

MOTHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND THEIR EXPERIENCES OF ITS
RECEPTION IN SCHOOLS: A CONVERSATION WITH SIXTEEN
MOTHER/TEACHERS

by

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ABSTRACT

The problem addressed in the study is the low status afforded women's knowledge in public institutions. Specifically, the purpose was to investigate the form and substance of knowledge acquired through motherhood, and mothers' experiences of the reception of the knowledge in schools. The political aim was to promote mothers' knowledge as deserving authoritative status. Post-modern feminist theory framed these regarding a tension involving two areas of mothers' knowledge -- named "authoritative knowledge" and "maternal knowledge" -- and informed the reflexive methodology employed.

Participants were sixteen women teachers who were or had been mothers of schoolchildren. Each mother/teacher participated in two one and a half hour audiotaped interviews. Following the interviews, eleven of the mother/teachers met for audiotaped group discussions.

The data indicated that mother/teachers take to schools a wealth of maternal knowledge acquired through both childraising and living a mother's life. Participants claimed the knowledge is valuable to their work as teachers. They reported difficulty, however, with respect to both reception and proclamation of the knowledge in school decision-making forums. They attributed the difficulty to various causes.

Participants' talk contained key words such as "instinct" which can be diversely conceived and expressed. That the words may be readily interpreted in ways harmful to promotion of maternal knowledge was noted by the researcher through critical reflection upon her own thinking. The words, the multiplicity of concepts associated with them, and the importance of recognizing this impediment to promoting maternal knowledge, became the topic for group discussion.

The findings imply that maternal knowledge could enhance the critical capabilities of frameworks which guide decision-making in educational administration;

that maternal knowledge should be explained and promoted during administrator and teacher professional development; and that the notion of the tension within mother/teachers' knowledge could be usefully applied in several areas of education research. A mismatch was revealed between many participants' career standings and their experiences and knowledge of value to schools. This implies that when thinking about employment equity for school personnel we need to recognize that being equally qualified may not necessarily mean possessing the same qualifications.

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Chapter 1

THINKING BACK OVER THE STUDY AND ITS BEGINNINGS

It occurs to me that although the subject of this study is mothers' knowledge, it is important to acknowledge that it is also a story about my own thinking. That is, I shall be telling how the problem, the questions, the research methods, reporting methods, and so on, developed through my own thinking, albeit, often with the aid of others' writings. I choose to write in the first person to accentuate that I am ever present. I believe it untruthful to pretend otherwise. Speaking in the first person, moreover, enables me to describe my thinking about my thinking. That is, it enables me not only to speak self-consciously about the impact of my subjectivity upon my thinking -- although I would not claim full consciousness regarding my subjectivity -- but also to demonstrate how vigilance and reflexivity help me to recognize when my own thinking interferes with my reception of study participants' thinking.

Because I chose to investigate how popular and authoritative discourses impact on the status of mothers' knowledge, I felt that authenticity would require me not only to think about how such discourses might be impacting on my own thoughts about the information that mothers provided me, but also to show evidence of this thinking in my writing. Minnich claims that "it is important to realize that we ... can and do think about our thinking and that it is a basic ground for our freedom" (1990:137). I hope to demonstrate how thinking about my thinking throughout the study led me to think differently, and how the different thinking seems better suited to finding a way to free the status of mothers' knowledge from forces that constrain it.

In this first chapter, I will be thinking retrospectively. First, to provide an overview of the study, I will think back briefly over the conception of its what, why, and how. Second, I will explain how the identification of the problem had its beginnings in

my own experience.

THINKING BACK OVER THE WHAT, WHY, AND HOW OF THE STUDY

Like Minnich (1990), I wanted to address the problem of the low status afforded women's knowledge in educational institutions. Specifically, my concern was the relevance of this problem for schools. What consequences, I wondered, does the dubious status of women's knowledge have for the many women who become associated with schools as teachers and/or as mothers? What consequences does it have for all who are associated with schools? Within schools, why have women apparently found it difficult to demonstrate that they are "knowers"? Upon reflectively searching for the difficulty within my own life experience, I was disturbed to find it appearing most clearly in the period after I had become a mother. Anxious to learn whether or not this was typical of others' experiences, I sought out research literature on mothers. To my surprise, the literature was scant, especially on mothers as teachers. However, it offered plenty to nurture my developing thoughts on mothers' knowledge.

Discerning a Tension Within Mothers' Knowledge

Both my reading of the literature and my reflections influenced me to discern a tension within mothers' knowledge which seemed attributable to its inclusion of both "authoritative knowledge" and "maternal knowledge." I conceived of "authoritative knowledge" as that made available to all people through formal education and socialization; knowledge which we consider to have been authorized, or certified, as valid. I thought of "maternal knowledge" as that which becomes available to mothers through the experience of mothering. My image of the tension produced by the joint

possession of these two forms of knowledge¹ sharpened when I began to view it through the framework of postmodern feminist theory (e.g., Weedon, 1987; Sawicki, 1991). Moreover, using this feminist theory to frame my personal reflections and my reading of the literature on mothers (e.g., Ruddick, 1989; Swigart, 1991), I developed four theses which problematized "maternal knowledge."

Problematizing "Maternal Knowledge": Four Theses

What do I mean by "problematize"? I think of it as a process that begins with the recognition that a phenomenon -- in this case "maternal knowledge" -- presents a problem because it is subject to a tension. I associate the tension with contradictory conceptions of the phenomenon; conceptions which in some cases are influenced by unexamined assumptions about the phenomenon. I would suggest, for instance, that such tension occurs when one's conception of a phenomenon based upon cultural beliefs seems contradictory to the conception one gains upon experiencing the phenomenon, yet the strength of the culturally based conception disallows any attachment of value to the experientially based conception. Thus, the tension is perceived when attempts to re-value the phenomenon on the basis of experience seem to be thwarted. So, according to my understanding, to problematize a phenomenon is to suggest the desirability of re-evaluating it and to realize this will require speculation

¹ It is not my intention to suggest that the whole of mothers' knowledge can be divided into the "authoritative" and the "maternal," nor that these are the only forms of knowledge between which a tension might be thought to exist. Although I have chosen to focus upon the nature of the tension encountered by teachers who have knowledge gained through experiencing motherhood, I would propose that similar tension is encountered by teachers who possess knowledge gained through other forms of experience, for example, from growing up in a different culture, from being employed outside the field of education, or from being a member of a church group. I also recognize it is not new to talk of tensions between teachers' authoritative and experiential knowledge since we are already aware of conflicts between their professional knowledge and practical knowledge of teaching. Although I would not equate either of these bodies of knowledge with "authoritative knowledge" or "maternal knowledge," I would conceive of some overlap in content. With all these understandings in mind, I wish to stress that my purpose for envisioning and defining "authoritative knowledge" and "maternal knowledge" was no grander than merely to provide me a convenient way of thinking, talking, and writing about the problems I wanted to address with regard to mothers' knowledge in schools.

upon not only alternative conceptions of the phenomenon, but also the tensions which hamper these conceptions. Thus, on the basis of my own reflections and the literature on mothers, I problematized "maternal knowledge" and consequently formed four theses.

The first thesis was that "maternal knowledge" has the potential to offer a valuable moral and critical² perspective on the "authoritative knowledges" accepted and applied in public social institutions. The second was that "maternal knowledge" may be powerless to enact its potential because it cannot be identified as knowledge according to the terms of currently accepted epistemological theory and lacks, therefore, the warrant required to authorize its use in public institutions. The third thesis was that as a result of the non-authoritative status accorded "maternal knowledge," any attempts by women to use it are constrained not only by others' "authoritative knowledge," but also by their own. And the fourth was that if women's "authoritative knowledge" serves to devalue their "maternal knowledge," a resulting conflict may cause many women to feel uncomfortable, and thereby to appear incompetent, when presenting or dealing with either form of knowledge within public social institutions.

Thinking About a Focus and a Methodology for the Study

Together, my theses about "maternal knowledge" suggested that it can be devalued by "authoritative knowledge." Distressed that this implied the possibility of a moral and critical perspective being silenced, I determined to focus my investigations on the status of "maternal knowledge" in schools. That is, the purpose of my study became to investigate the form and substance of the "maternal knowledge" that teachers who are mothers (mother/teachers) bring to schools; what mother/teachers believe

² By claiming this perspective to be "moral" and "critical," I am suggesting that it would enable examination of the oppressive potential of the authoritative knowledges which inform, for instance, decisions, rules, and policies made within public institutions. That is, it would assure that these could neither harm persons for whom the institution holds responsibilities (in schools this would be students), nor damage relationships between those persons and others within the institution.

their "maternal knowledge" has to offer schools; what reception of this knowledge they experience in schools; and how they feel about and cope with the reception. My political purpose became to demonstrate the value of "maternal knowledge" for all involved in the education of children, and to seek a way to promote it as knowledge that deserves to be warranted as authoritative in educational institutions. The nature of my theses indicated that I should not only investigate how "authoritative knowledge" impacts on participants' comments about "maternal knowledge," but also seek authenticity by thinking reflexively on how "authoritative knowledge" might be impacting on my reception of their comments. Thus, I decided that a feminist postmodern methodology that enables reflexivity (Lather, 1991) would be the most useful for informing my research design.

Thinking About the Avoidance of Essentialism

It was never my intention to suggest that men teachers do not or cannot possess "maternal knowledge." Rather, in Chapter 3 and with reference to postmodern theory, I explain that because of currently prevailing gender differences in socialisation, enculturation, and life experiences, "maternal knowledge" is more likely to be a prominent component of women's knowledge than men's and would be most readily identifiable among women who have experienced motherhood. I would not want to overlook, though, that men sometimes fill the role of "mother" in relation to their children, and that both men and women sometimes "mother" siblings, friends, or even parents. Thus, I have tried to convey this extended conceptualization of "mother" in discussions of any theory informing this study. Nevertheless, because the study is situated in both a time and a culture wherein the vast majority of mothers are women raising children, such were the people to whom I turned for information on "maternal knowledge." I proceeded with my investigations, however, on the assumption that any persons who "mother" could be subject to tensions that the findings of the study might

reveal in connection with mothers' knowledge. This was in spite of the fact that the problem I investigated began to present itself to me when I was observing the interactions of women.

REFLECTING UPON UNEASY FEELINGS

In this section, I present and discuss two excerpts from my personal experience which prompted me to conduct this study. First, I describe how while planning another study of teachers, I decided it must be abandoned. I explain that the decision was made when I grew to suspect that my conceptual framework for that study was insensitive to the behaviours of women participants. Second, I recall how this suspicion provoked me to reflect upon my own teaching experiences, and how, as a result, I remembered feeling uneasy sometimes about knowledge that I had wanted to think of as useful to my career.

Beginning to Suspect a Problem

During two of my years as a graduate student of educational administration, I worked as a research assistant for a teacher development project. The work enabled me to begin a study of the interactive behaviours of pairs of teachers while they engaged in consultation following one's observation of the other's lesson. Specifically, I wanted to learn what kinds of interactions experienced teachers perceived to be useful in their quest for ongoing development of their teaching abilities. I believed that I was collecting data suited to my interest by listening to participants' reactions to videotapes of their conferences. It was also my task to observe and write fieldnotes on the lessons associated with the conferences. So, I had the opportunity to see whether or not conference interactions which the teachers perceived to be beneficial actually translated into what they had hoped for in the classroom.

To guide investigation of the teachers' consultative interactions and their perceptions of these, I asked of the conference interactions, "What are they doing?" I asked of the interviews, "What do teachers like or dislike about their conferences?" And I asked of the lessons, "How do the preferred features of their conferences provide help with respect to the teachers' classroom work?" I was aware of and was prepared to be explicit about the conceptual framework that would influence my interpretation of the data I would collect. The framework was based on theories of cognitive development and adult learning and had helped me previously to study hierarchical clinical supervisory pairs. Disappointingly, however, the framework sometimes failed to help me interpret my observations of paired teacher consultation. To my dismay, I began to realize that when the framework failed, the teachers I was observing were women.

Sometimes, I simply could not understand what the women were doing in their conferences. At other times, my framework made their interactions seem arbitrary and insignificant. Moreover, in their interviews, if women spoke favourably of their conference interactions, to me their reasoning seemed lightweight. These ugly interpretations appeared uglier still when I began to observe that the conference interactions were translating into successful developments in the women's classrooms. It was alarming to realize that while observing developments that were clearly the work of knowledgeable teachers, I was failing to discern any knowledge-forming interaction within the women's conferences. I felt compelled to suspect a fault in my conceptual framework. My framework did not include feminist theory, and I was unsure as to whether or not the theory that it did include had evolved from studies which included women. Being familiar with the feminist studies conducted by Gilligan (1982) and by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), I decided it was necessary to discard my framework rather than risk misinterpreting women's behaviours. What troubled me most was the framework's failure to credit the women teachers as knowers. This led me to ask, "Is women's knowledge often subjected to such doubt in schools? If so, is there a

link between the dubious status of women's knowledge and the infrequent appointment of women to positions of authority in educational organizations? Had I felt respected as a knower during my teaching career?"

Suspecting a Connection Between the Problem and Motherhood

Because the information required was closest at hand, I began to answer the last question first. This action, however, played a germinal role in my decision to abandon my previous study and investigate a problem that I found more intriguing. Why? When I reflected upon my own teaching career, I found that my recollections of being discounted as a knower were all situated within the portion of my career that followed my becoming a mother. The section of my personal narrative which revealed this situation is presented below.

Following the birth of my first child, I left my seven-year-long career as a high school mathematics and science teacher and took up fulltime motherhood. I did not resume my teaching career until many years and a second child later. I resumed my teaching career with much enthusiasm. I felt sure my teaching would benefit from the knowledge I believed I had acquired through mothering experience; from working acquaintances with other parents in organizations to which my children belonged; through volunteer work and part-time employment in other educational organizations; and from my own two children's school lives in which I was sharing. I regarded motherhood as an occupation to which I needed to apply much intelligence. Yet, I soon felt that the knowledge I associated with my experience as a mother was discounted and unwelcome in places such as staff meetings or inservice teacher education discussion groups. I was pleased to resume my career at the same school I had left when my first child was born, but I was disappointed when it soon felt as though in the intervening years I had done nothing from the school's perspective - apart from taking a few university courses in special education - to increase or benefit my knowledge.

Perhaps, therefore, I felt a need to make up for lost time, for I soon eagerly embraced inservice education opportunities. Yet, despite my appetite for it, I rarely found myself able to comfortably digest the substance of the inservice education events. I tried to adopt many of the presented ideas, but my feelings about them were ambivalent: on the one hand, they impressed me because they seemed rational, efficient, and therefore respectable and professional; yet on the other hand, they troubled me because their regulatory image made them seem insensitive to the human variance in my classroom, and therefore somehow immoral. I never wanted to discount entirely the inservice ideas, but rather I felt a need to examine them from a critical perspective which I believe was rooted in my mothering experiences. Yet, if I tried to do this during inservice education sessions, despite having a decent reputation as a teacher, I felt unheard. Moreover, the knowledge underlying my critical perspective seemed to become jelly. The reception was frustrating, and I feared making myself appear professionally feeble. So eventually I learned to keep quiet. It seemed wiser to reserve my critical perspective for private thoughts on whether or how to adopt the ideas in my own classroom.

When I chose not to adopt an idea, nobody complained, but the image of its tidiness and efficiency never left me, and I often wondered if I should have been able to accept the idea. If I could not, did I really know what I was doing? Would accepting the idea improve my professional image? After all the inservice ideas were easier to explain than what I chose to do instead. I wonder now if such concerns sometimes led me to adopt ideas I might otherwise not have. If so, what might have caused me to do so? Why did the knowledge I associated with my mothering apparently have no warrant for inclusion among professional teaching knowledge? What exactly was that knowledge? Why did I believe it was important? Why did I sometimes believe it less respectable than other knowledge?

While asking myself these questions, I recalled that the observations which

influenced me to reject my previous study plans were of women teachers who were also mothers. So this increased my determination to seek answers.

Anticipating the Thinking that Lies Ahead

Since this is a feminist study, "it generates its problematics from the perspective of women's experiences" (Harding, 1989:27). In this first chapter, I have described how my interest in the status of mothers' knowledge arose while thinking over some of my lived experience. In Chapter 2, I will reveal how I thought my way through the literature on mothers and teachers wherein I sought answers to questions that were presented, but unanswered, by my reflections. In Chapter 3, I will explain how within my study I "focus on gender as a variable" and take "a critical stance toward gender" (Harding, 1989:27) by employing feminist post-modern theory to frame my thinking and my research questions about mothers' knowledge. In Chapter 4, I will describe my research design. I will explain how, while both planning and conducting the study, I attempted to think in ways advised by post-modern theory (Lather, 1991) so as to place "myself in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter" (Harding, 1989:27). In Chapter 5, I shall introduce the sixteen mother/teachers who participated in the study, and I will reveal how their talk prompted me to think of additional research questions. In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I will both present and discuss the information which participants provided regarding their "maternal knowledge" and their beliefs about its usefulness and reception in schools. In Chapter 9, I will review the study, consider how participants' talk answered my research questions and informed my theses, and discuss what meaning I believe the information has for both educational administration and future research.

Chapter 2

THINKING THROUGH MOTHERS' LIVES TOWARD A PICTURE OF MOTHERS' KNOWLEDGE

I began my literature search hoping to find reports on studies of mothers as teachers, but disappointingly I found very few. Several researchers, among them Danylewycz, Light, and Prentice (1987); Schmuck (1987); Grumet (1988); and Apple, (1989), reported how when women first began entering the teaching profession in the nineteenth century, it was recommended as an ideal preparation for motherhood. I found no reports, though, of research findings which supported those recommendations. Moreover, there were no reports indicating that the reverse has ever been considered let alone recommended or studied; i.e., that mothering might be a useful preparation for teaching.

None of the scant literature on mothers as teachers explicitly addressed the knowledge that mothers bring to teaching. Consequently, I extended my search to literature on mothers' relationships with teachers, and then to literature on mothers' perspectives on the experience of mothering. In this chapter, I describe first my journeys through each of these three bodies of literature. I follow the descriptions with a summary of the literature to help clarify how I formed the picture of mothers' knowledge that I describe in the next section. Finally, I close the chapter with a discussion of the implications which I perceived the literature to have for my study of mothers' knowledge.

MOTHERS AS TEACHERS

Mother/teachers are discussed in reports by both Grant (1989) and Littlewood (1989) of studies on women teachers' career patterns. Grant reports that because

juggling the demands of their two roles constrain mother/teachers' advancement at various points in their careers, their career ambitions fluctuate. She adds that the fluctuation contributes to women's dislocation from promotional processes because of the male norm of measuring ambition by its constancy. Littlewood reports that despite improved allowances for maternity leave, most mother/teachers temporarily leave teaching to care for their young children. She states that not only do these career interruptions occur at times crucial to promotion prospects, but the mother/teacher's age upon her final return to teaching spoils her chances for promotion. Both researchers suggest their findings imply that to enable more women to enter administrative positions, the male model should cease to dominate the structure of teachers' careers. Neither researcher refers to any studies or questions regarding mother/teachers' knowledge. However, because their findings show that motherhood detracts from rather than contributes to women teachers' prospects for career advancement, it seems reasonable to infer that nothing associated with the experience of motherhood is counted of value in the field of education. The only hint that it is of some value came from Karen Zumwalt (1984), a teacher educator and researcher in teacher education. She claimed that by comparing and contrasting her own recent induction into motherhood with the beginning teacher's induction into teaching, she has increased her understanding of what is required to improve teacher induction.

Conflicts and Contradictions

Madeleine Grumet (1988) -- although not explicitly speaking of mother/teachers -- provides information on women teachers that seems pertinent to my concerns. She reports that because women are socialized as nurturers, they have in the past and are likely still to anticipate enacting a maternal role as teachers. Grumet stresses that women are confronted with conflict when the commitments they associate with the maternal role are contradicted by the demands emanating from the politics and

knowledge they encounter in educational institutions. Moreover, although she does not explicitly address the topic of mothers' knowledge, Grumet seems clearly concerned that in educational institutions, maternal traits of value to pedagogy have been ignored.

In a study of women as teachers reported by Janet Miller (1986), many of the participants were mothers. Thinking back through her own experience, Miller states her aim is to eliminate a cycle of fragmentation that she finds in her own career and attributes to the dichotomous nature of being both a teacher and a woman. Thus, her lived experience prompts Miller's research interest in "the dichotomies expressed by many women teachers with whom I have talked, who feel torn between their own expectations of their role as teachers and the realities of their educational experiences and environments" (1986:112). While Miller's concern seems similar to Grumet's, she extends it by questioning whether men teachers experience analogous problems. Miller suggests that researchers should speak directly to teachers in order to find how they experience the fragmentation. She implies that such research might reveal ways to integrate the fragments and consequently eliminate oppression that denies teachers an authoritative voice.

School and the Universalistic vs. Home or Family and the Particularistic

Sara Freedman claims that women take for granted "their dual roles of teacher and mother" (1987:73). She implies that this is rendered problematic by a socially constructed dichotomy separating the workplace from the family. In the dichotomy, the workplace is thought to be dominated by "universalistic, specific, emotionally neutral, and performance-oriented norms" and the family by "particularistic, diffuse, emotional and quality -- (or ascriptive) oriented norms" (Kanter, 1977, cited in Freedman, 1987:76). According to Lightfoot the same dichotomy invites conflict between parents and teachers because "parents have particularistic expectations for their children while teachers have universalistic expectations" (1977:396).

Freedman states that when she asks mother/teachers whom she addresses during workshops about the conflicts they encounter as teachers, they most often report their encounters with parents. She quotes a teacher's comment: "'As a teacher I hate parents, and as a parent I hate teachers'" (1987:73). Freedman expresses her concern that this conflict is usually between two women: one a woman teacher, and the other a mother. In common with Lightfoot, she situates the root of the conflict in the setting of boundaries between schools and families and between the roles of parent and teacher. She calls for a relaxing of the boundaries.

It troubled me that the conflict between teacher and parent reported by Freedman was really between two mothers; one of them being a mother/teacher who could presumably find herself situated in the conflict as either the teacher or the mother. I recalled encounters with my own children's teachers and realized that in some I had felt that my knowledge was discounted. I was horrified to imagine that as a teacher I might have had the same effect on mothers of my own students. These thoughts persuaded me that I should investigate mother/teachers' perceptions of the status afforded mothers' knowledge in schools not only from their viewpoint as teachers, but also from their viewpoint as mothers who interact with their children's teachers. Thus, I extended my review to include literature on the relationships between mothers and teachers.

MOTHERS AND TEACHERS

Research literature under the headings "mothers and teachers" or "mothers and schools" is plentiful at the pre-school level, but scant at the levels of concern to my study, i.e., elementary and secondary. Here, the category disappears and seems to be replaced by others such as, "parents and teachers," "parents and schools," and "families and schools." Yet, this is clearly misleading because as Epstein (1986) found in her

study of 1269 students, 90 per cent of the parents most familiar with the child's school and teacher were mothers. That mothers are generally regarded as the parent responsible for children's schooling can be inferred -- although with negative connotation -- when Manicom (1984) reports that when teachers locate a child's schooling problem in "the family," they are in fact blaming the mother.

The Nature of the Relationship Between Mothers and Teachers

In a review of literature on mothers and teachers, Gaskell and McLaren note that relationships between mothers and teachers have "been portrayed as antagonistic" (1987:19). They claim that two assumptions contribute to this antagonism: (1) that mothers' help can be taken for granted to the extent that it is unnecessary to consider the impact of schools upon mothers' work at home, and (2) the view that teaching in schools has to compensate for mothers' inadequacies. Griffith and Smith (1987) report that discourses communicated in our everyday lives via radio, television, magazines, etc. convey the message that mothers have a responsibility toward their children's education. They note that mothers' knowledge of this responsibility is complemented by teachers' knowledge of how to allocate the responsibility to them.

An ample body of the parent/school literature reports studies of the benefits that good parent/school relationships offer to the teacher's task of educating the child, and how teachers can best build such relationships. While restricting themselves to concentrating on the teacher's perspective, most of these studies give the impression that the purpose of investigating parent/school relationships is to find better means of enlisting parents' (i.e. mothers') help in the educative task and better means of controlling the quality of the help. Yet, as Lightfoot reports with concern, studies of teachers' relationships with parents have not "cared to document the parents' role from the parents' point of view" (1977:400).

