Quebec or Alberta, our richer provinces. Unilingual provinces such as Quebec or Saskatchewan could be compared to the bilingual province of New Brunswick and policies that target language education and service could be considered.

The research that I looked at in Sweden needs to be developed. For a study that compares transnational countries the research would most likely benefit from a large survey sample where ethnicity, religion, and class are mixed. The study could look at the impact of globalization and migration researching *only* citizens, or *only* immigrants.

Through use of various methodologies, ethnicities, class, and gender a study of this type in a large urban city may bring about a different set of suggestions based on the strength of school policies, educator support, perceptions of divorced single mothers, and socioeconomic levels for those families. Further studies could be both narrower - such as researching only Aboriginal communities – or could be broader - such as researching large urban centers.

In this study, I was concerned about the placement of Research Participation flyers. Placing flyers in particular areas, not being able to cover the whole province, or a city, is problematic in that many divorced single mothers may not visit any of the areas. Even putting an ad in a newspaper may not facilitate poorer mothers knowledge about research studies. It is often for this reason that traditional selection processes do not work well with feminist methodologies and feminist research studies.

Marginalized groups of people would most likely not have access to areas where research studies are posted. Although I could have addressed this problem by placing flyers in low-income housing, I may have had three divorced single mothers with nearly the same socioeconomic placement. This would have posed a different set of considerations to the study.

I believe that it would be beneficial for an educator to do an action research project where s/he would have a larger sample of students in their classrooms and divorced single mothers. This may, in fact, be a methodology that could understand 'what's happening' with all three groups, rather than 'what happened', as my study did. My study included three adult children of divorce who discussed their past, two divorced single mothers who talked about a time when, and one educator who is no longer teaching in the school system.

In the literature review, I discussed the work of Hughes & Kirby (2000) whose study researched educators need to separate *fact from fiction*. A study such as I have done here could be replicated using the length of separation time as a variable. Do these relationships between educators, divorced single mothers, and children of divorce change over time?

This study specifically entailed research from my own perspective. This I referred to at the beginning of this thesis and many times throughout. It is important that the study be worked again from various researcher perspectives using different methodologies and variables.

Personal reflections

Working through this research has been double-edged. I recognized myself, and my children in the stories and struggles of others. I recognized challenges we all faced as educators talked about their classrooms. I remembered a time before divorce

touched our family and we did not have those battles. The period of time my children were in school fluctuated between pain and happiness. I still, however, have two hurt and angry children of divorce, and hearing other adult children of divorce speak, brought back pangs of guilt and bad-mother shame. As a mother who felt responsible for her children's happiness, I spent many nights in tears. Most nights my daughter and I were alone, and many times my son, daughter and I were alone. At times I did not have food and would send the kids to my parents to eat. Much of what happened to other divorced families happened to us, and this research brought the memories back full force. I wanted to provide a good life for my children and took the blame of *not* providing solely as my own, neglecting the impact of society, culture, institutions, and political policies. I still often feel that / alone have failed.

Memories of my childhood and schooling are perhaps elevated as I compare them to the childhood and schooling of my own, and other's, children living with few resources. This research did not change my desire that children have a childhood such as I had, one that had the full support of two parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, and resources enough to provide for a full and happy childhood. However, this study did not conclude that all problems for children of divorce would disappear – because mothers become adequately resourced and fathers stay involved in their lives. It did conclude, however, that when the resources – familial, social, and economic - that were once available for children are removed, and when stigma is introduced into their day-to-day, schooling becomes more difficult for them, for their educators, and for their mothers.

While I was at home in Canada for the Christmas holiday, I spoke with a friend and prominent businessman who is considering a life in politics. I asked him the question 'do you think everyone has the same opportunity for success?' to which he

replied, 'Yes. We all start school when we are five or six, have the same education, and have the same opportunities to go to work.' This man was brought up poor and 'made it'. Some do not, particularly single mothers. I suggested that as he becomes involved in politics he makes it a priority to have discussions with poor families asking them the very question I asked him. I also suggested that he look at the types of policies and language that target the wealthy and the types of policies and language that target the poor – both corporate and personal. He agreed that the question and ideas were important and that he was moving to politics because he felt strongly that he could help build a better province and make a difference in the lives of people. He cannot forget the poor.