Parent Involvement or Mother Exploitation?

I found that reports on studies of parents' perspectives were scarce. One of the few was a study by Epstein (1986) entitled, "Parents reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement." As noted above, Epstein reported that 90% of the parents were mothers. Using her own questionnaire, Epstein conducted a survey involving parents of 1269 first, third, and fifth grade students. She found that most parents not only appreciated teachers who involved them in their children's education, but also wanted teachers to instruct them on ways to become involved.

Epstein did not interview any of her participants, and findings from studies such as that of Griffith and Smith (1987) suggest that the addition of interview data might have shed a different light on her results. For instance, Epstein might have found it necessary to consider the extent to which her participants' responses could have been influenced by the anxiety that Griffith and Smith (1987) found upon analysing their interviews with mothers. Smith states that the mothers' anxiety resulted, for instance, from having responsibility for their children's homework unfairly thrust upon them. Griffith and Smith (1987) claim that because mothers are not present in the classroom and have neither control nor direct knowledge of what happens therein, it is unreasonable to assign them the responsibility of managing their children's homework. Smith (1987) implies that it is evident this reliance upon mothers to supplement the work of teachers is exploitive because it fluctuates in relation to changes in classroom conditions, such as, class size or teacher's workload.

Discourse on mothering, which persistently conveys the notion of mothers' responsibility for their children's schooling, is oppressive because it exposes mothers to "guilt, invidious comparisons, and anxiety" (Griffith and Smith, 1987:97). Although the comparisons may work favourably for middle class mothers, the guilt and anxiety cuts right across class barriers, according to Walkerdine and Lucey (1989). Their research findings were derived from transcribed audio-recordings of both middle-class and

working-class mothers accompanied by their four-year-old daughters both at home and in nursery schools. Walkerdine and Lucey noted that regardless of class, the lives of all pre-schoolers' mothers were regulated by their sense of responsibility to prepare their children adequately for school. In this regard, the depth of middle class mothers' anxiety was revealed in their apparent compulsion to convert all household tasks into pedagogical events.

Reports on the oppression of mothers in relation to their children's schooling linked it with a taking-for-grantedness of mothers which rests on faulty assumptions about their lives. It would appear, however, that the assumptions have long been free from challenge because study of mothers' own perspectives on their lives has only recently begun. This situation is reported by Willard, who writes in a report on her study of mothers: "reviews of the literature made it very clear that women's own perspective on the experience of mothering is glaringly absent" (1988:233). In the next subsection, I discuss the few reports on studies of this perspective which I found.

MOTHERHOOD FROM THE MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

This literature offered the most inspiration for my conceptualization of mothers' knowledge. To describe it below, I divide the literature into three categories each of which I have named according to the information it contributed to my conceptualization: (1) the impact of cultural scripts upon mothers' self-understandings; (2) the silencing effect of the "good mother" ideal; and (3) the nature of mothers' thinking.

Cultural Scripts and Mothers' Self-Understandings

Willard notes that although the psychology literature includes volumes on mothers, "the literature ... confuses the woman herself with her role as mother, and our

sense of the maternal self disappears" (1988:228). This situation, claims Willard, has arisen from several areas of study in psychology. For instance, in the child development literature, the mother's self remains in shadow while her instrumental role in her child's development is foregrounded; and in literature on women's transitions to motherhood, the "adaptation to what?" (1988:228) is never questioned, rather it is assumed that the woman is adapting to the "selfless" mother role and it is how she does so that is questioned. Willard claims not only that "American culture offers several scripts to women who become mothers" (1988:227), but also that the scripts are not convergent with the realities of mothers' lives. Participants in Willard's study were first time mothers who before childbirth were well-established in careers outside their homes. The women's career decisions varied following childbirth. By listening to each woman describe her experience of the transition to motherhood, Willard investigated how the women coped with cultural scripts such as those which promote the "selfless mother" or the "superwoman." She found that mothers who recognized and accepted their own terms, i.e., decided what was appropriate in relation to their individual lives, were less prone to depression than those who tried to meet the demands of cultural scripts.

In another study of how popular discourses influence mothers' self-understandings, Attanucci (1988) asked in whose terms mothers describe themselves. Attanucci complains there is a lacuna in psychology literature because despite the discipline's insistence on the importance of the mother-child relationship, the literature reports no descriptions of motherhood that are informed by mothers' experiences. She finds fault with idealizations in the literature which equate mothers' interests with their children's interests and inhibit researchers and "even mothers from recognizing and articulating the mother's own terms" (1988:203). Moreover, because this equation assigns the label "bad mother" to those who display attention to interests unconnected to their children, Attanucci stresses that researchers must take care to decipher "in whose terms" mothers speak about their lives. From her interviews with 20 mothers,

Attanucci learned that they commonly experienced a tension between self and role. As a result of her study, she recommended that "men and women, as fathers and mothers, theorists, researchers, doctors, teachers, and therapists might well reconsider 'in whose terms' they understand self and mothering" (1988:222). Any such reconsideration of mothers could receive ample help from Swigart (1991).

Silencing Effects of the "Good Mother" Ideal

In her book, *The Myth of the Bad Mother*, Swigart (1991) devotes her attention to dispelling the "Good Mother" and "Bad Mother" myths, revealing their harmful effects, and going beyond them to examine how mothers really experience their role. Swigart explains that the myth of the "Good Mother" idealizes the mother as one who regardless of circumstances is devoted selflessly to the wellbeing of her child. Conversely, the myth of the "Bad Mother" displays a mother who is self-absorbed, uninterested in and bored by her children, and unable to discern their needs. Swigart notes that although it is impossible for even the most determined mother to meet the ideal of the Good Mother, feelings of failure to do so cause most to live in perpetual fear that they are Bad Mothers. When speaking of their mothering experiences, the fear makes mothers careful to guard against identifying themselves as Bad Mothers. Thus, information on the emotional life of mothers is scant not only because it has just recently become a topic of interest in research, but also because of the silencing effects of the Bad Mother myth. Swigart, whose own children are young adults, draws upon information in her own journals, in notes from interviews with other mothers, and in the works of renowned women authors and poets such as Doris Lessing, Tillie Olsen, and Sylvia Plath. In so doing, Swigart manages to look behind the silence and uncover information on the experiences of motherhood, including some information which seems to help explain the silence.

The Nature of Mothers' Thinking

According to Ruddick (1989), mothering experience influences women (or men, if they mother) to develop a thinking style which she names "maternal thinking." To begin her book of that name, Ruddick explains how upon becoming a mother while a graduate student and teacher of philosophy, she began to feel that "Reason," which had previously served her well, was starting to fail her (1989:8). Not wishing to reject "Reason," Ruddick pondered whether she could "reconceive a reason ... that refused to separate love and knowledge" (1989:9). Guided by the theories of Wittgenstein, Winch, and Habermas that "all thinking ... arises from and is shaped by the activities in which people engage" (1989:9), Ruddick made it her purpose to examine how mothering activities and experience shape "maternal thinking."

Ruddick discusses an ideal form of "maternal thinking" which she claims is not only worthy of respect, but is also suited to directing a path toward world peace. She notes, however, that women find it difficult to make "maternal thinking" heard even by other women because their regard for it has been constrained by self-doubt, which Ruddick claims -- like Swigart and Attanucci -- is produced by others' promotions of the "Good Mother" figure. Moreover, states Ruddick, mothers' authority is displaced by that of experts and professionals such as pediatricians, psychiatrists, and welfare workers -- "Even a child's teacher is apt to treat the mother condescendingly and belittle her advice" (1989:35).

Ruddick's descriptions of "maternal thinking" imply that mothering experience leads one to think of "truth" as only partial. Thus, in its ideal form, "maternal thinking" prevents a mother from uncritically accepting the so-called "truths" in authoritative discourses. For example, in "maternal thinking," a mother recalls the uniqueness of her child and his/her environment and she reflects critically, either alone or within lengthy discussions with other mothers, upon the applicability of the "truths." Ruddick names this ideal, "authentic maternal thinking." Noting that her intention, however, is not to

idealize mothers, Ruddick states that a mother often engages in "inauthentic maternal thinking"; that is, she "valorizes the judgment of dominant authorities, letting them identify virtues and appropriate her children for tasks of their devising" (1989:113). Ruddick's descriptions suggest that mothers' "authentic maternal thinking" protects children from oppressive forces by enabling critical examination of "truth" (i.e., that which is judged by dominant authorities to be virtuous or appropriate). This perception of the morally critical character of maternal thinking seems to underlie Ruddick's belief in the necessity of describing and revaluing maternal thinking, which she eventually suggests could be named "women's thinking" because women are socialized for and usually experience mothering at some time, even though it may be of sisters, mothers, fathers, etc.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH LITERATURE ON MOTHERS

This summary is arranged in three parts which correspond with the three subsections of the literature review above. Following the summary, I present an explanation of how the literature influenced my conception of the two conflicting components of mothers' knowledge, and I close the chapter with a discussion of the literature's implications for my research.

Mothers as Teachers

On this topic, the literature was sparse and none was directly pertinent to my questions about mothers' knowledge. It contained, however, a couple of recurrent themes that seemed relevant to my concerns. The first revealed the discomfort of mother/teachers, who, being awkwardly situated within a dichotomous separation of schools and family, experience conflict and contradictions in schools. Researchers recommended that for the good of education and teachers there is a need to study the

conflicts and contradictions and find means to eliminate them. The second theme disclosed and depicted the dichotomy as the "particularistic" versus the "universalistic." In this depiction, mothers acquire knowledge incorporating "particularistic norms" to meet the demands of home and family. Such knowledge is seen as inadequate for schools and other public institutions, however, because the demands therein can only be met through knowledge incorporating "universalistic" norms. From the depiction, it seemed reasonable to infer that the dichotomy identifies the knowledge acquired through mothering experience as insufficiently objective or generalizable to be of use in public institutions.

Mothers and Teachers

Conflict between mothers and teachers was a popular topic. Sometimes the conflict was attributed to the "particularistic vs. universalistic" dichotomy distinguishing family from school. However, these reports seemed uninformed by mothers' opinions on the dichotomy. They demonstrated no awareness that mothers' experiences of their relationships with teachers and schools and the questions they might ask about the relationships have only recently begun to be investigated. Other reports, however, spoke of the scarcity of and the need for more studies of mothers' perspectives.

The contradictory situation wherein mothers are blamed for their children's failures in school but are nevertheless expected to complement the educative work of teachers was mentioned often. This contradiction was claimed to be a major contributor to antagonism between mothers and teachers, and to cause guilt and anxiety in and undesirable comparisons between mothers. Reports indicated that most mothers become involved in their children's education at both the pre-school level and beyond. Thus, it seems reasonable to infer that mothers might question why, as other reports claimed, their knowledge regarding their children's education is sometimes belittled in meetings with teachers.

Motherhood from the Mother's Perspective

Of the three bodies of literature, this one seemed the most supportive of my concerns about mothers' knowledge. Moreover, its contents enabled me to conceptualize mothers' knowledge in a way that seemed useful for addressing my concerns. Several reports were critical of the fact that many descriptions of motherhood have been informed by theory rather than mothers' experiences. These reports disclosed how the recent practice of listening to mothers' talk on their experiences has provided data which invalidate the former descriptions. Two themes recurred throughout this literature: (1) that "cultural scripts" on mothering promote a mythical ideal of the "good mother," which being unachievable dooms all mothers to suspect they are "bad mothers"; and (2) that fear of being suspected a "bad mother" impairs mothers' descriptions of their experiences by restricting what can be disclosed without risk.

PICTURING A TENSION WITHIN MOTHERS' KNOWLEDGE

The reports that popular discourses restrict mothers' opportunities to recognize and articulate their own experiences in their own terms began to evoke for me an image of two conflicting components within mothers' knowledge. The popular discourses constituted one component. This component appeared sufficiently powerful, moreover, to inhibit mothers' awareness of or respect for "their own terms," which by inference appeared to be connected to a second component of mothers' knowledge.

This image became much clearer when I read Ruddick's work on "maternal thinking" (1989). Ruddick's descriptions of "authentic maternal thinking" and "inauthentic maternal thinking" suggested to me the presence of a tension between two forms of knowledge that would influence "maternal thinking": the first being the knowledge which they gain from the experience of being mothers; and the second being

that, which in common with others, they gain from the authoritative discourses that they encounter via formal education and cultural scripts. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I named the first "maternal knowledge," and the second "authoritative knowledge," and I conjectured that maternal knowledge is non-authoritative; that is, it is not warranted as worthy of being heeded in public social institutions.

Using my own terms to translate Ruddick's descriptions, I pictured that her "authentic maternal thinking" involves using "maternal knowledge" to bring a critical perspective to "authoritative knowledge." I discerned, moreover, that part of "maternal knowledge" is knowing the importance not only of critically examining the potential of "authoritative knowledge" to be oppressive, but also of exploring ways to prevent "authoritative knowledge" from hurting persons for whom one feels responsible and from damaging one's relationships with those persons and their relationships with others. Simultaneously, I pictured that Ruddick's "inauthentic maternal thinking" could involve neglecting "maternal knowledge" and uncritically accepting "authoritative knowledge." However, I did not conceive that the acceptance would necessarily be immediate or tension free. Rather, I pictured that it might frequently be a case of authoritative knowledge overpowering maternal knowledge. That is, through its possession of authority, one or another of the authoritative discourses emanating from authoritative knowledge might serve to devalue maternal knowledge and thereby to exclude any critique grounded therein. Thus, it appeared conceivable that much inauthentic maternal thinking could be "defeated authentic maternal thinking" and a consequent source of discomfort for mothers.

In light of the value that Ruddick attaches to authentic maternal thinking, it seemed to me that any potential for its defeat and any suspected causes thereof should be investigated. Moreover, since defeated authentic maternal thinking seemed describable in terms of the concepts of maternal knowledge and authoritative

knowledge¹, and the reason for its defeat rested on my conjecture that maternal knowledge lacks authoritative status, the need to investigate the trustworthiness of this conjecture began to seem very important to me.

IMPLICATIONS IN THE LITERATURE FOR RESEARCH

The literature on mothers and teachers seemed to contain three implications for research. First, it indicated that there is a need for research which examines from mothers' perspectives how mothers experience the conflicts and contradictions they encounter in schools. Second, it implied that to design a study wherein mother/teachers could talk in their own terms about their experiences, the research method selection process would require an awareness of silencing potential. Third, it suggested that no research so far has explored mother/teachers' own descriptions of the knowledge that they take to schools either as teachers or as mothers.

The literature prompted me to conjecture that the overpowering of maternal knowledge by authoritative knowledge can result in defeated authentic maternal thinking. This conjecture led me to infer that the usefulness of maternal knowledge to schools and its reception therein required investigation. Moreover, my conjecture about the non-authoritative status of maternal knowledge seemed to not only help describe defeated authentic maternal thinking, but also to suggest why mothers find it difficult to describe their experiences in their own terms. To me, it also implied that in institutions where maternal knowledge is not credited as being knowledge, its presence within the totality of mothers' knowledge might somehow influence both mothers and others to perceive mothers as people who are not knowledgeable. Thus, the simultaneous

¹ I found that similarly I could use the concepts of "authoritative knowledge" and "maternal knowledge" to help me think about each of the five "women's ways of knowing" presented in Belenky et al.(1986), some aspects of the "morality of responsibility" in Gilligan (1982), and what Noddings (1984) refers to as "moral education."

possession of maternal knowledge and authoritative knowledge might be a cause of considerable tension for mothers. However, before attempting to utilize these concepts and conjectures in a study of mothers, I searched for a theory which could help not only to frame my conjectures about both the non-authoritative status of maternal knowledge and the tension between mothers' authoritative knowledge and maternal knowledge, but also to guide my investigations of them. In Chapter 3, I describe how and why I found post-modern feminist theory to be the most suitable.

Chapter 3

THINKING THROUGH FEMINIST THEORY TOWARD A POST-MODERN PERCEPTION OF MOTHERS' KNOWLEDGE

To search for a theoretical basis for my conjectures about mothers' knowledge, I turned to literature on both feminist theory and research on women in general. But could I justify this apparent slip from thinking about mothers to thinking about women? My thoughts about both mothers' and others' knowledge being inclusive of authoritative knowledge seemed to exclude any straightforward dichotomization of knowledge in relation to gender. However, from my conjectures that maternal knowledge has non-authoritative status, it seemed reasonable to deduce that intellectual activity arising from this component of mothers' knowledge might often be assessed as deficient and thereby create the perception that the total of women's knowledge is different from and inferior to men's. But here, again, why were my thoughts about mothers' knowledge becoming extended to all women's knowledge? I realized that I was recollecting how we expect all women to own and exhibit characteristics associated with the ideal mother, that we assess women accordingly, and, consequently, if the characteristics are devalued in public institutions, not only mothers but all women would be disparaged.

That all women are liable to be assessed as though they are mothers has been implied in feminist statements, such as, "That women mother is a fundamental organizational feature of the sex-gender system. It generates ... an ideology about women's capacities and nature" (Weedon, 1987:60). Two typical beliefs generated are, first, that "affiliation and attachment to others ... are the distinct characteristics forming the basis of a woman's social identity" (Skevington and Baker, 1989:7); and, second, that these (and other characteristics associated with the mother role) represent the psychological needs of woman, "the nurturing parent still under parental influence," and that the needs render her "passive and weak" in comparison to men (St.Claire

1989:142). Moreover, such "biased perceptions about women have been implicated as a cause of the under-representation of women in leading political and occupational positions" (St.Claire 1989:143). In the research literature on women that I reviewed for purposes of framing my theses, I found often that analyses were indeed founded on assumptions regarding the woman/mother identification. Thus, in this chapter, while assuming that what is said about women applies to mothers (and vice versa), my use of the terms "woman" or "mother" will be guided solely by whichever applies to the theory being discussed or the work being cited.

But which form of feminist theory could suggest not only a methodology for an investigation of mothers' knowledge, but also an explanatory frame for my theses? In the first section of this chapter, I describe my *thought/ful* journey through feminist theory and how it led me to conclude that post-modern feminism would be the most suitable for my task. In the second, third, and fourth sections, I discuss post-modern feminist theory and my perception of its relevance to the study.

SEEKING A FEMINIST THEORETICAL FRAME FOR MOTHERS' KNOWLEDGE

Feminist theory can be categorized roughly as liberal, radical, socialist, critical (neo-marxist), and post-modern. I say "roughly" to indicate that in presenting categories below I do not mean to suggest that absolute distinctions exist within feminist theory. Rather, I employ classification as an enabling device only. It helps me to explain why within strains of feminist thought other than post-modern feminism I found myself unable to frame my conjectures about mothers' knowledge.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminists theorize that equal opportunity is the key to gender equality. They have contributed to women's emancipation by helping to broaden educational and employment opportunities for women. Liberal feminist propositions imply that women not only can become "knowers" if provided the same educational opportunities as men, but also will demonstrate they are "knowers" if given access to the same work occupations and opportunities as men. Thus, liberal feminist theory cannot answer why wider educational and employment access seems neither to have improved woman's image as a "knower" nor to have offered her equal opportunity, for although her options have broadened they have not heightened. For example, gender equality in the appointment of decision makers in social institutions -- including schools¹ -- has apparently not been achieved. I would want to consider whether it is possible that this infrequent appointment is related to perceptions of women as inferior knowers and, if so, is it maternal knowledge that causes this perception of inferiority? I decided that liberal feminism could not accommodate my thoughts on maternal knowledge. To sustain its theory that access to, possession of, and opportunities to be agents of authoritative knowledge are the key to women's emancipation, liberal feminism elides² any thought that women's life experience may cause them to develop any other valuable form of knowledge. Rather, the zeal with which liberal feminism promotes attainment of authoritative knowledge for women seems to call upon women to devalue and ignore any other form of knowledge which they may possess.

1 Statistics which demonstrate the low percentage of school administrative positions held by women and the even lower percentage of women teachers who become administrators are provided for the United States in Schmuck (1987), for England in Acker (1989), and for British Columbia, Canada, in Bowman (1991).

2 The meaning that I attach to "elide" here is "to pass over in silence" (OED), or "to leave out of consideration" (American Heritage Dictionary, and Merriam-Webster Dictionary). This is also how I understand the term when it is used by post-modern theorists.

Radical Feminism

Unlike liberal feminists, radical feminists believe that the education traditionally provided for men may be unpalatable for women. For example, Virginia Woolf (1977) implies that women would not want the education which has influenced men to make war. Radical feminists strive to improve the status of women by insisting that all that is naturally womanlike must become highly valued and never degraded. According to radical feminist theory, women's separation from society's patriarchal institutions, wherein femininity has been debased, is the precondition that will enable women to assert autonomy and revalue their natural qualities. To suggest this separation, radical feminist theory needs to assume straightforward gender differences. Thus, with regard to knowledge, radical feminism would associate authoritative knowledge with men and overlook the possibility of not only its presence within women's knowledge, but also its provision of the frameworks women apply when attempting to value their own traits and qualities. For example, in its proposal that women should separate themselves from patriarchal institutions, radical feminism seems to be applying the same dichotomous framework to gender which it faults in the patriarchal structures that it rejects. Radical feminism's recommendation that women's revaluation of their knowledge should take place outside of patriarchal institutions apparently disallows my thoughts about promoting visibility and revaluation of maternal knowledge within public social institutions.

Socialist Feminism

Weedon (1987) explains that like radical feminist theory, socialist feminist theory promotes the revaluing of feminine qualities but differs from it by proposing that gender should be viewed as a socially and historically variable construct rather than as a stable and natural phenomenon. Socialist feminists (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; and Belenky et al., 1986) have sought to undermine previously held beliefs wherein traits and

behaviours of women have been perceived as weaknesses. In criticizing the practice of transferring norms acquired through men's studies of men in order to make judgments about women, these researchers have studied women. Their findings have revealed strengths which the assumed norms rendered invisible. The findings of Gilligan (1982), Belenky et al.(1986), Noddings (1986); Gilligan et al.(1988), and Ruddick (1989) have not only enabled positive re-evaluations of the thinking performed by women in their social roles as carers and nurturers, but also have lent support to the researchers' pleas for public social institutions to incorporate such thinking.

Socialist feminist theory helped me to frame both my thoughts about the moral value of maternal knowledge and my fears that such knowledge is not valued within public social institutions. That women are often accomplices in this devaluation is implied by Smith (1987) and Ruddick (1989). Moreover, my conjecture that the devaluation is produced by mothers' authoritative knowledge was prompted -- as previously explained in Chapter 2 -- by the writings of Ruddick (1989) on "maternal thinking," and of both Attanucci (1988) and Willard (1988) on the influence of cultural scripts upon mothers' self-understandings. Yet, although socialist feminist theory seemed necessary for the framing of my theses, I did not find it sufficient.

To remain true to the subject matter of my study, I felt that as in ideal maternal thinking, I should be respectful of differences between and even within individual mothers. Socialist feminist theory, however, despite its important propositions about the social construction of women's subjectivity, seems insufficient to explain why many women eagerly embrace the socially produced subjectivities (e.g., that of the naturally endowed caregiver) that socialist feminists abhor. Thus, the theory did not help me to think about "the range of possible *normal* subject positions open to women," and "the power and powerlessness invested in them" (Weedon, 1987:19, emphasis in original). Moreover, socialist feminist theory did not provide me a way to think about how to promote maternal knowledge as authoritative.

Critical Marxist Feminism

This strain of feminism extends socialist feminism by appropriating Marxist theory. For instance, when referring to socialist feminism, Gaskell and MacLaren (1987), claim that it blames women's oppression on modern economic structures, and they report that researchers such as Smith (1987) have investigated how capitalist institutions shape gender relations. Marxist feminism is founded on Marx's theory that the production and reproduction of oppression under capitalism is associated with false consciousness wherein truth is distorted. The theory posits that when oppressed peoples undergo consciousness-raising, they become able to form a truer knowledge of their society than that possessed by their oppressors and, consequently, can become agents of their own emancipation. While adopting the same beliefs about production, reproduction, and consciousness-raising, Marxist feminists argue that women's oppression must be viewed in relation to patriarchal as well as capitalist structuring of society.

The adoption of Marxist theory produces an epistemological standpoint. From this standpoint, it is theorized that because of women's oppressed position within patriarchal relations, the "truths" apprehended by women are not merely relative to but rather are truer than those apprehended by men. For example, Nancy Hartsock claims that more complete knowledge of the reality of social relations can be gained from women's standpoint than from men's. She explains that women's exploitation and their struggle to overcome it provides them a view of both sides of the dualisms that result from the "sexual division of labour" (1987:163) and, thus, they can claim a better standpoint than men can for apprehending "truth."

My first impression was that Marxist feminist theory could show me a way to claim and promote maternal knowledge as authoritative. Marxist feminist theory placed woman's standpoint within her societal position as carer, mother, etc., and, thus, it

suggested to me that false consciousness might be conceived as maternal knowledge blinded by authoritative knowledge. Moreover, using the theory to frame my conjectures about mothers' knowledge, I speculated that consciousness raising could entail struggling through blinding authoritative knowledge toward a reevaluation of maternal knowledge as provider of the true perspective on authoritative knowledge. But, here I encountered a problem because through both my personal experience and the literature on mothers, I had perceived maternal knowledge to exclude any notion of accessible "Truth." I noted that although Ruddick classifies herself as a standpoint theorist³, she disclaims that her standpoint enables access to "Truth that is exhaustive and absolute" (1989:135). Moreover, this Marxist theory of women's advantaged standpoint provided me no way of understanding or explaining why some women might be content and/or prefer to embrace authoritative knowledge. Rather, it appeared that standpoint theory would require such women to be relieved of their false consciousness, and, consequently, that the theory's own "truth" might lend it the potential to become oppressive.

Post-modern Feminism⁴

Like the standpoint theorists, post-modern feminists (e.g., Weedon, 1987; Nicholson and Fraser, 1990; Lather, 1991; and Sawicki, 1991) propose that to be

³ This is perhaps an example of the difficulty in attempting to categorize feminist theory and theorists. Although Ruddick places herself in the feminist standpoint category - albeit, with reservations - I would nevertheless still suggest that her work is of a nature that she can also be classified as a socialist feminist. When claiming herself a standpoint theorist, Ruddick (1989) differs from Hartsock by omitting reference to either Marxist or Marxist feminist theory.

⁴ I have yet to find in the literature a clearly marked distinction between "post-structuralism" and "post-modernism." British writers such as Weedon (1987) and Walkerdine (1989) appear to favour "post-structural," whereas North American writers such as Flax (1989), Nicholson (1990), and Lather (1991) seem to favour "post-modern." Foucault's theory is always referred to as post-structural, yet the North American feminist writers who turn to Foucault's theories seem nevertheless to refer to themselves as post-modernists. I chose to use the term "post-modern," unless referring explicitly to Foucault's post-structural theory or quoting writers who use the term "post-structural." So, generally, I employ the two terms synonymously.

politically useful, analysis of the social construction of gender requires a critical theory. However, post-modern feminists fear that by adopting a critical method intended to help us determine who we are, standpoint theorists might eventually produce a different but nevertheless restricting definition of "woman." This could be avoided, suggest the post-modernists, in a feminism informed by Foucault's post-structural theory, which offers not only "a critical method that is thoroughly historical and a set of recommendations about how to look at our theories," but also a politics of difference that is motivated by "the desire to avoid dogmatic adherence to categories and assumptions as well as the elision of differences to which such dogmatism can lead" (Sawicki, 1991:29). For the post-modern feminist, the purpose of "consciousness-raising would not be to tell us who we are," but rather would be to release us from certain self-understandings, that is, "to tell us who we do not have to be" and how "we came to think of ourselves as we do" (Sawicki, 1991:44).

Although many theorists have contributed to post-modern theory as a whole, Weedon claims that Foucault's theory of discourse and power "is arguably of most interest to feminists" (1987:22). Because "Foucault represented power as exercised rather than possessed, as decentralized rather than exercised from the top down, and as productive rather than repressive" (Sawicki, 1991:52), post-modern feminists claim that Foucault's analysis of power relations can help us to understand and think about how power produces its subjects and, thus, provide us information other than on how power represses its subjects. My understanding of the extent to which post-modern feminists believe Foucault's work can usefully inform feminist theory was gained primarily through my readings of Weedon (1987) and Sawicki (1991). In the following section, I describe that understanding of post-modern feminist theory and its relevance to my conjectures about mothers' knowledge.

DISCERNING THE NATURE OF POST-MODERN FEMINISM AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE STUDY

In her attempt to form a specifically post-modern feminism, Weedon proposes that the power/knowledge/discourse relationship theorized by Foucault⁵ is both productive for and compatible with feminism. She explains that in Foucault's work, discourse "is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, and [in] modes of thought and individual subjectivity" (1987:41). By adopting Foucault's concept of discourse, "feminist post-structuralism is able, in detailed, historically specific analysis, to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it" (Weedon, 1987:41). In this section, I shall discuss, first, the post-modern concepts of "subjectivity" and "discourse" and, second, Foucault's theory of power relations. Within both discussions, I present my understanding of not only how post-modern theory can help explain the presence of tensions within mothers' lives, but also of how post-modern feminism can safely co-opt Foucault's propositions without -- as some feminists fear -- endangering the feminist political project of revaluing and celebrating women's life experiences.⁶

"Subjectivity" and "Discourse" in Post-modern Feminist Theory

The term "subjectivity" refers to the individual's "conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions," and consequent self-understandings, self-identification, and

⁵ In this section, I attempt to show how a style of post-modern feminism that is informed by Foucauldian theory contributed to my thinking about the study. Although I sometimes report my thoughts on Foucault's theory, these thoughts are mainly based on the post-modern feminists' appropriations of the theory, so most of my references are to their's rather than to Foucault's own writings.

⁶ My study required a theory which could not only explain why tensions between mother's authoritative knowledge and maternal knowledge might somehow contribute to devaluation of maternal knowledge, but could also allow for the possibility of knowledge being acquired through experience -- in this case, women's experience of motherhood. So, I attempt to display in this section how I understood the form of post-modern feminism described by Weedon (1987) and Sawicki (1991) to fit both requirements.

ways of perceiving her/himself in relation to others and to society in general (Weedon, 1987:32). According to post-structural theory, however, the "unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subject" is constituted by discourses, and "the ways in which discourse constitutes the minds and bodies of individuals is always part of a wider network of power relations" (1987:108). Discourse is conceived of as the messages and purported truths which emanate from societal institutions. Discourses are defined as "more than ways of thinking and giving meaning," because they "are ways of constituting knowledge," "social practices," and "forms of subjectivity" (Weedon, 1987:108).

Discourses that are perceived to present truth are powerful, and those which attain such power in our society have "firm institutional bases" (Weedon, 1987:109). Among these, for instance, are the discourses of psychology, sociology, medicine, and education. Because the methods whereby knowledge is sought within these institutions conform to those which our society believes to be correct, the discourses which emanate from them are assumed to be founded on valid knowledge claims and therefore to convey truths. Such "truths" are produced in all societies and have a "normalizing and regulatory function" (McNay, 1992:25). Sawicki explains that the power transmitted in discourses produces disciplinary practices which

secure their hold not through the threat of violence or force, but rather by creating desires, attaching individuals to specific identities, and establishing norms against which individuals and their behaviors and bodies are judged and against which they police themselves (1991:67-68).

For instance, discourses on mothering practice do not secure control

through violence or coercion, but rather by producing new norms of motherhood, by attaching women to their identities as mothers, and by offering women specific kinds of solutions to problems they face (Sawicki, 1991:85).

According to Weedon, not only is the constitution of an individual's subjectivity a locale for competition between various discourses, but also "the institutional locations are themselves sites of contest" because "dominant discourses governing the organization and practices of social institutions are under constant challenge"

(1987:109). To explain this, Weedon states that according to Foucault, every institution and practice, such as, education or mothering, is "located in and structured by a particular *discursive field*" (1987:35, emphasis in original), and within a discursive field there exist a number of discourses or

competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organizing social institutions and processes. They offer the individual a range of modes of subjectivity.... Some [discourses] will account for and justify the appropriateness of the status quo. Others will give rise to challenge to existing practice from within or will contest the very basis of current organization and the selective interests which it represents. Such discourses are likely to be marginal to existing practices and dismissed by the hegemonic system of meanings and practices as irrelevant or bad (1987:35).

Thus, Foucault's theory of discourse/power/knowledge, according to Weedon, "decentres the self-present subject of humanism," by positing "subjectivity and consciousness, as socially produced in language, as a site of struggle and potential change" (Weedon, 1987:41). However, some feminists, for instance, Hartsock (1990), find cause to be fearful of Foucault's theories on subjectivity.

Annihilation of subjectivity: a danger in post-modern feminism? According to Sawicki, feminists who are apprehensive about post-modern feminism believe that appropriating Foucault's theories on "subjectivity, power, and resistance threaten[s] to undermine the emancipatory project of feminism" (1991:96). These feminists allege, "His politics of self-refusal ... leaves feminism with no standpoint from which to engage in an emancipatory politics and nothing to strive for" (Sawicki, 1991:96). Nancy Hartsock's suspicion of post-structuralism leads her to ask,

Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? (1990:163)

Weedon acknowledges that a theory that critiques humanism is likely to be viewed skeptically by "feminists whose primary concern is to revalue and celebrate the

experience and culture of women" (1987:74). She offers the reassurance, however, that the post-modern feminist's

concern with the discursive construction of subjectivity ... is motivated by a primary concern with understanding the position of individual women in society and the ways in which they are both governed by and resist specific forms of power. This involves not a devaluing of women's experience but an understanding of its constitution and its strategic position within the broader field of patriarchal power relations (1987:74-75).

According to my understanding of both Weedon (1987) and Sawicki (1991), post-modern feminism does not adopt Foucault's theories uncritically. For instance, both writers indicate that it would be risky for feminism to adopt Foucault's theory of the discursive construction of subjectivity without realizing that it needs to and can make a space for agency⁷. "Foucault's own protest is testimony to the fact that he did not believe that the normalizing processes he described were total" and "is also evidence that he did not entirely reject the notion of agency" (Sawicki, 1991:100).

Linda Alcoff suggests that Theresa de Lauretis offers feminists a preferable alternative to Foucault's theory by formulating "a subjectivity that gives agency to the individual while at the same time placing her within 'particular discursive configurations'" (de Lauretis, 1986:8 cited in Alcoff, 1989:315). This closely resembles, however, the post-modern feminist theory that is proposed by Weedon and informed by Foucault's theories. According to Weedon's description, this post-modern feminism would theorize that although the "site of [the] battle for power [between discourses representative of political interests] is the subjectivity of the individual," within the battle, "the individual is an *active but not sovereign* protagonist" (Weedon, 1987:41,

⁷ I conceive of "agency" as possession of the opportunity and ability to initiate thought and/or action. Lather (1991) explains that the Enlightenment project of progress via education and rationality posited the individual as an agentic subject capable of fully conscious and fully rational action. Post-modern theory, however, refutes the possibility of a fully conscious subject. Moreover, Foucault's theory of discourse and power can be interpreted to suggest that post-modern subjects are totally incapable of agency because post-modern theory denies them consciousness of how either they or the ways they experience life are constituted. Post-modern feminism requires a way to modify this extreme interpretation and preserve agency, however, in order to pursue the common feminist project of using women's understandings of themselves and their lives as the basis of appeals for social transformation.

emphasis added). In Foucault the roots of agency seem to be our life experiences, but they appear to be tangled roots that we must continually strive to untangle in order to safeguard agency from strangulation. To summarize post-modern theory on discourse and subjectivity, I attempted to think about mothering both as the subject of discourses and as a site of struggle and potential agency.

Struggle and agency in the discursive field that structures mothering. I realized that the practice of motherhood is situated in a discursive field consisting of discourses produced by institutions such as psychology, medicine, education, law, biology, sociology, and reproductive technology. First, I considered how the discourse of biology persuades me that as woman and birthgiver, nurturing and caring come naturally to me. Second, I recognized that this is complemented by sociological discourse on the family which cautions me that to ensure my family functions "normally," I -- as its nurturer -- must enact the important role of supportive adapter. That is, I am required deftly to accommodate each family member's physical and emotional needs in order to prepare them to take useful places in society. These discourses create in me a desire for the fulfilment that they imply. But they discipline me, too, by telling me what ideally I am and what I should do, and by threatening to name me "unnatural" or "insufficient" if either I am unsuccessful at being or I choose not to do what they recommend. When the discourse of psychology, however, assigns the label "passive" to the subjectivity that biology and sociology have constituted for me, if I interpret "passive" as deficient, I might experience a tension between the discourses. Then, if I find myself able to use my mothering experience as a basis for critiquing the contradiction the discourses present, perhaps, I might acquire some potential to self-direct my subjectivity.

In Foucault's emancipatory project, the importance of reflecting upon life experience seems evident in his hope "to effect an 'insurrection of subjugated

knowledges'" (Foucault, 1980:81 cited in Sawicki, 1991:57). Here "subjugated knowledges" refers partly to

those forms of experience that fall below the level of scientificity⁸. [They] include the low-ranking knowledge of the psychiatric patient, the hysteric, the midwife, the housewife, and the mother.... Because these disqualified knowledges arise out of the experience of oppression, resurrecting them serves a critical function. Through the retrieval of subjugated knowledge, one establishes a historical knowledge of resistance and struggle (Sawicki, 1991:57).

Weedon claims that a feminism informed by Foucault's theories would honour subjective experience and could "recognize and account for competing subjective realities and demonstrate the social interests on behalf of which they work" (1987:8). Moreover, Sawicki states that Foucault's analysis of power relations is valuable to feminists because "it support[s] feminist insights about the need to analyse the politics of personal relations of everyday life, and account[s] for our participation in reproducing systems of domination" (1991:10). I found that understanding this analysis of power relations was a prerequisite to my discerning the possibility of an insurrection of subjugated knowledges.

The Post-modern Analysis of Power Relations

In Foucault's analysis of power, the "competing subjective realities" and "our participation in reproducing systems of domination," referred to above, can be accounted for by examining power relations from the bottom up rather than merely from the top down. Nancy Hartsock fears that this "argument for an 'ascending analysis' of power could lead us to engage in a version of blaming the victim" (1990:169). It

8 Here Sawicki is using Foucault's term "scientificity." Earlier, she explains (Foucault, 1980 cited in Sawicki, 1991:26) that forms of knowledge "located ... beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" would include various forms of "popular knowledge," which Foucault defines as "particular, local, regional knowledge, or differential knowledge incapable of unanimity." That is, "popular knowledge" lacks generalizability, and is therefore an example of a knowledge that does not meet the standards set in the natural sciences for the validation of knowledge claims (i.e., the "required level ... of scientificity").

seemed difficult to reconcile this with Hartsock's perception and complaint that in Foucault's theory "there is no binary opposition between rulers and ruled" (1990:91), which seems to eliminate victims. Nevertheless, I felt compelled to give both of Hartsock's warnings some attentive thought.

With regard to the "binary opposition," because Foucault's interest is in the exercise of power rather than in power as a possession, he focuses on

the power relations themselves, rather than on the subjects related (sovereign-subject, bourgeois-proletarian), [thus], he can give an account of how subjects are constituted by power relations (Sawicki, 1991:21).

According to my understanding, what Foucault rejects are the limitations that the binary opposition of oppressor/oppressed(or victim) place on the analysis of power. Foucault's theory of discourse/power/knowledge does not elide top-down power relations, but rather insists that power relations are much more complex than the hierarchical model suggests. "He describes the social field as a myriad of unstable and heterogeneous relations of power. It is an open system which contains possibilities of domination as well as resistance," and it is a "field of struggle" wherein " 'We all fight against each other. And there is always within each of us something that fights something else' " (Foucault, 1980:220 cited in Sawicki, 1991:25-26).

In Foucault's theory, power relations are not restricted to the vertical dimension, but rather they operate also within and across all levels of social stratification by class, race, and gender. According to Foucault, it is the power relations at these microlevels of society that repress "difference" and make top-down imposition possible. Foucault suggests that analyses of how people experience power relations at the microlevels of society can reveal not only how top-down imposition is made possible, but also how people may unwittingly reinforce this imposition -- especially when discourses offer an appealing subjectivity. Thus, it seems possible to perceive that Foucault's theory is an attempt to reveal how people are insidiously manipulated within our social systems, and that by focusing on this problem, post-modern feminists can avoid blaming the victim,

as Nancy Hartsock fears. Moreover, if we accept that the insurrection of subjugated knowledges is a project that seeks to give voice to marginalized life experience (i.e., a voice that is free to examine the contradictions between experience and the discourses that seek to explain it) then we might find a way to help combat manipulation.

Summarizing Power/Knowledge/Discourse by Referring to Personal Experience

To consolidate my understanding of the power/knowledge/discourse relationship theorized by Foucault, I tried to recall instances when my own subjectivity as a mother may have been constituted by popular discourses founded on educational theory. I wrote the following memoir in my journal:

Not long, as I recall, before my children were born, education as an institution began to promote eagerly the theory that children's success in school was related to their pre-school educative experiences. It was claimed, moreover, that the quality of these experiences was related to the child's socio-economic environment, and, by association, the mother's ability adequately to prepare her child for school. Some attempts were made apparently to equalize children's access to pre-school stimulation. For instance, television programmes such as *Sesame Street* were introduced and heralded as a widely available preparation for school. My early years of motherhood were bombarded with declarations such as, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." I recall newspaper and magazine articles informing me, for instance, that the lives of great men such as Winston Churchill and Pierre Trudeau (prime minister at the time) had been strongly influenced by their mothers. How proud I felt to have landed such an important role in life! How sensible it seemed to devote myself to full-time motherhood rather than to my teaching career! Continually, I created and recreated "stimulating" experiences and environments for my young sons, and like the middle-class mothers in Walkerdine and Lucey's research⁹, I strove to translate my household chores into pedagogical events. I made sure to report these activities to other mothers not only to assure them I was doing my duty, but also, I suspect, to remind them surreptitiously of theirs. After all, I recall listening fearfully to other mothers' reports of their activities which seemed all too frequently to remind me of what was lacking in my own mothering. There were other things we talked about, for the wave of theory on pre-school preparation carried discourses other than those stressing the important role of the mother. It also brought to mothers a discourse which promoted institutionalized pre-school preparation. I did not want to send my children to pre-school. Perhaps to compensate, I chose to enrol them in recreational organizations such as ice-skating and swimming clubs, and *Tiny-Tots' Tumbling*. Yet, I can recall instructors -- some still in their 'teens -- occasionally telling

⁹ This is a reference to the findings of Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) which I reported in Chapter 2.

myself and other mothers that our children might fit into these groups better if they had pre-school experience. However, in the discussions among mothers standing beside skating rinks and sitting on swimming pool bleachers, I suspect the contradictory discourses that we were experiencing were implicitly addressed. But, I cannot be sure, because it seems the substance of these discussions was left behind like an old sock on the swimming pool bleachers -- not worth the effort required to go back and retrieve it. So, what superseded the discussions? Was it division among mothers -- division based on whichever discourse on childcare, careercare, and selfcare was most appealing in relation to our personal situations?

It seems important to stress that the above was not written for the purpose of illustrating Foucault's theories, but to help myself understand them by grounding them in my own experience. Through my recollections, I managed to appreciate three post-modern propositions about discourses: (1) how they can shape subjectivity through their appeal; (2) that subjects can support the imposition of discourses by disciplining one another; and (3) that discourses can compete in the shaping of our subjectivities. I noticed, moreover, that although the discourse promoting formal pre-schooling may have been a product of women's opposition to being identified as primary caregiver, to me it had probably seemed oppressive, especially since good quality pre-schools were non-existent where I lived. So, I could appreciate how the discourses probably prompted disunity among mothers, and I thought that this might be an example of how according to Foucault, "power enlists ... resistant forces into its own service" (Sawicki, 1991:25). I hoped that the discussions between mothers had included criticisms of the assumptions contained in the discourses, but it troubled me that those criticisms seemed to have no authoritative public voice. But what is "authoritative public voice"? In the next section, I use post-modern theory to examine our assumptions about what counts as "authoritative."

QUESTIONING CURRENT CONCEPTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE "AUTHORITATIVE"

Finding it necessary to clarify my thoughts at this point, I realized that I had two conceptions of authoritative knowledge: one, it is a knowledge that has been assigned authority, that is, it has been authorized, or certified, as knowledge; and, two, it assigns authority, that is, its possession certifies the exercise of authority. Authoritative knowledge, moreover, can be thought of as including both expert knowledge and common sense¹⁰ knowledge.

We obtain our common sense knowledge from many sources, for instance, "our general education, the media, relatives, and friends" (Weedon, 1987:76). Common sense knowledge includes cultural scripts. It "is the medium through which already fixed 'truths' about the world, society, and individuals are expressed" (Weedon, 1991:77). Common sense tells mothers, for instance, what is "normal"; little boys (or girls) can be expected to do this and that, and little girls (or boys) should behave in this or that way.

Common sense knowledge is powerful because it claims "to be natural, obvious, and therefore true" (1991:77), and "it tends to appeal to experience as the guarantee of its truth" (1991:78). This justification is fraught with assumptions, however, and tends to be circular. Teachers' common sense knowledge informs them, for instance, that doing homework regularly and having parental support is conducive to a student's good academic performance. Yet a high performing student who fits neither criterion is unlikely to present a challenge to this common sense knowledge; rather the knowledge will probably be affirmed by opinions stating that the student's achievement could be even greater with the aid of homework and/or parental support.

¹⁰ I use the term "common sense" here as it is used in Weedon (1987); i.e., to connote sense (beliefs, assumptions, etc.) that people hold in common.

The "expert" form of authoritative knowledge is that possessed by experts in various disciplines -- people we think of as specialists. The knowledge of specialists is certified as authoritative because we believe that the methods used to identify it are "the most rational that humankind has devised for investigating the world" (Addelson, 1991:16). We accept that specialists' understanding of these methods gives them "cognitive authority" because "we take their understanding of factual matters and the nature of the world within their sphere of expertise as knowledge, or as the definitive understanding," and "our teachers and our texts affirm this authority of ... specialists" (Addelson, 1991:16). Authoritative knowledge, then, endows its possessors with authority. We accept that its possessors have cognitive authority to make and impose decisions, to enforce rules, and to set rules, for instance. I wondered about the conception of authority involved here, and whether or not it would be what mothers would want maternal knowledge to be assigned. To find an answer, I attempted to discern whether or not conventional conceptions of authority, the voice of authority, and the authorization (or certification) of knowledge are compatible with maternal knowledge.

"Authority"

Jones (1988) reports a Foucauldian genealogical investigation of authority, that is, she discusses her analysis of traditional conceptions of authority and the oppressive potential of their inherent assumptions. Jones explains that the purpose of her project was to show that "the segregation of women and the feminine from authority is internally connected to the concept of authority itself," and she argues that "the feminist critique of authority as a specific form of male privilege has not focused enough on the limitations of traditional concepts of authority" (1988:120). For women, it is a problem that the traditional discourses on authority have produced an overly narrow conception

which normalizes it as a "disciplinary, commanding gaze" and, consequently, opposes it to "emotive connectedness or compassion" (Jones, 1988:120).

Jones notes that in the traditional conception of authority, which is "heavily influenced by some variant of the Hobbesian view of human nature ('the war of all against all')," it "stabilizes social interaction, marking human action by tolerable, rule-governed levels of sociality" (Jones, 1988:124). Authority, as traditionally conceived, is rational, is rule bounded, and is "necessarily hierarchical and dispassionate" (Jones, 1988:121). Because authority is a "mutually recognized normative relationship," however, the "justification of authority depends ... on clarifications of the criteria whereby authority is recognized in the first place" (Jones, 1988:123). When the relationship is mutually recognized, we do not have to be either persuaded or coerced into obeying those in authority (Jones, 1988).