End Notes

ⁱ Although recent literature challenges the Marxist analysis of upper, middle, and lower, class, I will use the terms as Canadians have become familiar with them. Upper class meaning those who have extensive economic resources, middle class as those who have more than what is required for comfortable living, and lower class, those who do not have the necessities to acquire even a comfortable lifestyle for themselves or their families.

ⁱⁱ 'two-parent' refers to a heterosexual couple where woman is mother, and man is father.

ⁱⁱⁱ In 1991, the New Brunswick Advisory on the Status of Women, *What Comes First*, wrote 'single parent mothers bear 17% of Canada's total poverty gap, yet make up only 3% of the population (from *Women and Poverty Revisited*, 1990, 13). Eighty-one % of single parent mothers with children under the age of eighteen had incomes below the poverty line in 1987 and 80 % of single parent women survive on less than \$10,000 per year while only 1 % earns more than \$30,000 per year.' Also low-income mothers cannot expect any relief from their stagnant situation of poverty, 'the Canadian provinces are increasingly insisting that low-income mothers with school-age children should enter the labour force rather than accept social benefits. In Canada, there is no counterpart to the Sole Parent Pension, and little public support for the idea that low-income mothers should care for their children at home at the taxpayer's expense' (Maureen Baker, *Poverty, Ideology and the Employability of Mothers : A Comparison of Canadian and Australian Social Policies*; 1996). Once children enter school, for single parent mothers who left the work force and are educated at a lower level than their already working counterparts, there is little chance for work that pays enough to support a family. Concerning divorced mothers solely, 'Divorce is a direct cause of poverty for a large proportion of women and their children. Many will experience the consequences of poverty in the short term following divorce, and many will suffer its effects for several years. Finnie (1993) has found that, in the first year after divorce, Canadian women's household income plummets by about 50% while men's declines by a lesser 25% however, when the figures are adjusted for family size, women's income drops by 40% while men's increases slightly. Women's poverty rises from 16% before divorce to 43% after divorce. Even three years after divorce, women's income remains far below what they had during marriage and far below their ex-husbands' current income' Dr. Anne-Marie Ambert, *Divorce: Facts, Figures and Consequences*; (1998)

^{iv} Divorce is often referred to as a particular moment, the date of the separation, or the signing of divorce papers. Divorce, however, is not a moment in time, but rather a 'continuous, multi-staged process' that may begin long before actual breakup and extend many years after (Demo & Acock, 1998; Morrison & Cherlin, 1995).

^v This statement was made to me by one child of divorce after being forcibly removed from his classroom by his father and a school social worker. The child was in the midst of his parent's custody battle and did not want to move out of his old school zone. 'Grant' was the principal of the school the child was moved to, and was a personal friend of the family.

^{vi} Sarah's teacher and I spoke many times through out her grade two year. The Reports of Family Law 35 (3d) quote Kelly and Wallerstein (1977; 469): '... many separations are characterized by diminished parenting. At the time of separation the parents may be so burdened by their own needs that they are temporarily unable to perceive or respond to their children's' (42). Many days, their teachers had to be their parent.

^{vii} Statistics Canada, CANSIM II, table 053-0002. Last modified: January 30, 2002

^{viii} Himelfarb, Alexander & Richardson, James C. People, (1980). *People, Power and Process*.

^{ix} 'Maddie' is a fictitious name for the teacher's own grand child who was a child of a single parent mom.

^x Wallerstein, Judith S., Lewis, Julia M., Blakeslee, Sandra. (2000). *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study*, New York, Hyperion Press
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^{xi} Hetherington, Mavis E., Kelly, John. (2002). *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered* Norton, W.W. & C. Inc.

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^{xii} Retrieved November 12, 2002 from Government of Canada
<http://projetemploi.gc.ca/english/index.pl?tid=64&sid=bclHopQNhO4OHF>

^{xiii} The committee consists of eleven members.