In *Educational Administration*, Hoy and Miskel (1987) present several definitions of "authority" that are similar to those reported by Jones. The authors cite also a comparative analysis of several theorists' perceptions of the bases of authority in organizations. The analysis distinguishes between formal authority, which is vested in organizations and legitimized by position; and functional authority, which is based on criteria of competence and personal skills. For functional authority, the criterion for competence is variously expressed, depending on the theory being analyzed, as "technical knowledge"; "technical [competence] implicit in special knowledge or skill"; "knowledge of performance criteria"; and "technical expertise" (Peabody, 1962:467 cited in Hoy and Miskel, 1987:111). This indicates that particular forms of knowledge are among the "criteria whereby authority is [mutually] recognized" (see Jones, above) in organizations. Moreover, it implies that according to my conception, maternal knowledge would not qualify for inclusion among technical knowledge because it is developed through mothering experiences and activities, to which no specific and tidily describable techniques would apply.

My interest in promoting maternal knowledge as authoritative leads me to concur with Jones' claim that currently accepted conceptions of authority¹¹ pose a problem for women. While thinking over those conceptions, I realized that by identifying the non-authoritative status of maternal knowledge as a problem, I do not want to imply that it should be assigned authority as traditionally defined. Rather, I do want to suggest that maternal knowledge and its owners should be authorized as worthy of being heard and heeded instead of being ignored and belittled.¹² But can maternal knowledge be heard by anyone? Can it have an "authoritative" voice?

"Authoritative" Voice

Jones intended her project to reveal how "the dominant discourse on authority silences those forms of expression linked metaphorically and symbolically to 'female' speech" (Jones, 1988:120). Referring to Gilligan's work (1982) and the compassionate approach and associated logic and voice that it implies women may bring to decision making, Jones suggests that "the female voice of would-be authority may speak in compassionate tones inaudible to listeners attuned to harsher commands" and its speech interpreted "as non-authoritative, marginal pleadings for mercy -- gestures of the subordinate" (Jones, 1988:121). She states that, "we define the masculine mode of self-assured, self-assertive, unqualified declarativeness as the model of authoritative speech. 'Female' hesitancy and other-oriented language patterns, considered as the marks of uncertainty or confusion, are derogated" (Jones, 1988:122).

¹¹ Jones (1993) presents an analysis of Weber's categories of traditional, charismatic, and legal authority and indicates how each is characterized in ways that privilege masculinity.

¹² From here onwards, this is the meaning I attach to authority or authoritative when I use either term in reference to maternal knowledge.

Women's "non-authoritative" interactive speech behaviours in mixed groups.

While discussing the speech behaviours that are displayed by women and men in interactions between the sexes during professional discussions and in decision-making groups, Smith states that

women talking with men use styles of talk that throw the control to others, as for example by interspersing their words with interjections that reassign the responsibility for its meaning to others, by saying "you know" or failing to name objects or things or to complete sentences (1987:32-33),

and she claims that

what women have to say may simply remain unsaid. Or it is treated as a byplay -- not really integral to the game. If it comes into play at all it is because a male player has picked it up and brought it into play as his (1987:32).

Similarly, in an overview of sociolinguistic research on language and gender, French and French (1984) report that in mixed group discussions women tend to use expressions facilitative of interaction, such as, "uh-huh"; expressions that indicate they are paying attention and which encourage the speaker to continue. French and French state that women's use of rising intonation and especially their use of qualifiers such as "perhaps" contrasts with the assertive tone and language that is usual for men's statements.

According to French and French, the interactive behaviours of women in mixed discussion groups have been interpreted to represent women's attempts both to display gender identity and to take a supportive role in conversation rather than the dominant role favoured by men. However, without wishing to negate these previous interpretations, I wondered if alternative interpretations were possible. Interpreted differently, could the reported interactive behaviours of women in mixed group conversations present -- as Jones suggests -- a feminine voice of would-be authority? For instance, might the behaviours be indicative of women's attempts to speak about maternal knowledge? Moreover, is it possible that audiences associate assertive interactive speech behaviours with authoritative knowers and, thus, fail to listen to the

voice of maternal knowledge because they do not perceive its tentative and supportive tones as indicative of knowledgeable or knowledge-generating interaction?

I wanted to think further about these questions because they persuaded me that investigating and promoting maternal knowledge as worthy of being heeded would not be sufficient to assure its being listened to in future, but rather that impediments to its being heard would also need to be investigated and ways to remove them sought. I inferred that this additional action might include the need to promote the value of interactive speech behaviours which have not traditionally been associated with authoritative knowers in discussions between the sexes. To think further about my questions, I tried first to clarify my picture of interactive speech behaviours that we tend to associate with the voice of authoritative knowledge and, second, to picture tensions which this assumed association might produce for the voice of maternal knowledge.

The conventional authoritative voice. I recalled that the interaction of authoritative speakers sounds like the "unimpassioned debate between *adversaries* who try to defend their own views against counterexamples and produce counterexamples to opposing views," which Moulton describes in her discussion of philosophical reasoning (1989:9, emphasis in original). Moreover, I remembered that to enter the debate authoritative speakers must be able to provide a rational explanation of how they know what they claim to know. Also, because it is the rationality of the explanation that will be challenged in the debate, the explanation must follow a set of rules designed to authorize the validity of the knowledge expressed.

An authoritative voice for maternal knowledge? I tried to picture what might happen if a woman participant's maternal knowledge causes her to find the knowledge expressed in the debate upsetting. What if she wants to enter her maternal knowledge into the conversation, but finds -- perhaps because her mothering experience causes her

to regard knowledge as partial rather than absolute -- that she cannot explain rationally how she knows what she believes she knows? Does her knowledge of the rules of "authoritative speech" pressure her to try to rationalize what she cannot and lead her to attempt a tentative pseudo-rationalization that judged in authoritative terms appears like the product of a feeble mind? In addition, if "upset" feelings are the impetus for the woman's decision to contribute her knowledge, could attempts to control emotion account for her tentativeness? After all, her education on valid reasoning teaches her that "the emotional [is] associated with the irrational" (Jaggar, 1989:145).

Alternatively, I pondered, what if the woman's purpose for introducing her knowledge is to prompt the group to think about building a critical perspective which, on the basis of her mothering experience, she believes is required to guard against the oppressive potential of the knowledge under debate? In this case, might it not be more suitable for her interactive behaviours, her speech, and her expression to have questioning, inquiring, and supportive characteristics that would encourage others to speak? Moreover, if she wishes to encourage others to join her in reflecting upon her knowledge which she regards as partial rather than absolute, would she not speak tentatively rather than assertively?

I found it disturbing to think that women's attempts to use their maternal knowledge for purposes of "authentic maternal thinking" might lend them the appearance of having difficulty in finding an "authoritative" voice and consequently hinder their being perceived as "knowers" by men, women, or themselves. Sandra Harding states that "feminists have argued that traditional epistemologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, systematically exclude the possibility that women could be 'knowers' or *agents of knowledge*" (1987:3, emphasis in original). Harding's emphasis prompted me to contemplate the fact that although we cannot observe people's knowledge, we can observe them as "agents of knowledge" as the above discussions of people's interactive behaviours show. But it appears that we may only be able to identify

agents of certified or authorized knowledge. So, how might our conventional ways of authorizing knowledge render the agent of maternal knowledge non-identifiable as an agent of knowledge?

The Authorization of Knowledge

Foucault claims that "We are subjected to the production of truth through power, and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth "(Foucault, 1980:93 cited in Philp, 1988:75). This implies that Foucault regarded the discourses of epistemology as the most powerful of all. According to Diamond and Quinby, Foucault's explication that "power's relation to knowledge is never separable, because within each society there is a 'regime of truth' with its own particular mechanisms for producing truth" is among his most important contributions for feminists (Foucault, 1980:131 cited in Diamond and Quinby, 1988:x). Because they contain the terms whereby all other discourses are judged as bearers of valid knowledge, epistemologies appear to be the ultimate in authoritative knowledge; that which has the power to assign authoritative status to knowledge claims. Epistemologies set the criteria whereby the validity of knowledge claims are judged. Claims that fail to satisfy the criteria cannot be regarded as knowledge. So, a person who attempts to be an agent of the nullified "knowledge" risks being excluded from the ranks of "knowers," and as the above quote from Foucault suggests, that person will be denied the legitimate right to exercise power.

The interactive speech behaviours discussed above suggest that to engage in formal discussion or debate, speakers need an epistemological frame of reference that enables them to display the rationality of their knowledge. If mothers, however, attempt to inject their maternal knowledge into the discussion, and -- as appears to be a possibility -- they have no epistemological frame of reference that enables them to display the rationality of their knowledge, they are liable to damage their reputations

both as knowers and as "*agents of knowledge*." This implies that the only apparent way for mothers to assure they are counted as knowers is to silence their maternal knowledge, if they can. That is, for want of an epistemology to validate and describe it, maternal knowledge is a marginalized if not silenced knowledge. This might also imply that what is needed are less narrowly constructed notions of "the rational" (Minnich, 1990:112). In the next section, I attempt to discern whether or not there is a feminist epistemology which can validate maternal claims of knowledge and, therefore, authorize maternal knowledge.

SEARCHING FOR A FEMINIST AUTHORIZATION OF MATERNAL KNOWLEDGE

Part of the feminist project has been to invalidate theories that have resulted from research grounded in traditional epistemologies tainted by masculinist bias. To find ways of eliminating such bias, feminists have sought alternative epistemologies. In this section, I discuss what the search has found so far and the usefulness of its findings with respect to maternal knowledge. The discussion represents my understanding of feminist epistemologies as they are described by Sandra Harding (1987a, 1989a, 1989b, 1990, and 1991), and all references in this section are to Harding's work unless another author is indicated.

Harding states that "epistemologies -- theories of knowledge -- are one kind of justificatory strategy," that they "make normative claims" by "tell[ing] us that one should do *x* to obtain the best kinds of belief" (1989a:189). These justificatory strategies have appealed to "divine revelation, common sense, observations, certainty, verifiability, and falsifiability" (1989a:189). Since Enlightenment, the epistemological discourses of objectivism and then "interpretationism" (1990:87) have presented the justificatory strategies. Feminism requires a defence against these discourses. To explain her term

"interpretationism," Harding states that its "assumptions ... can be found in ... participant-observer research, and phenomenological studies in the social sciences" (1990:102).

For feminists, objectivism is a problem because of its insistence "that scientific claims can be produced only through dispassionate, disinterested, value free, point of viewless, objective inquiry procedures" (1990:87). This insistence denies feminist research the capacity to produce valid knowledge claims because the avowed intention of feminist research is to address problems that can be identified from women's points of view. The problem with "interpretationism" is that although it concedes that the social experience of women can provide a different perspective, feminist interpretations arising from women's perspectives can be accused of having no better defence than those of non-feminists. The two are merely relative. There is "no way to decide 'objectively' between the two, there is no reason why people who are not already convinced of feminist claims should support them" (1990:88). So, asks Harding,

What theory of knowledge can provide a justifiable guide to practical decisions that have effects on women's lives? Neither objectivism nor interpretationism serves women well. What could serve better? (1990:89)

To find their answer, feminists began by attempting "to reform and transform" previously established epistemological theories "in order to create less distorted representations of the world than the mainstream, androcentric ones" (1990:83). According to Harding, three forms of feminist epistemology have emerged: the first two adopted respectively the epistemological discourses of objectivism and "interpretationism" but undermined assumptions implicit in each; and the third, and most recent, adopts the discourses of post-modernism. To organize my own discussion of feminist epistemologies and their capacities to justify maternal knowledge, I employ the same three categories that Harding employs and labels: (1) feminist empiricism; (2) feminist standpoint; and (3) post-modern feminism.

Feminist Empiricism

The epistemological argument of feminist empiricists is that the androcentric bias of previous empiricist research in both biology and the social sciences has generated false claims. They claim that empiricism has not lived up to its own objective standards. For instance, it has addressed problems that men have identified from their own point of view. Consequently, research questions have been biased, and research designs have not neutralized values as they are claimed to have done. Feminist empiricists insist that such "bad science" can be avoided by stricter adherence to the norms of empiricist enquiry. Thus, feminist empiricism does not call for different norms; rather it insists that improved alertness to and consequent reduction of bias at all stages of the research process will result in better standards of objectivity.

Feminist empiricism leaves the basic principles of its adopted epistemology intact, that is, it insists that only objective enquiry can produce valid knowledge claims. Thus, feminist empiricism "assumes that real knowledge is transcendental" and consequently it views "situated knowledge" to be "a contradiction in terms" (1991:48). Clearly the situatedness of maternal knowledge would disqualify it as knowledge according to feminist empiricist epistemology. The "real knowledge" of feminist empiricists can claim generalizability and universality, but, in contrast, an epistemology that could justify maternal knowledge would require that "partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims" (Haraway, 1988:589). That is, the epistemology would need to accommodate a broader conception of rationality than is held by feminist empiricism.

While attempting to adopt for feminist research the norms and values of scientific research, feminist empiricism has shown that those norms and values failed to detect androcentric biases without the assistance of feminism. "Thus feminist empiricism intensifies recent tendencies in the philosophy and social studies of science to problematize fundamental empiricist assumptions" (1989a:193), and, consequently,

"there is a tension between empiricist epistemology and its uses by feminists" (1991:117). This tension has provided the incentive for some feminists to develop an alternative justificatory strategy for feminist research; feminist standpoint epistemology.

Feminist Standpoint Epistemology

The feminist standpoint epistemologies "draw on...the resources of Marxist epistemology" (1989b:25) to claim that because of women's oppressed position in patriarchally structured society, "by starting research from women's lives, we can arrive at empirically and theoretically more adequate descriptions and explanations -- at less partial and distorting ones" (1991:48). In making this claim, standpoint epistemology "undermines the point-of-viewlessness of objectivism while refusing the relativism of interpretationism" (1990:97). That is, standpoint epistemology rejects the possibility of value-free and impartial objectivity and its application as a standard for distinguishing valid knowledge from mere opinion. Rather standpoint theorists claim that knowledge differs according to one's life experience, and how one perceives that experience in relation to society's ideological beliefs about it. Standpoint epistemology rejects objectivist accusations that because such knowledge is based on interpretation and interpretations are merely relative, none can claim to be more valid than another and so each represents opinion rather than knowledge.

The argument of standpoint theorists that more valid knowledge can be apprehended from some standpoints than from others is explained above in the subsection on critical Marxist feminism. Harding (1987) explains that a standpoint cannot automatically be claimed on the basis of experience; rather, it is achieved by developing a consciousness of contradictions between how lives are dominantly conceptualized and how they are actually experienced. According to Dorothy Smith (1987:49-50), this consciousness emerges along "a line of fault" situated "between experience and the way that experience is socially expressed."

Hartsock (1987) explains that starting from women's lives means starting from women's positions as carers. This makes standpoint epistemology seem able to justify the validity of maternal knowledge. Smith's conception of "a line of fault," moreover, appears to contain possible support for my conjectures regarding the conflict between authoritative knowledge and maternal knowledge. However, it seems that standpoint epistemology "still shares -- with feminist empiricism -- an urge for generalizable universal knowledge" which could make it "potentially oppressive... just as humanism has been" (Di Stefano, 1990:74). Because of this possibility that standpoint epistemology both seeks to justify "Truths" and to elide differences, I felt that it could not, after all, validate maternal knowledge, which as suggested previously would regard only partial and temporary truths to be obtainable. Although Harding (1990, 1991) claims that standpoint theory is attentive to differences (e.g., between women), I remained unsure about how this can be so in a theory that apparently accepts a vertical patriarchal relationship between oppressor and oppressed. Rather, it seemed to me that to claim an understanding of and respect for differences, a feminist standpoint would require a post-modern theory of power that can account for not only men's but also women's oppression of women in a patriarchal society.

Post-modern Feminism

The purpose of my discussing the two feminist epistemological positions above was not to discount their usefulness for other projects, but merely to indicate why they cannot provide a theory of maternal knowledge. In the remainder of this subsection, I attempt to explain why post-modern theory appears more helpful but, nevertheless, not sufficient to the task of providing an epistemology to justify maternal knowledge claims. Harding (1989a) notes that in the post-modern feminist view of knowledge

feminist claims should be held not as 'approximations to truth' that can be woven into a seamless web of representation of the world 'out there,' but as permanently partial instigators of rupture, of rents and unravelings in the

dominant schemes of representation. From this perspective, if there can be 'a' feminist standpoint, it can only be what emerges from the political struggles of 'oppositional consciousness' -- oppositional precisely to the longing for 'one true story' that has been the psychic motor of western science (1989a:198-199).

Harding's description illustrates a parallel between the post-modern view of knowledge and maternal knowledge. The literature on mothering experiences (e.g., Ruddick, 1989; and Swigart, 1991) suggests that through them a mother comes to know that there is never "one true story" that tells her how to understand her children and her relationships with them, or how to solve any problem she encounters with regard to either. That this knowledge becomes central to a mother's judgment of any "knowledge" to which she turns for help, either from within her own store of authoritative knowledge or from outside, is suggested to me by my reading of Ruddick (1989), my acquaintances with mothers, and my own experience.¹³ It appears that a mother does not reject authoritative knowledge offhandedly, but accepts it only upon terms that prevent it from being oppressive of her child/ren or her relationship with them.

I found this "maternal" attitude toward knowledge comparable to Foucault's post-structural approach. Foucault claims, for instance, that he is "not talking about a gesture of rejection" (1987:170) when he proposes that "we must free ourselves from the intellectual blackmail of being for or against the Enlightenment" (1987:169). According to Foucault, by continually arguing about whether to "remain within" or "try to escape from its principle of rationality" (1987:167-168) we fail to notice that "we have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers" (1987:170). For

¹³ Since I need in this section to discuss maternal knowledge in its ideal form, I am purposely ignoring any considerations that it may often be impeded or silenced by a woman's own authoritative knowledge. Any thinking described in this section is ideal maternal thinking, i.e., Ruddick's "authentic maternal thinking" (1989). That is, although I am talking about what mothers come to know is a desirable way to think with regard to their children, I do not mean to suggest that it is necessarily how they always do think. That mothers' thinking often does not fit the desirable form is suggested by both hooks (1989) and Ruddick (1989).

this purpose, Foucault recommends a critical analysis that is "genealogical in its design" (1987:170).

Comparing Foucault's and mothers' critical analyses. Like mothers, Foucault accepts that we have no "hope of ... access to any complete and definitive knowledge" (1987:171). The intention of his genealogical analysis is not to identify "universal structures of all knowledge or of all possible moral action"; rather by "treat[ing] the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events," this form of criticism "will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do or think" (1987:170). That is, by examining the history of the discourses that constitute our current understandings of ourselves and our knowledge we can discover not only what purposes it was once assumed they would serve, but also how those assumptions have enabled the discourses to impose limits upon what we can do and what we can claim to know.

On the basis of the literature on both mothers' and women's thinking and morality, I would suggest that genealogical analysis is similar to the process that maternal knowledge tells a mother she should follow in her search for adequate knowledge. A mother knows that she should not accept knowledge which masquerades as "truth" without asking, for instance, "Where does that idea come from? Whose and what interests was it designed to serve? What assumptions does it make about my children, their lives and/or my own life? Do these assumptions allow it to serve the interests of my child/ren and my relationships with them or their relationships with others? If I adopt the idea, what should I do to assure it has no oppressive effect?" A mother may reflect upon these questions alone, or, as Ruddick (1989) suggests, in conversations with other mothers wherein not just one idea but several will be addressed. But what motivates a mother to embark on such analysis in the first place?

I suspected that the answer might be that the motivation, at least partly, involves emotion. I felt unsure, however, that a post-modern epistemology could address any affective aspects of knowledge acquisition. Unless it can address emotion, a post-modern epistemology might be useful but not sufficient for the task of describing and validating maternal knowledge.

Locating emotion within maternal knowledge. Alison Jaggar (1989) argues that epistemologies should credit rather than discredit the role that emotion plays in the acquisition of knowledge. This would require recognizing the pro-active aspects of emotion; "they are wrongly seen as necessarily passive or involuntary responses to the world. Rather, they are ways in which we engage actively and even construct the world" (1989:152-153). While admitting that emotions are in part socially constructed, Jaggar introduces the concept of "outlaw emotions," which can be "distinguished by their incompatibility with the dominant perceptions and values" (1989:160).

Jaggar claims that "Outlaw emotions ... are necessary to develop a critical perspective on the world;" "they may provide the first indications that something is wrong with the way alleged facts have been constructed, with accepted understandings of how things are;" and "only when we reflect on our initially puzzling irritability, revulsion, anger, or fear, may we bring to consciousness our 'gut-level' awareness that we are in a situation of coercion, cruelty, injustice, or danger" (1989:160-161). That this can involve struggle for women, is implied by Spelman (1989). She discusses how cultural constructions of the unacceptability of women's anger serve to suppress it, and she explains that prohibiting anger is an effective way to restrain insubordination.

It seems reasonable to assume that "authentic maternal thinking" (Ruddick, 1989) requires the motivation that "outlaw emotions" can supply. Because of the salience of relationships in a mother's life and her moral understanding of responsibility in relationships (Gilligan, 1982), it could be expected that she may feel anxious, fearful,

or angry, when presented with a means/ends "truth" that purports to be good for her child. Then to engage in "authentic maternal thinking," the mother would allow these emotions to sensitize her to contradictions which render the "truth" more harmful than helpful to the lives it purports to enrich. I would suspect that this process is both motivated and sustained by the mother's "outlaw emotions" (Jaggar, 1989). Thus, I suspect also that an epistemology that can justify maternal knowledge will need to include an unconventional conception of emotion in relation to knowledge.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this chapter, I have discussed how and why I found post-modern feminist theory could provide a more useful framework for my study than could other feminist theories. To summarize, I will briefly outline five reasons why.

First, the post-modern theory of discourse posits that our gendered subjectivities are constituted by discourses that are historically situated and that these constructions can be changed. It allows me to refer to women, who via discourses are presently socialized into nurturer roles, as being more likely than men to possess and use maternal knowledge. It enables me, moreover, to suggest that men who via discourses are presently socialized to fill roles that meet the demands of public sector institutions, are likely to dismiss maternal knowledge unless they are men who mother. It also provides the opportunity to suggest the situation could be changed if it were found to not be in the best interests of either men or women.

Second, because post-modern theory posits that competing discourses constitute our subjectivities within a discursive field (e.g., of mothering practice, or of teaching) and that some are marginalized, it provides a frame for my proposition that within mothers' knowledge, contents of their authoritative knowledge can devalue their maternal knowledge. The possibility that tension is also produced by varying contents

within authoritative knowledge is illustrated in Weedon's claim that "contemporary definitions of woman as mother conflict with other subject positions which we are encouraged to assume.... As the subject of a range of conflicting discourses, she is subjected to their contradictions at great emotional cost" (1987:34).

Third, the thesis that women's authoritative knowledge devalues their own and other women's maternal knowledge can be framed in Foucault's analysis of power relations, which suggests that power operates at and across all levels of society. Foucault proposes that analysis needs to begin by investigating how power operates at the microlevels of society.

Fourth, from among feminist epistemologies, post-modern feminism seems to come closest to providing an epistemology of maternal knowledge. Moreover, the potential of maternal knowledge to bring a valuable critical perspective to authoritative knowledge seems to be comparable to Foucault's genealogical critical method. This apparent affirmation of the value of its critical potential increased my concern that maternal knowledge finds no authoritative voice in schools. I felt that if one takes seriously the moral responsibility which schools have for children, maternal knowledge would seem eminently suitable for advising how to put theory into practice. If so, it would have multiple application and importance in schools. These thoughts motivated my determination to acquire data that I could compare with my conjectures regarding maternal knowledge. Thus, I resolved to investigate the nature of mother/teachers' maternal knowledge and their experiences of its reception in schools. I was interested in what mother/teachers would say they believed about the nature of the knowledge and how it is received by school personnel. Below, I report the research questions which I decided the study should be designed to answer.

1. What is the form and substance of the knowledge acquired through experiencing motherhood?

2. What value do mothers/teachers regard this maternal knowledge to have for schools?
 - 2.1 Of what value do they consider it can be in their teaching?
 - 2.2 Of what value do they consider it can be for their students?
 - 2.3 Of what value do they consider it to be for the school as a whole?
 - 2.4 Of what value do they consider it to be in their relationships with their own children's teachers?
3. How does the knowledge compare with professional teaching knowledge which is gained from teacher education and teacher development events?
4. What reception do school personnel afford maternal knowledge when it enters schools?
 - 4.1 If maternal knowledge is ignored or belittled, why does this appear to be so? What then appear to be the consequences for students, teachers, mothers, and school administrators?
 - 4.2 If maternal knowledge is accepted, why does this appear to be so? To what extent is it accepted? What then appear to be the consequences for students, teachers, and school administrators?
 - 4.3 How do mother/teachers, in their mother role, and in their teacher role, cope with the reception their maternal knowledge receives?
5. How do mother/teachers' descriptions of their beliefs compare to the theoretical understandings which prompted my questions?

Finally, because post-modern feminist theory offers a way to deconstruct and reconstruct discourses and concepts (e.g., of authority) which might be found to contribute to devaluation of maternal knowledge, I felt it could supply a suitable methodology for the study. Because applying post-modern theory requires reflexivity, I would need to situate myself -- as Harding (1989) recommends for feminist study -- in the same critical plane as my research topic. I also considered by demonstrating reflexivity, I might help to allay the fears of some feminists that post-modern theory suggests subjectivity is entirely constructed by discourses and thus denies the possibility that knowledge can be acquired through our experiences. In Chapter 4, I discuss how I incorporated reflexivity in planning and conducting the study.

Chapter 4

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING THE STUDY: THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Situating my research within the post-modern obliged me to conduct the study in ways mindful of the existence of a power/knowledge relationship between researcher and researched. That is, since "poststructuralism views research as an enactment of power relations" (Lather, 1991:112), the post-modern researcher's priority becomes to seek methods which can deter the exertion of knowledge as power over the researched. Jane Flax (1989:53) suggests that bringing post-modernism to feminist study can help us "to think more about how we think ... and about how other modes of thinking can help or hinder in the development of our own discourses."

To place myself in the feminist post-modern while thinking about my methods, I decided that I needed both to think more *care/fully* about how I think and to re-think *care/fully* my common sense knowledge about how research should be conducted. Here, I was thinking that in its maternal sense, care entails recognizing the moral responsibility one has when one holds potential authority within a relationship; that is, the responsibility to steer the power away from its potential to oppress others, and shift it toward its ability to safeguard others from oppressive forces. The common-sense knowledge to which I wanted to apply such care involved the assumptions I hold about research methods on the basis of traditional discourses which constitute my knowledge of research.

In the discussion of the research design, I shall attempt to demonstrate how thinking *care/fully* about my thinking assisted me to place myself within the critical plane of my project while both planning and conducting the research. Much of this thinking was assisted by my readings of Lather (1991), who explains not only why she has added post-modernism to the methodological framework informing her own

practice of feminist research in education, but also what the addition has taught her about how to conduct emancipatory research. She claims that we need to develop "skills of self-critique, of a reflexivity which will keep us from becoming impositional" and to employ research designs that enable us "to reflect on how our value commitments insert themselves into our ... work" (Lather 1991:80). Because I had chosen a post-modern methodology, to assist my own reflexivity throughout the conduct of my study I decided to keep a journal. In it, I recorded my ongoing thoughts about and reactions to both my research design and participants' comments and stories. While discussing how I planned and conducted the study, I attempt to explain how keeping a journal helped me to think reflexively. To facilitate the discussion, I address three features separately: (1) study participants; (2) data collection methods; and (3) reporting method for the analysis and findings.

PARTICIPANTS: DISCERNING "WHO?", SEEKING FOR THEM, AND MAKING CONTACT

To find participants for my study, I sought women volunteers who were simultaneously teachers and mothers. Their dual role, I assumed, would enable the women to speak on their experiences regarding the reception of their maternal knowledge both as mothers of schoolchildren and as teachers. In this section, I discuss how and why I selected the criteria that would guide my search for participants, how I searched for participants, and how I made contact with them.

Selecting Criteria

I decided that each participant should have experienced being the mother of at least one child who either had been in school for any length of time between three years and school completion or had completed school at some time in the past. On the

assumption that lack of experience alone could influence a teacher to favour knowledge acquired during teacher training rather than other knowledge such as maternal knowledge, I decided that study participants should be experienced teachers. My immediate thought was to define "experienced" in terms of ten years or more in teaching. Upon further consideration, however, I feared that this could eliminate women who may have entered teaching following many years of mothering. On the assumption that such women could have much to contribute to my study, eventually I chose to define "experienced" as five years or more in teaching. Realizing that mother/teachers take leave for child care, for graduate or other university study, or for part-time work in other areas of education, I thought it unwise to require participants necessarily to be currently practising teachers. It seemed important, nevertheless, that they should not have been away from the field of education for more than five years. I found, however, that my criteria still did not make sufficient allowance for the reality of mother/teachers' lives.

Thinking about the criteria and the validity of the research. My own positioning as a mother/teacher matched the criteria used for the selection of participants. According to Acker, Barry, and Esseveld (1991), this would increase the validity of my data because I would "not have to go through the process of getting to know the special perspectives and nuances of meaning" (1991:146) of my participants and would be "sensitive to problems and issues that might otherwise [be] invisible." I thought this to be applicable to my study because my "primary orientation is towards the validation of women's subjective experiences as women and as people" (Oakley, 1981:30). To support their claims that such conditions increase validity, Acker et al. state that since "the notion of the neutral observer is a false assumption" (1991:151), to take into account the researcher's positioning in the social structure and thereby in the research relationship contributes to greater validity. They recognize the danger of the possible blinding

effects of closeness but imply that this danger is eliminated in the process of analysis, which imposes distancing upon the researcher.

Adjusting the criteria to fit mother/teachers' career patterns. When contacting the first mother/teachers who had expressed interest in participating in the study, I realized that my conception of "years of experience" was too narrow in relation to many mother/teachers' careers. For most of the mother/teachers who participated in my study, their years of experience had not mounted up tidily. I soon learned that a mother/teacher can have ten or more years of teaching contact with schools, yet not be able to claim five full years of experience. Careers that had been interrupted for several years for childcare purposes and/or changes of domicile to facilitate husbands' career moves mostly seemed to have been restarted via substitute teaching, and the substitute teaching was often followed by part-time teaching.

I found, for instance, that a mother/teacher could be officially credited only .25 years of teaching experience when in fact she had regularly substitute taught all subjects in Kindergarten to Grade 12 for one and a half years, and filled a half-time teaching position in the second half of the second year. For purposes of my study, I felt this should be counted as at least two years of teaching experience. Upon realizing this, I asked the people who were contacting prospective participants to refer to years of contact with schools rather than years of teaching experience. I was disturbed to find that the number of years of experience that I counted was often much higher than that applied -- depending on the school district -- to either participants' years of seniority, or years credited for their pension and other benefits. I found this especially upsetting when I heard about the extent and variety of many participants' teaching experiences.

Seeking Participants

Despite the advantages that I believed our similar mother/teacher positioning could bring to my relationship with participants, I felt, nevertheless, that the image of a hierarchical power relationship between researcher and participant might be sharpened if access were attempted via school administration. Believing, therefore, that a formal search for participants through contacting their schools would be inappropriate, I conducted the search via friends and acquaintances.

I contacted friends and acquaintances in the field of education to tell them about my study and to ask them if they would make it known to mother/teachers among their own friends and colleagues. I not only described my selection criteria to the contact people, but also gave them basic information to enable them to explain the study to women interested in participating. I told them that I had three main questions in mind because my purpose was to learn: (1) what knowledge is developed through the experience of being a mother; (2) of what use mother/teachers believe the knowledge to be in their work as teachers; and (3) what reception the knowledge is given in schools when mother/teachers speak it as teachers, and when they speak it as mothers interacting with their children's teachers. I also informed the contact people that the time commitment for participants would be roughly twelve hours spread over a five month period. I explained that I planned to have two one-and-a-half hour interviews with each participant and, when all interviews were complete, to convene an afternoon of group discussion between all participants. I asked contact persons to tell me the names and telephone numbers of any mother/teachers who expressed both an interest in participating in the study and a willingness to be contacted by me. I felt comfortable working with the contact people and felt encouraged when these friends and acquaintances, who were mostly teachers themselves, demonstrated interest by providing me a total of seventeen names within just one week.

Contacting Participants

I telephoned each mother/teacher who had expressed interest in participating. I introduced myself by describing my own positioning as a mother/teacher, and I invited questions about the study. I not only repeated the information that I had given to the contact people, but also offered further details. For example, I explained my plans for participants to review their interview transcriptions, and I mentioned that there would be a four to five week interval between each participant's two interviews. Of the seventeen whom I telephoned, only one mother/teacher declined to participate. She had just begun a new teaching assignment, and one of her two children was a seven-month-old baby. She felt unable to participate in the study because she doubted whether she would be able to meet the required time commitment.

The group of sixteen mother/teachers who volunteered to participate consisted of six secondary and ten elementary teachers and they were currently employed in four different school districts. Many of the volunteers had taught in other school districts. Several had also taught in other provinces, in the United Kingdom, and in the United States. There were many variations in the volunteers' career patterns: some had taught before having their children, taken breaks of various lengths to care for their children, and then resumed their teaching careers; others had only minimally interrupted their careers to care for their children; and two had not entered teaching until their own children were in high school.

To each participant, I sent a formal letter to thank her for her interest in the study, to confirm the time commitment required, and to provide assurances of anonymity, etc. The letter (see Appendix A) was forwarded along with a participant consent form. While making contact with participants, I found myself needing to reflect upon some of my assumptions regarding the researcher/researched relationship. The reflection can be seen in two entries in my journal:

Despite the delight and encouragement I have gained from hearing participants' enthusiasm over the 'phone, I continue to feel hesitant each time I approach the 'phone to make my introductory call to the next prospective participant. I have an acute sense of initiating an intrusion into these women's lives. I am anxious not to make the women feel like objects of study, yet at the same time I realize this is in a sense what they will be.

My feeling of unease when initiating each call has continued right up to No. 17, despite the fact that most of the women have received my calls with an attitude sufficiently warm that I have felt encouraged to proceed in a relaxed manner. On the other hand, telephone discussions have reminded me that the participants have power within the relationship and can resist attempts to make them mere objects. They have often reminded me that they have agency! Yes, for instance, their questions and comments have often indicated that their interests in participating in the study are connected to their personal agendas.

Unfortunately, I did not record the questions, but I recall that several participants were anxious to know what I expected the outcomes of the study to be, and some even suggested what they would like the outcomes to be. For instance, I recall being asked whether the study might encourage school boards to give mother/teachers credit for their mothering experience. Many sought information about my interview questions. Participants asked, for instance, whether or not there would be a questionnaire, and whether I had many questions. I informed them that I had a few open-ended questions designed to provide a framework for each interview. Some seemed anxious to instigate a first interview immediately on the telephone and began to recount their mother/teacher experiences.

COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA

Over a period of five months, two one-and-a-half hour audiotaped interviews were held with each of the sixteen participants. Following the completion of all interviews, eleven of the mother/teachers met for an afternoon of audiotaped group discussions. To explain these procedures, the discussion will focus first, on the two interviews; second, on the group discussion session; and, finally, on collaboration and reciprocity in relation to how the interviews and the group discussions were conducted.

The Interviews

Interviews were held -- depending upon each participant's preference -- either in my own or in the participant's home. Because of the reports in the literature regarding the "silencing" of mothers, I thought that mother/teachers might find the home environment safer and more conducive to speaking freely about their experiences than other locations, such as, their classrooms. Other locations were not ruled out when participants and I discussed arrangements for their interviews, but each chose one or the other home location. The interviews were held over a period of almost five months. The average time lapse between the first and second interview varied, but for most participants was about five weeks.

The plan for the first set of interviews. To begin each first interview, I planned to collect demographic information about the participant, such as, the number and ages of her children, the number of spells that she had in and out of teaching, the duration of each spell, and the positioning of each in relation to her children's births. The demographic information I planned to record in writing before commencing the audiotaping, although, as I shall explain later, I eventually found it necessary to audiotape this information. During the longer, audiotaped portion of the interview, I planned to ask each participant to talk first about her experiences of life as a mother in general, and second about her experiences as a mother of a schoolchild in particular. Before presenting the questions, I explained to each participant that although the first interview would focus on her mothering experience and the second on her teaching experience, I anticipated that she might sometimes want to refer to teaching in the first and to mothering in the second. The following are the open-ended questions that I had planned:

- 1) Before you became a mother, what did you expect it would mean to be a mother?
- 2) How do your actual experiences of motherhood compare with your expectations?

- 3) When you have had questions related to your child/ren's upbringing, how have you proceeded to search for answers? How did you feel about your chances of finding an answer?
- 4) What would you suggest being a mother teaches you?
- 5) What were your expectations of your role upon becoming the mother of a schoolchild?
- 6) How have your experiences in that role compared to your expectations?
- 7) How have you expected that your child/ren's teachers, school administrators, and counsellors should receive your knowledge of your own child/ren and of children in general?
- 8) How do your experiences of that reception compare to your expectations?

I realized that because a participant's answer to any one question might contain information pertinent to subsequent questions, it would often be unnecessary to ask all of the planned questions. I imagined that additional probing questions would be needed occasionally to expand or clarify information. Realizing, moreover, that participants might sometimes provide important information that had not been directly elicited by my original questions, I accepted that in subsequent interviews with other participants I should add new questions to elicit comparable information. Although I understood that such changes would be contrary to the conditions of replicability in research, I felt that to conform to such conditions would inhibit the richness of information otherwise available to me.

Following each of the first interviews, I transcribed the audiotape and delivered a copy of the transcription to the participant. My purpose was to give each participant the opportunity not only to check that the transcription correctly represented her interview, but also to write in any additional thoughts that occurred to her after the interview, including any that were provoked by her encounter with the transcription. Participants were told that at the beginning of their second interviews, I would invite them to talk about the additional information.

Piloting the first set of interviews. Interviews with the first two participants were used to pilot the questions. I was anxious to check the clarity and relevance of the questions from the participants' perspective. The readiness and the scope of participants' responses were used as the indicators of the relevance of the questions. The scope was also noted as evidence of the questions' ability to elicit the information which the study required.

The demographic information revealed that during spells away from teaching, the mother/teachers became involved in volunteer and/or part-time work that was directly or indirectly connected to education and schools. This prompted me to ask questions about these activities and what they taught mothers. Because these experiences appeared to be a source of knowledge for mother/teachers, it seemed important to seek information on them from other mothers and to add appropriate questions to the interview. Thus, I decided to ask participants who had taken breaks from teaching what activities they pursued outside of the home during that time. Moreover, I decided to ask all participants what involvements, if any, they had with community groups in which they may have enrolled their children, in what capacity they had become involved, and what they learned as a result of these involvements.

In the first of the two pilot interviews, the participant's response to my first question was brief and hesitant. She offered a ready and full response to the second question, however, and it included information which represented an answer to the first. In the second pilot interview, the participant answered my first question readily. Because most of the interview questions were paired like the first two, I decided from the piloting experience to expect that some participants' answers to the first of a pair might be sparse. The answer might nevertheless be presented spontaneously or by my probing during the answering of the second question in a pair. The first question in each pair, moreover, needed to be retained. The pilot interview participants had difficulty with the seventh and eighth questions, which sought information on how

mother/teachers' knowledge is received during interactions with their own children's teachers. The phrase "knowledge ... of children in general" at the end of question seven seemed to mislead participants into speaking about knowledge gained through teaching experience. I realized, also, that question seven was inappropriately long for the end of an interview. So, I decided to collapse the two end questions into one shorter one, which asked, "During meetings with your children's teachers, principals, etc., how is your knowledge of your own children received?" Responses indicated that the new question was a greater success than the previous two.

While discussing the pilots with my research methods advisor, I realized that some of the information I was discussing had been provided by participants during my talk with them before and/or after the interview, i.e., talk that had not been audiotaped. When she suggested that I should be recording this "before and after" talk, I felt somewhat uneasy because I recalled that the talks included information on my own experiences. However, upon reconsidering, I realized that when my contribution had influence, it resulted in the participant extending her own response; i.e., realizing that her own comment had activated my memory or thoughts seemed to be an impetus for her to enlarge upon the information she was offering. This led me to realize that I had been mistakenly holding my own talk in abeyance during the pilot interviews. So in ensuing interviews, I spoke briefly of my own experience on occasions when I inferred that my talk might encourage participant's talk, or provide them a sense of freedom of voice. Also, in following interviews, I audiotaped the "before" and "after" talks, but decided only to transcribe the portions that were relevant to the study. This procedure was explained to participants at the beginning of their interviews.

The plan for the second set of interviews. During the first thirty minutes, at least, of the second interview, participants reported their responses and additions to their first transcriptions, and I asked them questions that had occurred to me while transcribing

and reading through their first interviews. In the remainder of the interview, I asked each participant to talk about her experiences of teaching in general and of teaching as a mother/teacher in particular. Again my questions were open-ended, and I planned to ask each participant,

- 1) Before you became a teacher, what did you expect it would mean to be a teacher?
- 2) How would you compare your experience of being a teacher with your previous expectations?
- 3) After becoming a mother, what expectations did you have regarding the usefulness of your mothering experience in your teaching?
- 4) How would you compare your experience of its usefulness in your teaching with your expectations?
- 5) After becoming a mother, how did you feel the school should receive the knowledge that you had acquired through your mothering experience?
- 6) How would you compare your experience of the reception of that knowledge and your expectations?
- 7) How would you compare the knowledge you have gained from your mothering experience with that offered during inservice teacher development events?

After several first interviews had been conducted, it became evident that being teachers caused mother/teachers' relationships with their children's teachers to be atypical. Consequently, in most cases, it could not be discerned from participants' first interview responses whether or not other mothers' knowledge is accepted by personnel in their children's schools. In the hope of gaining some insight in this regard, I added an extra question in the second interview. The question asked, "What impact do you think your being a mother has on your students' mothers?"

Like the first, each second interview was audiotaped, transcribed, and a copy of the transcription was delivered to the participant for her verification. I invited participants to add comments to their transcriptions if they wished, or to report their comments to me by telephone. I arranged for the transcriptions to be returned to me on the day of the group discussions.

Piloting the second set of interviews. Interviews with the first two participants were again used to pilot the questions. Both participants had added comments to the transcriptions of their first interviews and discussion of these and my own further questions took approximately the half hour planned. During these second interviews, many of the planned questions were answered spontaneously; information that I sought was offered without my asking the questions. The pilot interviews, nevertheless, seemed to indicate that the questions were sufficiently clear and relevant. The interviews were conversational in style but, nevertheless, most talk was contributed by the interviewees. The conversational nature of the interviews seemed to enable reciprocity and collaboration between researcher and participant.

Conducting the interviews: reciprocity and collaboration. Prior to planning the study, I accepted that interviewers should restrict themselves to asking questions, eliciting and probing for further information, and uttering sounds and phrases indicating interest in and encouragement of participants' talk. To accommodate the restrictions, I believed that one should deflect interviewees' attempts to ask questions. I decided to re-examine these beliefs, however, after reading several researchers' experiences of interviewing women. Feminist researchers not only report that women ask several types of questions when they are interviewed, but also conclude that the questions should be answered by the interviewer (Griffith and Smith, 1987; Acker, Barry, and Esseveld, 1991; and Lather, 1991).

Prompted by these reports to reflect upon my previous interviewing experiences, I recalled occasional feelings of discomfort. I remembered feeling uncomfortable when interviewees explicitly apologized for being unsure whether their responses fit the research agenda. I recalled feeling uneasy about deflecting requests for my opinions or my answers, especially when I wondered whether the interviewee might find them helpful. Thus, upon reflection, I realized the error of assuming both the desirability and

the possibility that interviewers can somehow maintain objectivity in the interview relationship. Interviewing behaviours that had previously seemed reasonable to me, now appeared capable of transforming the researcher -- from the research participant's perspective -- into a mysterious powerful knower and of, thus, compounding the researcher/participant power hierarchy. Moreover, I concluded that the interview situation wherein it appears correct not to answer questions presents an opportunity to abuse knowledge/power by camouflaging not only one's research intentions, but also one's possible inability to answer the questions participants ask. Thus, I chose to answer willingly any of my participants' questions.

I found support for my above conclusions and decision in Lather (1991), who suggests that, "Interviews conducted in an interactive, dialogic manner that requires self-disclosure on the part of the researcher encourage reciprocity" (Lather, 1991: 60). Lather defines reciprocity as "give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (Lather, 1991:57), and she draws on Oakley (1981) to explain that "interviews conducted in an interactive ... manner" are sequential interviews and include the recycling of data. I believed that my treatment of the transcription data could partly support my claim that reciprocity was encouraged in my study.

According to Lather, research that is conducted in a "dialogic manner" is collaborative because "respondents are actively involved in the construction and validation of meaning" (1991:63). I continually sought participants' responses to ideas that I was developing during the data collection process. I presented the ideas in the form of additional questions but, nevertheless, this enabled me to solicit participants' opinions and/or criticisms of my emergent understandings of the data. Moreover, the interviews gained the semblance of an ongoing conversation. The reciprocal nature of the interviews also enabled me to check participants' reactions to my ideas regarding a meaningful topic for the group discussion session to be held following the interviews.

Planning and Conducting the Group Discussion

The discussion session was planned for the end of the fifth month of the data collection period. So that a selection could be made on the basis of the best possible attendance, participants were asked upon which of three proposed dates they would be able to attend. The most popular date was one that would enable twelve participants to attend. When the day came around, one of the twelve had to leave town unexpectedly, so the number dropped to eleven. Of the other four unable to attend, one had left Canada to teach in Guatemala, another was on vacation, and the other two, who were Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, were holding introductory meetings with the parents of children who would be their students in the approaching school year. The group discussion day occurred during the last week of the school summer vacation.

To begin the afternoon of group discussions, the eleven participants met as lunch guests in my home. After lunch, we proceeded to a nearby university building. There, I had arranged for us to have the use of one large and two small rooms for the afternoon. Audiotaping equipment had been set up in all three rooms.

I had planned three hours in total for the discussion session. In the first twenty minutes, I introduced the topic for discussion to the whole group and gave my reasons for choosing it (participants' contribution to the choosing process is discussed in the data analysis section below). Next, I explained that the discussion would commence in small groups; that persons whom I had contacted previously would act as recorders for each group; and that following the group discussions, the reports would be shared in a whole group discussion. I encouraged participants to share any personal stories that they thought pertinent to their small group discussions, and to repeat any which they may have recounted previously to me. At the end of this introductory session, we divided the whole group into two small groups of four and one group of three, and each went to a separate room for one hour and forty minutes of small group discussion. Each group took refreshment breaks at their own discretion. For the last hour, the whole

group reconvened in the large room and shared reports from their small groups. At the end of the afternoon, it was agreed that I would telephone each participant at some time in the future to ask them to reflect upon what it had meant to them to be in the study.

My role during the discussion afternoon was mainly that of facilitator. Following my introduction, I visited each group in turn and listened momentarily to the discussions, but did not contribute unless invited. I felt encouraged by the eagerness and the amount of talk that was taking place. I "chaired" the whole group discussion, listened to the reports and responses, and finally offered a five-minute summary to close the afternoon.

Triangulation

To achieve triangulation in interpretive studies, Lather claims that researchers "must consciously utilize designs which seek counter patterns as well as convergence if data are to be credible" (1991:67). Drawing on the work of Guba and Lincoln (1981) Lather reminds us that triangulation contributes to establishing the trustworthiness of data. The two sets of interviews in the study enabled comparison between two sets of different but related data. These data also provided information on individual differences between participants. The group discussions enabled me to discern which of the beliefs and experiences revealed during the interviews were held in common by participants. The content of the group discussions also seemed to give "added depth to the description of the social meanings involved" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:198).

Data Analysis

The post-modern methodology that I adopted for my study, obliged me to encounter data reflexively. Thinking *care/fully* about my thinking, became my perpetual

habit in order to avoid imposing my own unexamined ideas. Consequently, it occurred to me at this stage of my writing that although convenient it is artificial to describe data analysis as though it were separate from data collection in this study. This is because the preliminary analysis of the data occurred entirely during the data collection phase. However, because the analysis continued during the writing phase, descriptions of how I employed reflexivity throughout both phases is included in my discussion which addresses two problem areas referred to in literature on research methods: the first is the interpretation of data; and the second is what Lather names "the textual staging of knowledge" (1991:90).