^{xiv} Griffith, Alison I. (1987). *Mothering, Schooling, and Children's Development*, paper presented at the Society for the Study of Social Problems Meetings, Chicago.

^{xv} As quoted by Henri Giroux, (Winter 99) *Rethinking Cultural Politics and Radical Pedagogy in the Work of Antonio Gramsci*, Educational Theory, Vol 49, Issue 1

^{xvi} Retrieved October 12/2002 from a writing on IE at
http://www.caut.ca/english/bulletin/2002_sep/bookshelf/mapping.asp

^{xvii} Farella, John. (1992). *Wind in a Jar*, Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P.

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} Mapping Social Relations: Institutional Ethnography Conference, July 2001, Syracuse, NY Retrieved December 2, 2002 from <http://webdev.maxwell.syr.edu/soc/ieconf/ie.htm>.

^{xx} Daisy Street is a fictional name and the name of the school has not been disclosed. This school is severely under funded, and I am not so sure that the government deserves the respect of nondisclosure, however, the children and families do.

^{xxi} Before the Family Services Act of New Brunswick that provides that child support be directly garnished from the salaries of fathers, mothers often did not receive their support every two weeks – when fathers were paid. Often too, checks were passed between parents through the children, checks were lost, and assigning blame became common. The matter of a father passing money to the mother degrades the mother in many ways, particularly that the father still maintains control of finances even though he is no longer in the home. What this type of power indicates to the children can only be imagined. Betty was no different than many and stated that she was accountable for how she spent the money and even though it often did not arrive when needed, she was held responsible for how it was spent.

^{xxii} Betty remarried within a year to Barry who works as a top executive in one of New Brunswick's richest enterprises. Not only does he enjoy a large salary, but also a company car, company gas, and many company events that Betty is not invited to.

^{xxiii} Thomas and Robbie live close to my daughter and me and often come by our house to take the dog for a walk, mow the lawn, or shovel the driveway. Mostly they just come to get cookies, hot chocolate, or see what is going on. On cold days, they come by to get a drive to school rather than walk.

^{xxiv} For those receiving public assistance, or welfare, the state remains involved in the lives of mothers and fathers. In my study of the Family Services Enforcement Office (1994), one enforcement officer told me that mothers on assistance must 'name the father' if they are to receive support/assistance. Social Assistance cases are different than the other cases that go through the Enforcement Office. For women who are on assistance, as well as their ex-mate, Income Assistance sends them both a cheque. When the father goes off assistance, enforcement officers become involved. I was told that it is of no economic benefit for the mother or father to go 'off' income assistance.

^{xxv} School policies, and Education Acts are written for not only two-parent financially stable families, but in the shadow of a firmly established colonial patriarchy forging the way for neoliberal corporate and government success or a particular kind of family. That family is white, heterosexual, socioeconomically upper class, physically and mentally abled, and holds to the philosophy of the institution..

^{xxvi} Retrieved April 22, 2002 from <http://www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/histneol.htm>.

^{xxvii} Before 2000, mothers were able to go to the Family Services office and pick up their cheques. This meant that we did not have to wait the extra week for it to arrive in the mail. Often, if a cheque was not forthcoming, we also would go and try to find out where it was. That process has been altered. All cheques are now mailed, and the Enforcement Office requests that complaints are phoned in between 2:00 and 4:00 and that appointments be made.

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Appendix A Informed Consent

My name is Corinne Saunders Hersey and I am a student at the University of New Brunswick enrolled in the Master of Education program. As a part of the requirement for the completion of my degree, I am conducting research on schooling for children of divorce. I am a divorced single parent mother with a son now twenty-three and a daughter, twenty, who both experienced schooling before, during and after our divorce.

I am interviewing adult children of divorce, divorced single mothers, and educators. The interviews will form the foundation of the research. The stories will tell of the intersections and relationships between children of divorce, divorced single mothers, and educators in the day-to-day schooling for children of divorce.

If you choose to be a research partner, data will be collected through your participation in a taped interview. You may choose to use another name or choose to use your own. In any event that you use your own name, a 'false' name or pseudonym will be used in the transcriptions. Anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed. Stories will be transcribed and analyzed only by me. Telling ones personal story may bring about anxiety or discomfort, and as a participant and partner you may choose to not answer any question or part of, and may request that the interview stop at any time. You may withdraw at any time and may also make the decision not to have your interview used once it is completed. Your requests will be graciously honored. Tapes and interview transcriptions will be locked in a secure place at my home where only I have access. These transcriptions may be used further for articles and publications. Anonymity and confidentiality will always be honored.

The benefit of the research to you a partner, is that you now have the opportunity to tell your story in a secure and safe place. Perhaps you have not had that opportunity. What was *your* reality? You should realize that *your* story is important to this research. It *is* significant and *does* count. This research will also provide valuable information in the way of personal stories and analysis for educators, The Department of Education and the NBTA.

The partners of this study are limited to three groups of people living in the Fredericton area:

1. adult children of divorce over the age of 19 and under the age of 30, whose parents divorced while they were in junior or high school.
2. divorced single parent mothers, who were mothers in a two-parent family - divorced, and then had sole custody of their children or joint custody, but day-to-day care. As well, their children were attending school before, during and after their divorce.
3. educators who are currently teaching, or taught no longer than six years ago. They as well must have a teaching involvement of least five years

If interested, you may contact me for a summary of the findings once the thesis is complete and accepted by the university. A goal date is set for June of 2003.

I have the support and counsel of my advisor, Dr. Mary McKenna, professor for the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick, and committee member Dr. Marilee Reimer, professor of Sociology at Saint Thomas University. As well, my research proposal has the approval of the UNB Ethics Review Board.

If you have questions at any time, I may be contacted at:

- ◆ Corinne Saunders Hersey, PO Box 4400, UNB Faculty of Education, Fredericton, NB, E3B 5A3
- ◆ 452-7633 -phone
- ◆ chersey@nbnet.nb.ca - email

Dr. Mary McKenna may be reached at:

- ◆ Dr. Mary McKenna, PO Box 4400, UNB Faculty of Education, Fredericton, NB, E3B 5A3
- ◆ 447-3036 – phone
- ◆ mmckenna@unb.ca – email

To contact someone not directly involved with the research: Dr. Joseph Dicks, Associate Dean, who may be reached at:

- ◆ PO Box 4400, UNB Faculty of Education, Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
- ◆ 453-4603 – phone
- ◆ jdicks@unb.ca - email

I have read the above description of the research and understand the purpose and procedures. I understand that my participation is totally voluntary and that I may withdraw or refuse to participate at any time. I hereby provide my informed consent to Corinne Saunders Hersey.

Participant

Corinne Saunders Hersey

Date

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Educators

Please feel free to not answer any question, or add to with your own story or questions. You may also end the interview at any time.

1. What is it that brought you to this research? (probe: demographics, where worked, for how long)
2. What experiences have you had with children of divorce? (probe: affecting student behavior, relating with friends, concerning health)
3. Did you do any extra curricular activities? (probe: anything with school? anything with parents at school? anything with children?)
4. Have you seen any types of changes in the school regarding divorce during your experience as educator?
5. What types of projects or special assistance did the school offer children of divorce?
6. How did you find out if a child was going through a divorce?
7. To what extent did economics influence schooling for children of divorce? Can you give me examples of that?
8. What were your expectations for children in your classroom? (probe: did your expectations of the student of divorce change? their achievement level, behavior, interests?)
9. How did your school involve parents? (probe: was there any difference for two parent families or divorced single moms? when parents divorced, did you see any difference in involvement?)
10. How were parents encouraged to make decisions in your school? (probe: did you see any difference between divorced parents and two parent families?)
11. What was your relationship with parents in your classroom? (probe: was that relationship any different than with divorced single mothers?)
12. To what extent did the formal policies of the school deal with divorce? informal?
13. Are there any particular instances that stand out regarding children of divorce?
14. If you could have changed anything about divorce, what would you have changed?