Interpreting data. As previously mentioned, throughout all stages of the data collection process, I kept a record of my reflexive thoughts in a journal. The journal writing commenced when I began to contact participants. At first, the journal took the form of a computer file. However, during the interview phase, many of the thoughts that I wanted to record occurred while I was transcribing the interview audiotapes. To avoid continual switching between files, I decided to continue my journal in audiotape form. For this purpose, I kept a small tape recorder permanently by my side, recorded my thoughts as they arose, and transcribed them later

Often the thoughts which I recorded in my journal emerged as irritations. That is, they represented an uncomfortable or disappointed feeling about something a participant had said. Recording these feelings increased my awareness of them and prompted me to examine them. Reflexive examination revealed that either my own values or my preset ideas about what I wanted to hear were interfering with my reception of participants' comments. For instance, I found it disturbing when first I heard participants speaking enthusiastically about instinct in connection with their knowledge. I noted that although, in my theses, I had proposed that a validation of maternal knowledge may not be possible according to the terms of currently accepted

theories of knowledge, the theories were nevertheless influencing my ideas about how participants ought to describe knowledge. I recognized, moreover, that I was worried that some feminist concerns about associating women with nature might give "instinct" dubious currency. I felt compelled to banish these thoughts in order to hear better what "instinct" means to mothers and what place they assign it in relation to "maternal" knowledge. I would not want to pretend, however, that keeping a journal cleansed my interpretations of all my own mistaken thoughts. I merely think it helped to improve the trustworthiness of some of my interpretations and provided a record of how those interpretations were made.

Keeping this reflexive journal also had two practical uses in the research. First, the reflexive journal enabled me to allow emerging ideas to surface, share them with participants in the form of additional interview questions, and note their responses. In this way, I was able also to share with participants several ideas about what they might discuss during the group discussion session and note from their reactions how meaningful they found the ideas. In its second practical use, because several other words surfaced which like "instinct" could be diversely conceived and expressed, having them recorded in the journal helped me to recognize not only that I should seek further information about them during interviews, but also that they seemed to represent categories which could guide the analysis of data. Eventually, I identified eleven such words among the mother/teachers' descriptions of their knowledge, how it was acquired, and their difficulties in making it heard. These words, the multiplicity of concepts associated with them, and how understanding this problem might assist attempts to promote maternal knowledge became the topic of the participants' group discussions.

Although the reflexive journal enabled me to identify categories of information, because my research was politically oriented, I was not attempting to build theory solely from the data as is the case in grounded theory research (Lather, 1991). Rather,

because mine was a critical form of research, it had required first that theory should "illuminate the lived experiences" of the mother/teachers and, second, that in turn the theory "must also be illuminated by their struggles" (Lather, 1991:55). Propositions, for instance, regarding the problematic nature of the eleven words were generated by data, but only in a dialectical manner that took into account the "a priori"¹ theoretical framework, but which [kept] ... [the] framework from becoming the container into which the data must be poured" (Lather 1991:62). That is, the process of analysing the data associated with the words seemed to be what Geertz (1975) describes as "a continual dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously" (1975:52). Although the eleven words suggested categories of information regarding maternal knowledge, these were not the only realizations afforded me by my reflexive journal. It also revealed to me the necessity to honour differences among participants in order to prevent the findings on maternal knowledge from becoming impositional.

Lather (1991) claims that researcher reflexivity is necessary for enabling construct validity² in politically oriented, interpretive research. She states that, "A *systematized reflexivity* which reveals how a priori theory has been changed by the logic of the data seems essential in establishing construct validity in ways that will contribute to the growth of illuminating and change-enhancing social theory" (1991:67 emphasis in original). Because, during the conduct of the study, reflexivity enabled me to note sometimes the tendency of my own authoritative knowledge to discount ways in which

¹ According to my understanding, "a priori" refers to theory that is available to inform the study prior to the investigative stages. It may be verified, refuted, or amended as a result of the investigation.

² Construct validity exists in qualitative studies if study participants' descriptions of their experiences and/or beliefs confirm the appropriateness of the concepts and ideas constructed to aid thought about and investigation of the experiences and/or beliefs and, therefore, demonstrate their potential usefulness to theory building.

participants expressed their maternal knowledge, I believe that reflexivity helped to install construct validity in my research.

Discussing the additional requirement for face validity³ in interpretative research, Lather explains that research which has "face validity provides a 'click of recognition' and a 'yes, of course,' instead of 'yes, but' experience" (Kidder, 1982:56 cited in Lather 1991:67). Lather states, moreover, that face validity can be acquired by having at least a few of the participants check the emerging analysis. Since such checking occurred not only during interviews, but also was facilitated by the group discussions, I would claim that the presence of this feature in my study enhances its face validity. I would also claim that collaboration⁴ and reciprocity⁵ were increased because the group discussion session represented a participant review of the preliminary analysis of the data. It enabled them to respond to eleven words that I had identified as representative of key themes in their interview talk. Data analysis is the second of the areas wherein reciprocity is necessary in critical research according to Lather (1991), who states that it should operate not only between researcher and researched, but also between data and theory as discussed above.

Lather proposes yet another criterion for assessing the validity of research that is politically oriented. This she names "*catalytic validity*," which she describes as "the degree to which the research process re-orient, focusses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (Lather, 1991:68). Guided by Lather's (1991) report of her own research experience, I fear that consciousness raising lends

³ Face validity exists if the report of data analysis and findings "rings true" to readers; i.e., if they find it credible on the basis of their own experiences of life.

⁴ Collaboration between researcher and participants involves a sharing of the tasks and responsibilities of constructing and validating meaning with regards to the data.

⁵ Reciprocity is a means of enabling collaboration. It involves give and take between participant and researcher, in a chain of events which enable the building of evidence and/or understanding. For instance, as data are generated, participants are invited to respond to them, then the researcher responds to the participants' responses, and so on. Thus, meaning and power are mutually negotiated (Lather, 1991).

itself to impositional practice and, thus, it is not an aim of my research. However, I felt that the nature of my study required me to investigate whether or not it helped the participants to gain a new respect for their knowledge and a desire to find ways of promoting its value. The enthusiasm and the ready flow of talk that was evident during the group discussion session implied that mother/teachers had strong concern for and pride in their maternal knowledge.

Keeping a reflexive journal helped me to guard against becoming impositional while collecting and analyzing data. However, recognizing that I had both responsibility and control with regard to reporting the analysis and findings, I felt it important also to think *care/fully* about how this stage can be affected by researcher power. In this regard, several ethnographic researchers have addressed the question of how the text in the report should be staged.

The question of the "textual staging of knowledge." Reviewing recent literature on the problems that researchers report regarding description and interpretation, Lather notes an emphasis on the problem of "textual staging of knowledge" in the writing process (1991:90). She notes that the written texts of interpretive research represent "'a point of intersection between two subjectivities'" (Patai, 1988:146 cited in Lather, 1991:94). However, since "social relations [of the research act] mediate the construction of knowledge; who speaks for whom becomes a central question" (Lather, 1991:91), and the style of narrative realism with its "foregrounding of [the researcher's] own perspectivity" (1991:91) becomes a problem. Lather reports that usually in interpretive studies, interview dialogue is used " 'as a means of verisimilitude in the interest of empirical validation'" (Tyler, S., 1985:93 cited in Lather, 1991:91). Speaking of realist accounts in ethnography and referring to them as the most prevalent and recognized form, Van Maanen (1988) explains that

a realist tale offers one reading and culls its facts carefully to support that reading. Little can be discovered in such texts that has not been put there by the fieldworker as a way of supporting a particular interpretation (1988:53)

but he also reminds his reader that "ethnographies of any sort are always subject to multiple interpretations. They are never beyond controversy or debate" (Van Maanen, 1988:35). However, some researchers seem to be more firmly set against realist accounts, for instance,

data might be better conceived as the material for telling a story where the challenge becomes to generate a polyvalent data base that is used to *vivify* interpretation as opposed to 'support' or 'prove' (Lather, 1991:91 emphasis in original).

Offering her support for alternative forms of staging text, Lather suggests that "turning the text into a display and interaction among perspectives and presenting material rich enough to bear re-analysis ... [can] bring the reader into the analysis" and "such writing works against the tendency to become the locus of authority" (1991:91). In support of her statements, Lather describes the creative forms of presenting data and analysis attempted by six other researchers. She also provides a comparative analysis of her own attempts to use both alternative forms and the more conventional ones.

Addressing various ways of presenting ethnographic data and analysis, Hammersley and Atkinson (1987) carefully examine the alternative of foregrounding data and, thus, the researched, by separating the narrative from the analysis. They suggest that this variation has the advantages of enabling the author "to present an engaging and accessible account of the data" which is not "held up by ... discussion or clouded by ... analytic problems," which well acquaints the reader with "considerable information about and 'feel for' the culture in question," and which consequently leaves the author free to present the analysis of themes and problems relatively "unimpeded by any need to clutter such discussion with data" (1987:221-222). However, Hammersley and Atkinson warn that the approach has its "dangers and pitfalls" (1987:222). They suggest that having separated the narrative from the analysis, the author may "develop

flights of sociological fancy that are not in fact grounded in and systematically related to the data," and, moreover, the separation can disguise the fact that any orderly presentation of the narrative description, "is itself analytic" because it must necessarily be preceded by "a great deal of analytic work" (1987:222). This is a problem because,

the separation between ethnography and analysis may *appear* to imply that the ethnographic account is somehow innocent or pre-analytic: this may seduce the reader into placing greater credence in the ethnography, and hence, as we have suggested, in the following analysis. However, it masks the analytic work that has informed its production (1987:222 emphasis in original).

Therefore, Hammersley and Atkinson conclude that "any use of this approach must be informed by an explicit awareness of its analytic implications" (1987:223).

In response to the calls for and suggestions of ways to improve the staging of texts, Geertz (1988) warns that

there are a number of these pretensions, but they all tend to come down in one way or another to an attempt to get round the un-get-roundable fact that all ethnographical descriptions are homemade, that they are the describer's descriptions, not those of the described (Geertz, 1988:144-145).

With full appreciation of these limitations, I decided that when presenting the findings and discussion, I would prefer to position participants' comments prior to my discussion of them. My decision was based on a premonition that this method might give readers a better opportunity to form their own impressions of the data than would the more conventional realist style wherein the words of participants would be subsidiary to my comments about them. I suspected that the alternative to the realist method might enable readers better to assess the feasibility of my interpretations and claims. However, I realized that adopting this style would not eliminate the need to maintain reflexivity in order to avoid the pitfalls which were reported by Hammersley and Atkinson (1987) and discussed above.

PREVIEWING HOW I PRESENT AND DISCUSS MY CONVERSATION WITH SIXTEEN MOTHER/TEACHERS

In the next four chapters, I reveal the information provided in my conversation with the sixteen mother/teachers. In Chapter 5, I introduce the sixteen study participants and highlight differences between and similarities among them. I use participants' talk both to illuminate the introductions and to reveal how it prompted me to develop additional research questions. In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I present what I heard and learned from the sixteen mother/teachers about maternal knowledge. I discuss, in Chapter 6, what the mother/teachers implied that they believed to be the roots of their maternal knowledge; in Chapter 7, what maternal knowledge the mother/teachers claimed to have developed through experiencing the activities of motherhood; and in Chapter 8, what they said they believed to be the usefulness and reception of their maternal knowledge in schools.

Chapter 5

MEETING AND LISTENING TO SIXTEEN MOTHER/TEACHERS

My purpose in this chapter is to provide a background to the discussions of maternal knowledge which I present in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. Within the chapter, I perform two introductory tasks: (1) I introduce participants by forming a profile of each mother/teacher using demographic data and excerpts from her interview talk; and (2) I introduce eleven words which I discerned from participants' interview talk to have special importance in mother/teachers' descriptions of their maternal knowledge. The sketches of the participants enable me to display evidence of differences between and similarities among the sixteen mother/teachers. Introducing the eleven words enables me to reveal why upon hearing them I was prompted to compose additional research questions which not only influenced my choice of a topic for the group discussion session, but also guided further analysis of the data.

In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I present analyses and findings pertaining to both interview and group discussion data. In this chapter, however, I present analyses and findings which influenced the choice of discussion topics, were conducted therefore before the group sessions, and are consequently based upon interview data only. As explained in Chapter 4, to present the analysis and findings, I planned to foreground participants' words; i.e., to write them before rather than as a support for and, therefore, after my own words. I did not want this presentation style to represent merely an alternate way of positioning participants' words in relation to mine, but rather I intended it to demonstrate how the process of composing Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 constituted a continuation of the analysis. So, I introduce each chapter by discussing the process employed in its composition.

While composing this chapter, I built the profile for each participant by using a three step process: first, I wrote a sketch of the participant using the demographic information she had supplied during her interviews; second, I excerpted and wrote down interview talk that exemplified what the participant drew to my attention regarding both maternal knowledge and her experience of being a mother/teacher; and, third, I wrote about what I had learned from the talk. I am aware, however, that despite my efforts to give precedence to participants' voices by presenting them prior to my responses, I did not relinquish the privilege of deciding what to present from among their talk.

Participants' stories indicated that despite many differences, there were also marked similarities between the mother/teachers' life situations. Most participants described teaching careers which had been interrupted by child-rearing and/or husbands' career relocations. Many spoke of having felt the need to return to teaching or to participate in volunteer or part-time employment because working as a mother at home was "not enough." In all cases, the volunteer or part-time work had some association with schools or other educational institutions and organizations. Regardless of their previous experience/s and although the average age¹ of participants was forty-something, many held only a few years of seniority in their current positions.

There were commonalities among participants' descriptions of the nature and development of their maternal knowledge, its usefulness to their work as teachers, and its reception in schools. For instance, without exception, every participant said she thought that through being a mother she had gained a new understanding of and respect for both individuality and the importance of preserving and cultivating children's individual qualities and talents. Therefore, I quickly perceived that "individuality" was a term of importance in participants' descriptions of their maternal

¹ I did not ask participants' ages, but other demographic information indicated that the ages ranged from mid-thirties to early fifties and that the majority were in their forties.

knowledge. As the interviews progressed, I gradually discerned ten other words which were similarly important. The words were "instinct," "intuition," "sensitivity," "nurturing," "caring," "controlling," "mothering," "assertiveness," "humility," and "emotion." Unlike "individuality," none of these words was referred to by all participants, but each was referred to by several. The importance of each word and that the word might be conceived of in several ways, however, was first drawn to my attention by just one or a few individuals. In this chapter, each participant is introduced within a chapter section that indicates which word she brought to my attention.

The chapter is presented in six main sections, and each section has a title which refers to one or more of ten² of the words. Various participants are described within each section. I find it important to stress, however, that my use of these sections is not intended to suggest any scheme for categorizing participants. Rather, I regard the sections merely as a device for both organizing the information presented in the chapter and accentuating the words that emerged from participants' talk; words which prompted me to form additional research questions. I present the questions in the summary of this chapter, that is, after I have introduced the sixteen participants whose talk prompted me to investigate mother/teachers' conceptions of, first, "instinct," "intuition," and "sensitivity"; second, "nurturing"; third, "caring"; fourth, "controlling"; fifth, "mothering"; and sixth, "assertiveness," "humility," and "emotion."

² This group of ten does not include "individuality." Each of the ten terms was first drawn to my attention by the talk of one or a few participants. In contrast, "individuality" caught my attention because it was prominent in the talk of all participants. Thus, I felt it inappropriate to introduce "individuality" in the same way that I introduce the other ten terms. In this chapter, either implicit or explicit references to individuality will be evident in the excerpts from many of the participants' interviews.

PARTICIPANTS WHOSE TALK FIRST PROMPTED ME TO INVESTIGATE
MOTHER/TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF "INSTINCT," "INTUITION," AND
"SENSITIVITY"

By using the two terms often while attempting to describe their maternal knowledge, two participants drew my attention sharply to "instinct" and "intuition." I was alarmed by their insistent association of instinct and intuition with maternal knowledge, as I shall explain further in Chapter 6. I was not perturbed, however, to hear the term "sensitivity," which the two mother/teachers often used along with "instinct" or "intuition." The two frequently embellished their talk with nature imagery. They implied their belief that mothers learn to respect the uniqueness of each child's "nature" and the importance of preserving that nature. The mother/teachers I introduce in this section are Pat and Ruth.

Pat

A mother of one son aged fourteen and another aged eleven, Pat had eleven years of school teaching experience. She had grown up, attended university, and had begun her teaching career in the eastern United States of America. After eight years of teaching, Pat's first son was born and she took a one year maternity leave. When Pat was about to resume teaching, her husband made a career move from Florida to Alberta. In Alberta, Pat began teaching English as a second language (ESL) to adults, part-time. When her second son was born, Pat again took a one year maternity leave. She applied for full-time secondary teaching work when the younger son reached four years old, but a severe shortage of jobs meant her only option was to continue part-time teaching in adult education. She taught adults for a total of nine years until her husband made a career move to British Columbia. There Pat acquired a full-time position as a high school drama teacher. She was in the third year of this assignment at the time of the study, and her contract had recently become permanent. For salary purposes, Pat's

current school board had given her credit for her teaching experience with adults. She had, however, only three years of district seniority.

Pat's words. That initial bond that you feel for that baby, that toddler, that five-year old, that ten-year old. There is nothing stronger I don't think in the world. I know I always wanted children. There was that nesting urge, that need to have children, uh, but I didn't know that I'd have this, you know, this kind of a connection to them. I've got a fourteen year old who's pushing me away as fast as I'm holding on. He's spreading his wings and his dad's encouraging it. I don't worry about it at all because I think that's normal. I think that ... they come back. I think it's more of a game than anything else.

J: What is the knowledge that you feel you gained by being a mother?

I just think life skills, um, I would have to say a knowledge of life skills -- family life I don't know. I don't think knowledge is the right word. I think it's instinct, or the honing of instincts. I think some of us probably have better instincts than others. Um, I think it's probably a honing of instincts rather than development of knowledge.

I'm blinded by the light. I, I -- I mean these are my kids! I just think they're great kids ... yet I know that they don't do what other people's children do. I know that [my older son] won't likely get to university ... and yet I'm happy with his development, I love his wit, I think he's clever I would like it if he were athletic or were more aggressive. Er, even if he's not more athletic, at least be aggressive, and get out there on the soccer field and be aggressive. So if you're not the best player just get out there and punch your way through. Um, he's not like that, never going to be like that. His dad's disappointed in him. His dad would like him to be more athletic. I'm not. I wish he could do these things, I wish he could feel better about himself. I don't know how to make him feel better. And I have to admit, I wonder where, I wonder if I, if I've loved him too much, if I've hugged him too much (pause). My son had a hard time adjusting when we moved ... to B.C. ... kids picked on him, he had a really rough year in his sixth grade year and seventh wasn't much better.

Just thinking about [my son's] problems I think the schools are too busy! I think the individual child is lost. I mean, I say that as a teacher, and I say that as a parent. I've got a boy right now that's being picked on and I don't know why, except he's smaller than the other kids. I don't like seeing it! I hate it! And that's hard to deal with, too, as a teacher/parent.

I'm a better teacher for it -- through being a mother. I know I am, I'm better in that I'm a nurturer. I think there's a sensitivity there that wasn't when I was single ... and having a good time.

J: How would you describe the sensitivity?

Oh, just sensitivity to other people's children. Uh. These are children! I understand them better, I understand them from the parents point of view -- that this kid that is just driving me crazy in class is somebody's child, is somebody's special person.

Learning from Pat's words. Pat's explanations were frequently embellished with nature imagery and stories of animals. She referred to instinct often, and she maintained that the experiences of motherhood assist the "honing of instincts" rather than the "development of knowledge." Finding this reverence for instinct alarming, I realized I must examine reflexively my own conceptions of instinct. I discuss this in greater detail in a section of Chapter 6 which focusses on instinct.

Pat's talk revealed a tension between her culturally scripted expectations for her son and her fondness for and sensitivity toward the individuality of his nature. She declared, "I'm blinded by the light," in a tone of self-reprimand. The tension seemed to be exacerbated by Pat's classroom experiences of students being picked on. Her talk made me wonder whether teenagers, who are mostly struggling with pressures to conform to both their peer group's and their society's cultural standards, can accommodate concern for the nurture of others' individuality. Pat's experience suggested that currently many cannot or do not. Moreover, Pat's maternal knowledge of individuality and the value of its preservation is not part of the students' knowledge. It is not generally promoted in schools as knowledge that an educated person should acquire (Martin, 1990). Like Pat, Ruth also talked about the sensitivity she had developed through being a mother and how it helped her as a teacher.

Ruth

Ruth had grown up and attended university in British Columbia. She was mother to a daughter aged six and two sons aged eight and ten. Ruth had been a high school art teacher for two years prior to her first child's birth, after which she had taken an eight year break from teaching to raise her family. During the break, the family had lived in Alberta, where Ruth taught art part-time in various community programmes. Three years prior to the study, Ruth's husband had begun full-time doctoral study in

education. To accommodate this, the family had returned to British Columbia. Simultaneously, Ruth resumed teaching. For the first year and a half she worked as a substitute teacher of any subject and from Kindergarten to Grade 12. In the latter half of the second year, Ruth took over a Grade 6 homeroom. In the year of the study, Ruth had a full-time Grade 5 teaching assignment.

Ruth's words. Childbirth for me was very, very awakening. I really felt that ... there was a meeting even in the birth, and how the child went through the birth process with you was very much an indication of the personality already. For my children, I could [describe] the birth process for all three children and ... if you met them ... you would go, 'Yeah!' I guess that makes sense. [Their births] were so very, very different and they have very, very different personalities.

I hesitate to change the way a child would be trying to cope with something. I just try and help them do it the way they want to do it, as opposed to trying to say, 'No, that's just not the way we're going to do it. I want you to do it this way.' And I find I'm much more sensitive to watching children being squished

J: When you have had questions with regard to your children, how would you say you have gone about trying to find answers?

I try to get a whole spectrum of insight (pause) But I think that, er, for the most part I talk to the child. They're usually fairly communicative and fairly good about locating exactly what it is that's bothering them. They seem to be fairly good at being able to give me a pretty clear picture if something's not working, or if they can't verbalize it then a lot of times it's, uh, pretty self evident through, uh, signs they give you. So most of the information comes directly from the child. Now a lot of these times because the kids are in ... teams that [they] play on -- no matter what community we've lived in it seems that the kids have always had other adults that have been fairly in tune with the children -- so ... I usually check up on ... how [those adults] might be seeing ... [the issue] so that I can gauge how things may be in other situations. But basically I'm not an advice seeker When [one of my children] ended up going in for testing, we ended up in a, in a room with five of them -- school psychologist, speech pathologist, etc., and there was advice given but even with all those -- quote -- experts in the room, it was all part of a synthesis process for me, it was never like their word sort of weighed more heavily, it was much more my gut level reaction, or the, what the children had been able to, um, communicate to me through word, deed, or whatever. No, I'm not really an advice seeker. I rely more on my basic instincts and understanding of my child's personality.

J: How did your experience of being the mother of schoolchildren compare with what you had expected?

Oh-oh! The actual situation was just so involved. And you're constantly monitoring, and you know, bells and whistles and alarms ring all the time in different -- you know, it's just like there's a quiet ring over here, a quiet ring -- I found much ... I thought that you'd be much more, perhaps, detached. That

seems really naive as an educator, but maybe its because I started off in secondary, and you had the impression that the children sort of -- it was separate -- school was a separate reality, whereas in elementary school it's not a separate reality But that's not necessarily true because I notice that parents on my staff who are mothers of teens are still very involved. Yeah, and I found that one of the things that was really a big change for me is that when you would do parent teacher interviews, I'm much more careful as a [mother/teacher] than I was as a normal one -- as a pre-mother-- I guess you could call it.

Learning from Ruth's words. Ruth was not alone in suggesting that childbirth provides a mother her first recognition of her child's individuality. But Ruth's claims, however, were the most emphatic. Her descriptions were often quite graphic, for instance, as in her phrase, "watching children getting squished." The phrase suggested to me that through respect and recognition of her child's individual nature, a mother comes to know the fragility of her child's spirit and its requirement for protection. Ruth's talk implied her belief that mothers know the importance of taking this respect for children's individual natures to the problem solving activities of motherhood. From Ruth's talk, moreover, I discerned that through knowledge founded on sensitivity toward her child's nature, a mother is able to bring her intuition to problem solving situations. In the style of problem solving that Ruth described, other perspectives and forms of information were not ignored, but appeared rather to be measured against and combined with what she knew intuitively.

THE PARTICIPANT WHOSE TALK FIRST PROMPTED ME TO INVESTIGATE MOTHER/TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF "NURTURING"

In the talk of many mothers, I heard that being a mother means accepting the responsibility for nurturing children's individualities. Thelma, the mother/teacher I introduce in this section, drew my attention to "nurturing" without explicitly using the term. She claimed that motherhood had taught her the importance of nourishing

children's individualities, and the force of her words prompted me to recall that other participants had spoken similarly while using the term "nurturing" rather than "nourishing."

Thelma

Thelma was teaching high school home economics in a position she had held for three years in the lower mainland of British Columbia. She had thirteen and a half years of previous teaching experience in Eastern Canada, but she had only three years of seniority in her present school district. Thelma was 44 years old, had one daughter in Grade 12, and another in second year at junior college. Only recently remarried, Thelma had been a single mother for most of her daughters' lives.

Thelma's teaching began in primary grades when she was nineteen. She taught for four years but in two different districts in Ontario because when two years had accumulated to make her first contract permanent, her husband was given a job transfer. Four months of maternity leave interrupted Thelma's third year, and her second daughter was born at the end of the fourth year. Thelma said that she resigned from teaching in the belief that re-entry would be easy. It was not, however, and when her second daughter was one year old, Thelma began a year of substitute teaching. The following year, she resumed fulltime mothering and became divorced. With daughters of three and five years old, Thelma returned to university for three years. Upon degree completion, she taught for three years in a private school, substituted for one year in the public system, and finally acquired a full-time position for five years in Ontario before moving to B.C. During breaks from teaching, Thelma had started up a daycare facility, and had taught both Grade 13 English in Summer school and interest courses at community colleges. Thelma's teaching career had spanned primary, intermediate, and junior secondary grades. She noted that she had unintentionally moved up the grades

with her daughters. Thelma had begun part-time study for a master's degree in curriculum studies.

Thelma's words. I couldn't approach [motherhood] from a formulaic model.... When I was nursing my children ... I remember my sister-in-law saying to me, 'Well, is [your baby] sleeping four hours [between feedings] every day? My child wakes up at eight and has lunch at twelve and four and eight.' And I thought, 'Oh, my goodness! Oh-oh!' She would set the alarm clock to wake, to wake this baby up for a feeding -- to make sure it stayed on schedule. It just -- oh, no! This was not something that I was going to determine for the child, it was, er, kind of a combination type of thing.

I think if I insisted that the child fit into every situation that I set up for them that the uniqueness of them as a person might not have the chance to come through. I wanted them to grow in, in their own way as strongly as they could.

The idea of mother, it's, you know, the word itself and the connotations ... there's a whole bunch of things that go along with that that you could probably talk forever about ... that I've learned about whole kind of concept -- not a burden but, um, a sense of responsibility in a sense In my situation the responsibility was probably greater because I did become a single mother. It was a juggling act -- doing it all, ... teaching, ... professional development ... and then mothering -- keeping up with growing children. I mean, they're going through different stages, different friends, and different habits, and different, different! Different! Different! Different! And then there's home I would just hire help. I would, you know, you could, I mean ... spend all weekends doing housework. I even thought, if I could find a cheap cook (laughs). Isn't that awful!

J: Why did you say, 'Isn't that awful?'

Yes, isn't that funny I should say that? Because that doesn't -- to hire out, or to hire someone to do -- what a mother should do is cook -- and I, yeah, and there's obviously a conflict in there. I think that mothers should cook and bake ... (chuckles). There's some kind of unwritten rule that cooking goes with raising children ... there are ... types of things that are there and we don't even have to talk about them, they're just written already, they're stronger.

Once you have a child you are a mother, but I think we qualify it with are we going to be good mothers, and what are the criteria for a good mother? What are the characteristics? We don't want to bruise the children, you know, their psyches. I think most mothers want to raise children in as nourishing an environment as possible. And we're going to do it all, Yeah! 'Cos. I think, there comes a whole bunch of guilt sometimes with motherhood because you feel that you're responsible for this child's life!

Learning from Thelma's words. Thelma's story about baby-feeding times indicated that while mothers do not discard "formulaic models," having children teaches them that models need to be adapted to suit individuals -- "a kind of combination type

of thing." That mothers' task of nurturing requires respect for individual differences was indicated strongly in Thelma's words. She implied that a mother must recognize not only differences between her children, but also differences that occur within each child while growth, development, and social encounters bring continual change. To avoid bruising their psyches, mothers are faced with the task of nourishing their children's spirits and adapting to changes in appetite and constitution.

Thelma's story about contemplating the hiring of a cook suggested to me that cooking is probably the task that a working mother is least likely to give up in order to ease her load. Perhaps, I thought, this is partly because its association with feeding makes it the task that continues to produce a connection between mother and child. Thus, might mothers feel pressured to cook just like -- as Thelma implies -- they feel pressured by their common-sense knowledge to be the perfect nurturers or nourishers of their children? Do mothers suffer feelings of guilt when recipes fail despite knowing that there are no infallible recipes?

Although I often heard mothers use the terms "caring" and "nurturing" synonymously during their interviews, I wondered if the conception of "nurturing" as the nourishment of individuality might represent how mothers sometimes distinguish "nurturing" from caring. So I decided that both words should be presented for group discussion.

PARTICIPANTS WHOSE TALK FIRST PROMPTED ME TO INVESTIGATE MOTHER/TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF "CARING"

The talk of three mother/teachers implied to me that they had learned as mothers that caring required them to develop the ability to think reflexively. Their talk prompted me to envisage reflexive thinking as the intellectual work of caring. It provoked me to picture "caring" as an ongoing effort to refresh one's thoughts and ways

of understanding others by removing the clutter and dust that settles on the mind. The three participants whom I introduce in this section are Eva, Doris, and Coral.

Eva

Estimated by me to be in her mid-thirties, Eva had been born and educated, and was a teacher in the lower mainland of British Columbia. She had six years of teaching experience and was the mother of two daughters aged ten and seven years old. After completing her degree and teacher training, Eva had taught high school home economics (textiles and clothing) for three years. Despite liking her subject area, she did not then enjoy teaching. When her first daughter was born, Eva left teaching for seven years. Although she had taken parenthood leave, Eva eventually gave up her teaching contract. Having returned to teaching three years before the time of the study, Eva now enjoyed it. Her return began with one year of substitute teaching and for the next year, she was assigned a .65 temporary teaching position in high school home economics. During the year of the study, Eva had held a .3 assignment until April and a full-time time assignment for the remainder of the school year. Because of district cutbacks, however, she was laid off at the end of the year. Eva experienced a dilemma when she was offered a full-time teaching assignment outside of the school district wherein she lived and had previously taught. The opportunity to start an innovative programme in a brand new school with good home economics facilities interested Eva, but she feared her acceptance could adversely affect her daughters, who had just experienced their parents' separation. The school's location would require Eva either to move her daughters to a new home and school, or, because of travel time, to spend a longer working day away from them than previously. Eva's alternative was to take her chances on substitute teaching in her own district, and she chose it rather than compound the current disruption in her daughters' lives.

Eva's words. When I taught those first three years, I think I'd had it I hated teaching at the time I didn't like it at all. In going back now, I enjoy it. I've really enjoyed the kids this time around. It's different. I think it's probably a combination of ... understanding families and probably myself moreso now, and the counselling that I've gone through in the last, you know, three years that, um, well, I just, I think I can see the kids and understand them better now -- the students.

I think you're forced into a position -- I mean, when you have children, if you don't grow and think about yourself, I think you've got yourself in a really awkward position. I can remember going to something, uh ... you know, I couldn't go on dealing with the children until I had looked at myself. There was something missing. I don't know, there was something that ... it seemed really difficult to deal with the children. Actually, now I can think of a situation ... in dealing with the kids ... I wasn't sure, I depended on my husband to make the decision, and, um, I think maybe it was I hadn't, I hadn't grown. There wasn't enough within me, I mean I think that even as a mother you have to be growing from within. But I couldn't say a 'yes' or 'no' and be firm, there was no backbone sort of there. I guess to ... have healthy children, I guess as, as a parent, you have to be growing, or I had to be growing, too. You know, how can you deal with your own children if you haven't dealt with yourself?

It's easier talking to the parents now having had children. Yeah, it's a lot easier. Mind you, it's easier talking to the kids, too, and then knowing the kids, um, I think I have a different relationship with the kids now than what I did. I mean, going back to my first three years, I was more concerned about content, subject area, and that kind of thing, whereas, now the process is important And kind of seeing the kids as individuals is important. There's a whole human aspect to [my teaching] that, um, was not there before.

Learning from Eva's words. Eva's words indicated that she thought her mothering experience had taught her that to become a responsible carer she needed to be growing from within, on an ongoing basis. This, she said, required her to develop the ability to discover and examine her values and inner thoughts. She implied that this ability can enable a mother/teacher to be more open to and receptive of individuality -- to "see the kids and understand them better." Doris suggested that such openness enables mother/teachers to appreciate children's fresh ways of thinking.

Doris

Doris had twelve years of teaching experience and was mother to a daughter aged twenty-one and a son aged nineteen. After growing up and completing a science

degree in South Africa, Doris had chosen teaching out of the three career choices she saw available to herself at the time -- nursing, secretarial work, or teaching. She had studied for her teaching diploma "probably not with the most positive attitude ... and afraid of going into teaching because my degree was in science ... so I knew I would be sent to a boys' high school to [practice] teach." Doris had anticipated correctly and found her teaching practicums there even more difficult than she had expected. So, after her training, Doris did not teach. Rather, she worked in a publishing house until she and her husband emigrated to Canada, where she taught high school science for two years. Again, she experienced fear which was compounded by her encounter with an unfamiliar culture. When her daughter was born, Doris began a nine year break from teaching during which she volunteered in kindergarten classes and the school library. When her second child entered Grade 1, Doris returned to teaching but this time at the primary level. She was a substitute teacher for five years; an elementary school librarian for four years; and a fulltime Grade 1 teacher in the most recent three years.

Doris's words. [My] children were such a source of fun and, er, added a dimension that I didn't think was possible in terms of one's own experiences. Small children are loads of fun aren't they? I mean they really are, they get on your nerves sometimes, they're ratty, or in the wrong frame of mind, but in the main they're delightful ... they see things through such different eyes, their perspective on things is so different from an adult's. So, uh, just to see things through children's minds -- I think as an adult, you forget that, er, how to look at things, you lose that. I don't know if I'm generalizing here, but I certainly lost this kind of lateral thinking that children have -- that scattered approach to things. You know, I trained in the sciences, so -- a focussed brain. Go for the focus!

This whole different way of thinking It would just be, uh, looking at an object, or looking at a creature, or looking at a book and coming out with a comment that [would make me think] 'I never thought of it like that before.' A different approach, just a different way of looking at things -- really and truly, a different way of seeing things.

When [my son] was in Grade 4 and [my daughter] in Grade 6, she had broken her leg skiing and was on crutches. Prior to which, at Christmas time, we had got a dog. Now up until the dog, [my son] was the baby, right? After [my daughter] broke her leg -- now the dog's had a lot of my attention ... and [my daughter] gets a lot of attention because she's hobbling around and has to be driven everywhere -- [my son] was very upset one day and said, 'Mum nothing's the same anymore!'

I said, 'What do you mean?'

'Nothing's the same since we got the dog and [my sister] broke her leg.'

And I said, 'Why do you think nothing's the same?' He couldn't tell me why, but it suddenly dawned on me why nothing was the same anymore because his life, his whole life had been shattered because he'd been replaced first by the dog (laughs), and then by his sister. And that made me really take a step back and think, 'This dog and this child with the broken leg had really affected this other child. It's made a huge difference to his life. Everybody else is taking it for granted.' But that was something that really made me stop and think. That was just one little thing, but it's those kinds of things that as a mother that ... increase your awareness of the way other people are reacting.

The other thing you learn is that you -- what you tell them and what they hear can be two entirely different things and you don't learn that until you have children of your own. Now what you think you said has got -- they've put a completely new emphasis on it, it twists, or they'll come up with a whole different approach to what you were talking about.

Learning from Doris's words. Like Eva, Doris talked about finding a new enjoyment in teaching after experiencing her own children. She spoke of appreciating that children can show us fresh, new ways of thinking, and that this is one of the greatest pleasures of being with children. Her words implied that she thought that because adults feel pressured often to maintain a focus, they tend to lose the habit of embracing alternative perspectives. Doris talk suggested that as a mother she had learned not only the pleasure of hearing fresh perspectives, but also the importance of being receptive to these in order to appreciate the inner thoughts of one's child. Doris stressed that she had not recognized the nature of her son's distress; rather he had shown it to her. She reported, however, that "he couldn't tell me why, but it suddenly dawned on me why." That is, she had partly to intuit his perspective. Through Doris's words, I began to view this process of opening the mind to others' ways of thinking as the intellectual work of caring. Coral told a story that showed me how such caring can affect mother/teachers' relationships with children.

Coral

Coral was of Japanese parentage, and had been born and raised in British Columbia. She had twenty-four years of teaching experience and was the mother of two daughters aged nineteen and fourteen. She had taught for five years before her first daughter's birth and had taken only a few months for maternity leave. Following the birth of her second daughter, however, Coral left teaching for two years to care for her children. Afterwards, she returned to teaching part-time, but in recent years has held a full-time assignment. To accommodate her career, Coral's daughters were cared for, first, by a babysitter who was the mother of a pupil in the school where Coral taught and, later, by a neighbour.

I had only one interview with Coral. On the weekend when her second interview should have occurred, relatives visited her at short notice. We had known previously that Coral could not be interviewed later than the originally planned date because she would be attending degree credit classes in summer school. Because the group discussion session was held in the last week of the school summer vacation, Coral was unable to attend. For the whole of that week, she had scheduled introductory meetings with her incoming kindergarten pupils and their parents.

Coral's words. [As a mother/teacher] you have an understanding -- an empathy - - with the child, and you also have empathy with the parent. If the child comes to school with dirty clothes on, or wears the same t-shirt week after week, or they have two different colour socks on -- you understand that because you know, well, they probably just had a rough morning and the child just went out the door without your re-checking them. I think before I was a teacher [and not a mother], I thought, 'Who, would send a child with two different socks? who would send a child with a stinky shirt?' (Laughs) But, you know, you have that -- you've gone through that experience yourself and I think it really makes a difference.

In motherhood, I learned that you have to try and trust [children], and to instill trust in them. If you find out they've [broken your trust], you deal with it, but not by being angry and upset and yelling at them. My oldest daughter was working [after school hours], and she didn't go to work [one] day. She had 'phoned in sick in the morning, and I didn't know that. She wanted to go to a birthday party. So she went ... and we got this 'phone call from her employer asking how's my daughter, and I said, 'She's fine, why?' And they said, 'She 'phoned in sick.' Well, I just about died! I thought, now how am I going to deal with it. My husband was

livid. So, I 'phoned the place where she was, she was having dinner. I asked for her ... I said, '[Your employer] just called and said that you didn't go to work this afternoon.'

'Oh?' Then this pause at the other end!

I said, 'I think maybe you should come home, we need to talk about this right now.' And she was home within [the time limit I gave her].

My husband says, 'Oh, wait 'til she gets home!'

I said, 'No ... if you're going to get angry and upset maybe you shouldn't be here.'

You know, you can't yell and scream at the kids, you need to hear them out ... if you yell and scream at them they just get their back up and they will not talk to you -- that's what I've learned But we were just so upset that she would do something like this and be dishonest -- there's the hurt and disappointment -- and I said, 'You know we're really really disappointed. We thought that we could trust you and ... what are you going to do about this? What do you think, you should do?'

'Well, I guess I should go and apologize.'

It was difficult for her to go there and apologize. Yes! It was hard for me, you know, not -- keep from saying, 'Why did you do this?' (Laughs at her effort to control exasperation). But I just had to stay calm. I find with teenagers -- well, with all children -- you don't jump on them, you give them time to explain themselves 'cos quite often there's a reason why they do the things they have done, and I think you have to give them that chance ... to explain themselves ... at school, you have to give them that opportunity, too.

Learning from Coral's words. Through her story, Coral reveals how mothers know that in relationships, openness to others' perspectives is essential to building trust and enabling communication in relationships. In coping with her daughter's misdemeanour, Coral's preparedness to listen to her daughter displayed a willingness to have her own thoughts challenged because she had learned that "often there's a reason why they do the things they have done." Accommodating respect for her daughter's perspective, however, did not translate into Coral's either dismissing or excusing her daughter's wrongdoing. Rather, Coral understood that various perspectives need to be accommodated to maintain a workable relationship. So, she expected the daughter to respect her parents' perspective and to act on this respect by taking immediate responsibility for making amends. Coral claimed that the experience of mothering

enables mother/teachers to be empathetic with the perspectives of their students' parents.

I realized that with regard to Coral's story, the term "controlling" could be applied to her actions because through them she was able to direct her daughters' behaviour and value-system. However, I also sensed that if I were Coral, I would find it distasteful if the term "controlling" were used to describe the event and my efforts within it. Participants whose interview talk drew my attention to tensions associated with the term "controlling" are introduced in the next section.

PARTICIPANTS WHOSE TALK FIRST PROMPTED ME TO INVESTIGATE MOTHER/TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF "CONTROLLING"

The participants I introduce in this section are Amy, Ivy, Nancy, and Lauren.

Amy

Amy had twelve years experience as a primary grade teacher, was in her early forties, and had a son aged thirteen and a daughter aged ten. Amy had met her husband at university. Upon degree completion, they began their respective careers as teacher and engineer in the lower mainland of British Columbia. Two years later, Amy's contract became permanent but a career opportunity arose for her husband and the couple moved. Amy obtained, first, a temporary teaching position and, later, a permanent position which she held for only two years because another career opportunity for her husband caused the couple to relocate again. This time, Amy found a part-time position which she left one and a half years later when expecting her first child. Meanwhile, her husband's engineering job had begun to take him abroad periodically, often at short notice, and has continued that way. When the baby was sixteen months old, Amy wanted to return to teaching part-time, but teaching jobs had

become scarce and only full-time or substitute positions were available. Amy chose substituting, left when her daughter was born two years later, and did not return until her daughter entered Grade 2. During her break from teaching, Amy assisted at her children's parent-participation pre-school, attended monthly pre-school assistants' training sessions, and volunteered help in the Kindergarten. Amy had resumed teaching three years before the time of the study, for the first two years half-time and for the third year full-time in a permanent position. For salary purposes Amy was accredited seven years of experience, but for district seniority only three years.

Amy's words. I felt like my life had really changed ... we moved back to the lower mainland while I was expecting, we'd gone through moving into a new house ... and [my husband] had made a total job change. His job in the first few years of marriage had been a standard eight to five kind of job ... but [now he could] come home tomorrow and say he's off to Hong Kong for three weeks. Things come up very suddenly -- like an explosion in the plant and this all happened within a month of [my son] being born ... I kind of lumped it all together and thought, 'Oh, this life is not good!' I like to plan ... and [my son] wasn't the kind of baby that let you plan -- like [I'd just think] he's on a schedule .. and two days later it all changed! Ooh-ooh-ah! (chuckling)! I'd chosen that I wouldn't work, and yet I, very soon after I'd had the child, and [my husband] was flitting off here and there all round the world. Here I was at home and my life had changed so much, and at that time you couldn't get a teaching job. It was really tough to get back in. I went to [the district office] and applied for part-time work and they said, 'Look you've got to be willing to work full-time or nothing.' And I said, 'Well, I have a young child and I don't want to work full-time,' and she said, 'Well, then, you can substitute,' and I said, 'the trouble with substituting is you get 'phoned early in the morning, and if you have to have daycare arranged, er, and you can't afford to pay for it every day if you're not going to get called,' and she just said, 'Well, that's a decision you have to make.' And I remember coming home thinking, 'Gee, I really kind of messed things up here!'

Sometimes when the kids do atrocious things, I think 'I really goofed up ... I've really failed' I think it is kind of our upbringing and what we hear from television shows -- the mum is the one who's supposed to nurture and pull the family together and previously, as a teacher, I think I had those feelings a lot.

My mum used ... to plan her baking so that it would be ... coming out of the oven just about the time we were due home from school It was wonderful, and so I can remember thinking ... my children will come home ... and we'll have this very nice warm sharing time and we'll eat treats. I think I made a big mistake ... because my kids now both love to have treats So we had to get into a thing a few years ago that you had to eat fruit before you could have the treat food because I overdid that.

I wanted to be involved in the school myself. I realized how much I learned by seeing other children in the same age range ... so I always was volunteering to work in the classrooms and help out in the school. I think this is something that [my daughter] has found hard with me going back to work. She's made some comments that .. 'you can't come to the sports day, you can't come to this, that, and the other thing. And, I feel the motherhood guilt that I'm not doing my role the way I should, and there are days that I rush home after school to be here. I'll leave work at school, or I'll stay later the day before to plan everything for two days so that I can rush home right at three to be with the kids, and by 3:20 they're battling with each other, and I know the thoughts go through my mind, 'this isn't the way it's supposed to be. We're all in a squabble here and why do I bother coming home?'

Learning from Amy's words. Amy's stories revealed a tension between feelings of in-control and out-of-control that featured as part of being a mother/teacher for many of the participants. In the picture that Amy drew of her life prior to childbirth, some control over its direction seemed evident. Like her husband, Amy had reached her pre-set goal of completing a university degree and entering a profession. Although the control began to diminish during the first five years of marriage, the effects appeared minimal because despite disruptions Amy continued to obtain full-time teaching assignments and eventually a permanent contract. Control had rapidly disappeared, however, in the picture Amy presented of life following childbirth. Amy could neither plan her baby's schedule nor her husband's trips away. Upon trying to resume teaching to regain some control, she encountered a shrinking job market but thought, "Gee, I really messed up here."

The imagery in Amy's story about baking for her children's return from school illustrated an understanding that nurturing is not all sweetness, and a mother learns that she must challenge her children's appetites to accept the more wholesome. The reference to her daughter's sports day, for example, suggests Amy's guilt about not following the cultural recipes for mothering, but her story about rushing home from school to her children indicates her recognition that even well-recommended recipes can produce unexpected, disappointing, and puzzling results. Her stories suggested to

me, however, that control as possible/impossible presents an ongoing puzzle and tension for mothers. Ivy, the mother/teacher I introduce next, also implied that she had experienced this with her children. However, unlike most other participants, Ivy described a mother/teacher career life which had a semblance of management, tidiness, and control.

Ivy

Born and raised in a Chinese extended family in western Canada, Ivy was the mother of three sons who were attending Grades 2, 5, and 7 in elementary school. She was teaching junior secondary science and home economics full-time as she had for eighteen years. Ivy had taught for seven years prior to her first son's birth. Her child-rearing breaks from teaching had been brief; one year following the births of each of her first two sons, and six months (including two months of summer vacation) following the birth of her third son. As a consequence of her husband's employment at a university, the institution's daycare facilities had always been available to Ivy. The family had utilized the daycare right up until the time of the study. However, because Ivy had decided to reduce her teaching assignment to half-time, her sons would no longer require daycare next year. I learned of this while listening to an audiotaped small group discussion wherein Ivy was speaking. So, I did not have the opportunity to ask about the reasons for her decision.

Ivy's words. I probably would have been happy to have stayed at home more than one year, but, uh, I think my husband had a hand in sort of pushing me along in that, um, 'Well, you've had your year,' you know, 'we do have daycare. Why don't you go back to work?' That was fine with me so, I, I continued to do it. We had good daycare facilities in that my husband was working at [a university]. I've been really happy with them which is why I was quite content to work and have them go to daycare. It was formal daycare with, um, trained people and it really made a difference. I really wanted to have that kind of formal daycare if I was going to be leaving them for that length of time. Looking back I'm just as glad. I don't think I would have wanted to just stay home -- 'though there were times I thought, 'Oh,! I wish I were at home instead of working' but, er, I think it still, it was the best choice for us at the time.