Thank you for your time. I appreciate your willingness to help in this study.

Corinne Saunders Hersey

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Divorced Single Mothers

Please feel free to not answer any question, or add to with your own story or questions. You may also end the interview at any time.

1. What is it that brought you to this research? (probe: demographics, family)
2. How old were you when you divorced? How did your family take the divorce?
3. What school did your child attend? What grade/s was s/he in through the divorce? Did your divorce have any affect on where your child went to school?
4. How did the school find out about the divorce?
5. Were there any changes in the way your child traveled to school before and after the divorce? (yourself)
6. What arrangements did you have if your child was sick at school (did they change after divorce)?
7. Do you think the divorce changed schooling for your child? (probe: changes in treatment at school? in what ways do you think these were related to the divorce?)
8. Did your economic status play any role in schooling for your child that was different after the divorce?
9. Did your expectations about your child change during or after the divorce? (probe: treatment by friends and teachers? academic achievement? behavior? health?)
10. What was the relationship between your child and their teacher(s)? (probe: good/bad, before and after the divorce)
11. What was your relationship with the school? (probe: good/bad. before, during, after the divorce?)
12. Was your level of participation at the school any different after the divorce?
13. Is there anything that stands out regarding your divorce and schooling?
14. If you could have changed anything about your child's schooling experience after the divorce, what would you have changed?
15. If you could have changed anything about the divorce, what would you have changed?

I thank you for your time and willingness to help with the research.

Corinne Saunders Hersey

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Adults Children of Divorce

Please feel free to not answer any question, or add to with your own story or questions. You may also end the interview at any time.

1. What is it that brought you to this research? (probe: demographics, brothers or sisters that went to school during that time? relationship with mother? Father?)
2. Do you remember the divorce and what it was like? (probe: yourself, mom, family)
3. Did you have to change schools?
4. How did your teachers know about the divorce?
5. What was school like for you before the divorce? during? after? (probe: behavior, academics, friends)
6. How did you feel about school and how did the school feel about you before, during, and after the divorce? (probe: level of attachment with school or teachers)
7. What types of school activities did you participate in? (probe: before, during, after)
8. Were you aware of any services that were available to you in or through the school? (probe – counselors, programs: (Y ME)?). Did you use them? What did you think of them? Were you encouraged to use them? By whom?)
9. Did family economics play a role in your schooling? (probe: before, during after)
10. What were your relationships with friends before and after the divorce?
11. What was the relationship between you and your mom? Dad? (before, during, after)
12. What was the relationship between your mom and the school? (probe: before, during, after. Relationship with teachers? before, during, after)
13. Is there anything in particular that stands out for you during that time?
14. If you could have changed anything during that time, what would you have changed?

I recognize that this has been a lengthy interview, and I thank you again for your time and willingness to help with this research.

Corinne Saunders Hersey

Appendix E

Request for Participation

This is a request for educators, divorced single parent mothers and adult children of divorce to participate in a research study:

'Schooling for Children of Divorce'

The study is limited to adult children of divorce over the age of 19 and under the age of 30, whose parents divorced while they were still in junior or high school. It is also limited to divorced single parent mothers, who were once the mother in a two-parent family and had sole, or day-to-day custody of their children. Educators may currently be teaching, or must be those who finished teaching no more than six years ago, and have five or more years teaching experience.

Participants will take part in the research through taped interviews. There is no requirement for names, and pseudonyms (or false names) may be used.

I have the support and counsel of my advisor, Dr. Mary McKenna, professor for the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick, as well as committee member Dr. Marilee Reimer, professor of Sociology, Saint Thomas University. My research proposal has the approval of the UNB Ethics Review Board.

To respond to this research:

- ◆ 452-7633 - phone
- ◆ chersey@nbnet.nb.ca - email
- ◆ Mail: Corinne Saunders Hersey
P. O. Box 4400, Marshall D'Avery, UNB
Fredericton, N.B. E3B 5A3

I am interested in your research. Please contact me at:

If you have questions concerning this study, you may contact Dr. Mary McKenna at 447-3036 or mmckenna@unb.ca