If we weren't happy with [the daycare], I think I would have said, 'No! I want to stay at home with the kids.' But, um, I think I'd get tired of that. Even though I'd find lots of things to do, I still would like to have that sort of meaningful role where I, you know, um -- doing a job that, uh, involves things outside of the house. I guess, just having (pause) some kind of a schedule that, um, I had to respond to and, and sort of a direction -- something very definite that had to be accomplished within a certain amount of time. Being at home with children ... wasn't something where (pause), I don't know, I guess you couldn't sort of say, 'Well, I have accomplished such and such'

As I was growing up ... we lived in an extended family ... my nieces and nephews were there ... [I] was responsible for looking after them in some part -- but just as a part of an extended family. So I think when, um, I thought about having children, it was sort of ... I would have this individual that was my child but at the same time, it wasn't something that I would feel isolated, that would be all my responsibility, that there would be all this backup of, of the family -- even though I didn't live with my family -- my husband and I lived in our own house -- I think in the back of my mind there was still that.

[When my first child was born] it was very exciting to realize that that here [was] this little individual that you could mould, but then I came to realize ... I could sort of direct him but if he chose to respond in his own way, he was born that way and no matter how I tried to mould him, he wouldn't necessarily change to the way I would want him to be or the way I would want him to view certain things.

I look back and I think ... 'the kids probably would have done things the same way in spite of, you know, what was done or what wasn't done in a lot of cases.'

Learning from Ivy's words. I sensed a quiet peacefulness in Ivy's talk about her motherhood, her access to good daycare facilities, and her confidence that daycare had been a positive experience for her sons. She claimed that when occasional problems had arisen, the staff had handled them well and had respected her concerns and wishes.

Ivy stressed that not only did her mothering experience provide her with knowledge that she takes to teaching, but also her teaching experience provides her with knowledge that informs her behaviour toward and understanding of her own children. I found it revealing that despite the former of these claims, Ivy situated "meaningful roles" outside of the home. In her definition of "meaningful role" as an occupation wherein one can set directions and accomplish something definite within a certain amount of time, Ivy not only displayed the influence of a cultural message, but

also by implication excluded the role of the mother from those which are "meaningful." Ivy's decision to return to her "meaningful role" in teaching was assisted by the availability of daycare, and her comments about growing up in an extended family suggested that may have helped her to accept others sharing in the raising of her children. Some of Ivy's comments, however, implied that she had not entirely escaped doubts about whether a mother should take such steps.

In comparison to Ivy, life and career management for most of the mother/teachers appeared haphazard. However, many participants' stories indicated that mothers learn an alternative to controlling the pattern of their lives; they learn to compose their lives through the process of improvisation (Bateson, 1990). Mothers learn both to be heedful of and to utilize opportunities, and to deftly piece these together as though creating a harmony of available colours and patterns as in a patchwork quilt or Fair Isle knitting. This characteristic seemed common to many of the mother/teachers lives, but it was drawn to my attention most sharply in the words of Nancy and Lauren.

Nancy

Nancy, whose parentage was Chinese, had been born, educated, and had taught for seventeen years in British Columbia. She had two sons, one in Grade 4 and the other in Grade 6. Nancy began her teaching in a small town, left after three years, and moved to the lower mainland of B.C. where her husband worked. Marriage precipitated the move, but Nancy said she had never planned to stay in the small town. She obtained no teaching work, however, until the end of the first school year following her move. Because Nancy was not admitted on to the substitute teacher list until January, she took work as a substitute school secretary for the first half of the year. The following year, Nancy was assigned to full-time temporary teaching from which she resigned when her first son was born at the end of the year. When she decided to return four months later,

Nancy was assigned another full-time temporary position. Seventeen months later when expecting her second child, rather than resigning, as previously, Nancy applied for parental leave. Upon returning from leave, Nancy continued to be assigned temporary full-time appointments for another six years. Five years before the time of the study, Nancy's position was finally made permanent and she opted to temporarily reduce her appointment to half-time. Nancy was pleased that a recent change in district policy had enabled her eight temporary years to be counted in the calculation of her seniority. At the time of her interviews, Nancy had begun studying for an M.A. degree, and she had obtained a leave from teaching for the upcoming year to pursue her studies full-time.

Nancy's words. I never had any clear goals, you know, when I was teaching. It was never clear in my mind that either I would continue working or that I would -- none of that was clear. It was not clear to me that -- whether I'd be working full-time, whether I'd be a stay-home -- just never thought about that. I lost a lot of opportunities because of [leaving my job when my first son was born], but in retrospect, I'm glad it happened because what happened was, I, when I did come back I was on temporary for eight years, and I was shifted all over the place. And, er, looking back, I'm glad it happened because I would have been just stuck in -- if I had had a continuing contract, I would have been in the same grade, in the same school, all these years. I wouldn't have had the opportunities. But [I got temporary work], I was just really lucky! They kept cutting, they kept cutting for the next two or three years -- at that time there was no seniority for, um, temporaries I taught in six or seven schools -- and grades, I never had the choice of grades. I think it was in the long run an advantage, you know -- looking back -- because I was one of those people who would have gladly stayed in the same place in the same grade. I really believe that if I had had the continuing contract, I wouldn't be here now [beginning a master's degree].

J: So at the end of every year, you had to question, 'Will I have a job?' How did that make you feel?

Well, it used to worry me. But, at the same time, I don't think I was that upset by it, um, the weird thing is, I managed to have a job all those years. One year they didn't hire me back until the middle of September. So, I did something else (chuckles) which I had to quit. If you asked me now, where do I see myself in five years, I don't know! I never really had, I never really had those long term goals. I never really had a clear vision. I never saw this day laid out or this period laid out, or -- I kind of -- I never had a -- I don't know -- it's not sort of concrete. I wouldn't consider myself an organized person. Although it's interesting that a lot of people think I am, but I'm not really -- just in pockets. I value change now. I was one of those [young] people who never wanted to move out of my house, like, live at home for ever -- I was one of those. Going half-time was about the only choice I ever made. Now, I've decided to go back to school. I now like

change, and I never did before. I get bored -- well, not quite bored but really too comfortable or complacent -- it loses its edge.

Learning from Nancy's words. Prior to Nancy's interview, other participants' talk had revealed that the resumption or relocation of their teaching careers had required one or more years of substitute teaching and/or at least two years on temporary assignment before permanent status was acquired. Each time I heard this pattern described, I was reminded of the insecurity I had experienced during two years of temporary contracts following my own return to teaching after several years of full-time motherhood. I remembered particularly how anxious I had felt during the latter months of the school year while awaiting news of continuing employment prospects. Feeling annoyed that Nancy had been required not only to endure uncertainty for so long, but also to adapt to annual changes of assignment, I anticipated that she would claim it a hardship. So, I found it unsettling when Nancy announced that she didn't "feel upset by it," and, moreover, had felt privileged to continue being offered positions.

To begin, I feared that Nancy's grateful acceptance represented passivity, but my accompanying disappointment warned me that I must re-examine my thinking. Was my interpretation embracing a passivity/activity dichotomy? Were discourses on women's passivity still constructing "woman" for me as a reactive rather than a proactive being? To answer my questions, I listened again to Nancy's words. Eventually, in her positive tone and energetic speech, I could hear a strong sense of achievement. As Nancy had come to know it, achievement was not the reaching of pre-selected goals; rather, it was the creative -- and possibly endless -- piecing together of available opportunities. Because Nancy had utilized her opportunities proactively, her acceptance of them both mixed and blurred activity and passivity. It did not merely represent one or the other. Perhaps knowing achievement differently influenced Nancy's apparent disregard for setting personal goals and having visions. Because Nancy had embarked on the goal

oriented activity of M.A. study, I wondered how this would affect her view of achievement.

Lauren

In her early fifties at the time of the interviews, Lauren was in her fifth year of elementary school teaching. She had a thirty-four year old son and a thirty year old daughter. Although she had performed volunteer work in public schools earlier, Lauren's teaching career had not begun until her own children had finished their schooling.

Lauren had an unhappy childhood and had married young. When her first child was born before Lauren was twenty, she worried that her upbringing would impair her ability to mother. Approximately six weeks after the birth of her daughter, Lauren joined an evangelical church and found help for her self-set aim "to condition myself in a different way."

Lauren and her husband became missionaries, and her mission work included teaching and tutoring in several Central South American countries. When Lauren left the mission field, the family returned to life in a small B.C. town and her husband continued to work for the church. Lauren volunteered in the local high school, did some private tutoring, and wrote her Grade 12 equivalency examinations. While working as a teacher's aide, Lauren was encouraged by the teacher to become a teacher herself. So, by attending university as a full-time student, Lauren acquired her teaching certificate and a full-time teaching position in an urban elementary school. Meanwhile Lauren and her husband had divorced. At the time of the study, Lauren had decided to leave public school teaching, at least temporarily. She had applied for work through CUSO, was assigned a teaching job in Guatemala, and had already left to take up her new position when the group discussions were held.

Lauren's words. I don't recall anticipating having children in a very positive way, because my own life had been so unhappy and I was deathly afraid that I would raise my children as my parents raised me. I enjoyed my children and I guess that's when I began growing as a person because I had to deal with things [about me] that didn't make me happy. I began seeing that I was raising my son the same way my mother raised me, which was very negatively.... I could see the pattern happening again. And so I began changing, I began listening and changing what was coming out of my mind -- very definitely trying to condition myself in a different way. [As a mother] you learn a lot about yourself.

My husband came from a family where there were ten children.... Probably their attachment to each other helped to show me ... the possibilities for love in a family. I'm sure that helped me in listening to myself and my children. About six weeks after [my daughter was born] I joined an evangelical church. I think I desperately needed help outside of myself, and I did find it in the church. I found support, I found love ... it helped me with my children, it gave me a more loving outlook on life, and I could deal with problems a little differently. Eventually, I got to the point where I outgrew that need as well. I found enough strength within myself that the church began to be very limiting. So I had to move on beyond that. Some people get real upset when I say that because it sounds like I sort of outgrew my need of God, which isn't what I'm saying. I outgrew my need of the church.

When I decided to leave the mission field, my life shattered It was very difficult ... I had to put myself back together, and it took a number of years. I never even found all the pieces, so the person I got together was very different, and I like this one better. And then it was sort of time to get back into school, get back into being with people, and so I volunteered in the schools.

I find teaching limiting, and that's why I was looking for development work -- I have some papers in at CUSO -- going over right now -- I just feel I don't use all my skills. I have so many skills in so many different areas that I don't use. I just -- I don't like that. I like to be challenged, challenged to use all the things I've got. And teaching just sort of uses parts of them. You get pretty frustrated with teaching -- people get so upset about piddly little things that really aren't worth the emotional drain that they let happen. One of the things people get really up tight about -- the new buzzwords. Why don't we just take the best out of each of the new ideas that come along, instead of jumping on the bandwagon ... and saying this is it, nothing else is right! I just can't do that, you know, So I get into trouble sometimes. I don't think life is that way ... where everything's black or white, that's it! It's this or that! This is right, that's wrong! And I don't live my life that way any more, and if I get too close to people who live that way, I start backpeddling!

Learning from Lauren's words. Lauren's story of the intentionally progressive way in which she composed her life -- albeit from bits and pieces -- offered me the image of a Fair Isle knitter rather than the patchwork quilter I had pictured in Nancy's story. The onset of motherhood and an accompanying anxious realization of

responsibility strongly provoked Lauren to pull out the grey yarn and unpleasing patterns in the fabric of her life. Although Lauren's motivation was drawn from her desire to be a good mother, it also seemed to stretch beyond toward a simultaneous wish to recreate her whole being. To do this she looked out for threads of colours that appealed to her, picked them up, and worked them into her life. She watched vigilantly for old undesirable patterns and pulled them out if they began to re-appear, regardless of how much effort the unravelling and reknitting required to construct something that she liked better.

In composing her life, Lauren had both accepted and met continuous challenge. I heard with dismay her claim that her teaching jobs failed both to offer her sufficient challenge and to utilize her skills and knowledge, many of which had been acquired during her many years of mothering. All of the mother/teachers expressed the belief that through mothering experiences and activities they had developed knowledge which they found useful as teachers. Other talk, however, indicated that promoting this knowledge could be hampered because many people, including mothers, conceive negatively of "mothering" and anything associated with it.

PARTICIPANTS WHOSE TALK FIRST PROMPTED ME TO INVESTIGATE MOTHER/TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF "MOTHERING"

The mother/teachers I introduce in this section are Trudy, Ursula, and Gwen.

Trudy

Trudy had eighteen years of teaching experience, only six months of which had been part-time. She had taught in nine different schools, all in one school district. Each assignment change had been of Trudy's own choosing. She had taught in the intermediate grades in eight elementary schools, and for the most recent three years

had taught English as a second language (ESL) in a junior/senior secondary school. Trudy's teaching career was ten years old when her daughter was born. She took a year and a half long parental leave and returned to teaching for six months part-time before resuming full-time work. At the time of her interviews, Trudy was completing a post-graduate diploma in education. Because of divorce, Trudy was a single parent.

Trudy's words. I'm just, I don't know, I just, I perhaps prefer the term single parent. Single mother I think has gotten so much bad press. I think a 'single mother' has a connotation, er, the term has come to mean, 'Can't quite cope, is just barely making it,' because I think a lot of the single mothers that you do hear about are in financial need. I think if it's a single parent, there's no agenda, a single parent just means someone who's on her own, or his own, raising a child. I always find when I read in the press, you know, the single mother, you know, they're stating the sex and usually saying in some fashion how this woman is just financially not able to handle, can't afford daycare, or can't find good accommodation. Very seldom do you hear about the single fathers. It's just something personal, I mean, it's not something I'd want to stand on a soapbox about, but I just prefer saying I'm a single parent. If it's a single mother, she can't really cope, she can't make it on her own, and I don't necessarily think that way.

I taught elementary school for years, and I found that when I came home at nights, I really wasn't prepared to deal with what I'd just left for five hours. Sometimes, I was a little stressed, a little short, um, 'cos I'd been dealing with ten year olds, and I was coming home, you know, to a six year old. And I deliberately got out of elementary school and moved into secondary school, so that I'm not coming home to the job that I've just left, and I've found it has made a good deal of difference.

I have tried to separate my roles as a teacher and a mother, and I don't necessarily bring one home and take one to school. In many, in a lot of ways, I view my job as a business, and my business is to educate and I've seen teachers who do more of the nurturing role in the school, and not enough learning goes on. Whereas, I view mine as, you know, I have a job to do, you have a job to do, and if there's any further need, you have of me as a person, then I will be very supportive, but I think my primary role is that of an educator, I feel that I have a job to do and that job is to impart knowledge or impart a thinking skill, and to do it in as respectful a manner as possible, and I like that to be my child's teacher's role and leave the mothering to me.

I really wouldn't want my child to be mollycoddled and mothered. I want her teachers to just educate -- or teach -- I think I also do that [as a teacher]. I'm thinking especially at the, the younger age levels where they have kind of mollycoddled the children ... where I have seen some teachers that will say, 'You don't have to do that. That's okay, don't worry about that now, we'll learn our tables later.' As a teacher that's not my style. It's just 'You've got a job to do, let's get it done!' And you see what I've seen is a kind of mollycoddling rather than the, well, what I think of mothering is, uh, being supportive but setting goals and giving direction.

I like teaching because I think I'm good at it ... it is a sense of identity I'd never really thought about being good until I got, um, feedback, .. from either administrators or parents

Learning from Trudy's words. At the start of our first interview, I was startled when Trudy told me that she disliked being labelled "single mother" and preferred "single parent." Because of my interest in revaluing motherhood, hearing a mother reject the title of "mother" was unnerving. The first passage quoted above is Trudy's reply to my asking her about the cause of her preference, for I had feared that her words lacked sympathy toward less fortunate single mothers. I felt perturbed, but realized that this indicated that I should reflexively examine my thinking. Why did I want sympathy for all single mothers? Why wouldn't Trudy want sympathy?

Upon careful re-thinking, I realized that my sympathy represented my belief that it must take much courage to raise a child alone and to maintain courage would require others' support and understanding. Listening again to Trudy's words, however, it occurred to me that it would be doubly difficult for a single mother to cope and to maintain courage if frequently bombarded with authoritative discourses on single mothers and their coping difficulties. Thus, I began to hear an act of resistance reported in Trudy's words; resistance toward her subjectivity becoming constituted in a way that might interfere with her coping ability. Moreover, I thought that having a career that gives one a sense of identity other than that of "mother" might help in this regard, especially in a society that values mothering work less than career work. Whether or not these interpretations were accurate, I felt that they represented a possibility, and I realized that despite my anxiety for mother/teachers to value their mothering knowledge as highly as their professional knowledge, in the current state of our culture there may be situations and times in a mother/teacher's life when this may not be feasible. It would be impositional to suggest that all mother/teachers should promote their maternal knowledge.

Trudy's descriptions of how she conceives of her professional role as an educator seemed to reflect our society's commonly held conception of education, wherein "we subscribe to an ideal of the educated person that gives pride of place to intellectual virtues and attainments" and makes "no calls for mastery of the three C's of care, concern, and connection" (Martin, 1990:25). Trudy's words revealed, however, that if "mothering" is thought only to represent the concept of "mollycoddling," it would appear inappropriate for teaching. Her talk suggested, therefore, that attempts to promote the value of maternal knowledge in the field of education will need to present a conception of "mothering" that includes "challenging" and excludes "mollycoddling." Thinking about this, it occurred to me that teaching the "three C's" to our students would require us to be clear in our minds about our conceptions of these, also.

The opportunity Trudy had to manage her career by choosing to change her teaching assignments had not been available to most of the other participants. However, she was one of only three participants who had over fifteen years of full-time teaching in a single district, and the only one who had taken just one break for childrearing. Trudy's choice to separate her teaching and mothering roles contrasted sharply with that of Ursula, who was also a high school teacher of ESL.

Ursula

Ursula grew up in Eastern Canada. Upon completing high school, she did not immediately prepare for a teaching career, rather she worked for a year in a hospital laboratory. For the following two years, Ursula studied full-time in a community college, and then worked in the college for another two years while studying part-time. Next, Ursula taught for two years on an exchange programme in Fiji. Upon returning to Canada, she moved across country to B.C. where she spent three years completing her degree in education. Ursula taught high school French for two years before her first child was born. Following the birth, she took maternity leave only, but when her second

child was born two years later, Ursula began a three year break from teaching to care for her children full-time. Since the end of that break, Ursula had worked part-time as an ESL and English teacher in a junior/senior high school.

Ursula's words. I never divide myself up and say, 'This is my professional life. This is my home life.' I want my students to know that I'm a parent. I mention my children. I'm always a parent even when I'm at work, and I think that, that's a real conscious thing on my part. I'm not just there saying, 'I am your teacher' and go straight through the year and never mention any of my personal values or the fact that I have a family, or talk to the children about who I am or about who they are. So that's probably a little bit of a different approach from the way perhaps some people work in high school.

I talk about my children. I bring anecdotes about my family and my personal life into the classroom and bring them in, and the kids enjoy hearing them. [A mother/teacher colleague] was talking [to me] about ... that it was a healthy thing, a natural thing to bring those family values and all those other things into the classroom and be a whole person, and it's not just this divided person who works here ... and never the twain shall meet. And I said, 'That's really how I feel when I'm going to work ... I'm not leaving parts of me behind.' Um, and that's our approach, and that's the way we teach, and we love it, and it's great fun for us. And we hope that leads to the kids finding that human, and, er, it brings out things for them that they can identify with, er, talking about their experiences and their feelings because good writing requires tremendous honesty. I always tell the children, 'Never lie -- never write what you think I want to hear, um, never write for me ever, ever, ever. Just do not write some trite bit of nonsense just to please a teacher. That is the worst kind of writing you can ever do. You've got to get to yourself, and in order to get to yourself, you have to be honest, and that requires some risks.' And if you take no risks, you cannot expect the students to take risks either. So, I think it's fair to say, 'I am just a person, um, I'm not coming at you as an English expert, I am here to facilitate some stuff that should be coming out of you, not always being the font of wisdom who has all the answers to the poetry questions, but that you yourselves with your heads together can probably come up with just as good answers as I could.'

Learning from Ursula's words. Ursula's lively and confident manner made it possible to find credible her claims that she faces her high school students as a mother and talks to them about her children. Her talk displayed her strong conviction that her mothering self has a place in her secondary classroom. She implied her belief that because this both allows her to display her "human side" and enables students to perceive her as supportive, it improves her opportunity to challenge and encourage

them to take risks. Thus, when Ursula referred to mothering in the classroom, she was thinking of an entirely different concept than mollycoddling.

Ursula was the only study participant who talked explicitly about making her motherhood values known to students. Gwen, the mother/teacher I introduce next, said like Ursula that her experience of mothering was valuable to her teaching. She also explained, however, that through becoming a teacher she had unlearned some negative thinking which she associated with her mothering experience.

Gwen

Gwen had nine and a half years of teaching experience and was taking a one year leave of absence at the time of the study. She had two sons aged twenty-six and twenty-three years. Gwen had married fairly soon after completing high school, and her first son was born when she was twenty years old. Her post-secondary education, degree completion, teacher training, and entry into teaching began when her older son was in high school. Gwen had developed an interest in teaching through school and classroom contacts that had been prompted by her younger son's learning disabilities. Through various associations and agencies, Gwen learned how to help her son, and she used the skills also as a volunteer tutor for special needs students. The tutoring experience motivated Gwen to enter university and qualify for a teaching certificate. Following certification, Gwen began four and half years of substitute teaching. During the last one and half years of this time, she completed her degree and afterwards obtained a full-time teaching assignment. She had continued in this position for five years until taking her one year leave of absence. At the end of that year, however, Gwen decided not to return to teaching and resigned from her contract. She thought that she might, however, like still to work occasionally as a substitute teacher.

Gwen's words. I hadn't had any experience with little babies -- I was terrified. But I loved this little guy I could sit and watch him for hours -- it just was such

a miracle I used to just enjoy sitting in the grass and watching them explore and watching them learn and grow and, er, just playing with them and enjoying them. I think this is what I like to do with the kids in my class -- just watch them learn and, yeah I, er, allowed other people ... Dr. Spock and other people like that to set schedules for me. One thing that I regret in terms of the way in which I raised [my first son] -- not [the second] because the first one gets all the untrained parenting I was always wishing, 'Now when he's potty trained, when he can feed himself, when he's in school, etc.' So, in a way you sort of wish away their lives instead of being there with them.

It was through parenting that I became aware of my need to learn [to be patient]. My dad was a very impatient, exacting -- you did it right, or you were just a so-and-so, whereas my mother was very patient, very tolerant and accepting, you know. So I had these two kinds of models -- the dominant impression was to be an effective parent you had to be this way -- like my dad In contacting with my kids, I responded in the mode of my dad and so became very aware of that in me. I was variously successful in dealing with it ... it's something I've been working on all my life. It's funny because, you know, one of the things I've been credited with by my students -- and been absolutely amazed -- is my patience.

One of the things ... I've been working through is bringing myself to come around to honour the way my mother was, I mean, one of the things I, I get angry about was that she didn't stand up for herself to my dad, you know. I get angry about that because I felt that ... would have taught me to stand up for myself.

One of the reasons why I took my leave of absence was I was becoming increasingly aware that I was relating to my students -- especially the ones that had difficulty -- with less detachment than was helpful for them. So, I think that probably would be saying more about teaching revealing something to me about motherhood -- that motherhood had taught me. I would say before I went into teaching that my experience of motherhood had taught me that to be a mother -- to nurture -- means that you look after things and provide just the right circumstances for things -- in order to grow, and that their growth depends on you doing that and that you've got to do it right. Putting the motherhood and the teaching together [I came] to the realization that things will grow, that it doesn't depend entirely on you -- that there are other factors. So I'm coming to the realization that no, it didn't all depend on me, there were other factors. I acknowledge that I perhaps felt a lot of ownership of my son's problems, and in leaving my teaching job for my leave of absence, I recognized that I was responding in the same way to my students with difficulties -- learning, social, or familial.

You have to meet the kid where they are ... and that requires that you meet the child as an individual. You say, 'It looks like you've got a problem here. I'd like to help you address it. What do you think we can do, and what will work best for you?' Ask the kid. The kids know, you know, and ninety per cent of the time, nobody ever asks the child. [My son] was in a summer class -- he had a ball and said, 'Mum, I really like math., and I understand it.' Well, he was finished for any other [method] -- and the bulk of your learning assistance teachers [then were] behaviourist, And, you see, he'd experienced what worked and kept trying to tell people -- poor guy -- he kept trying to explain to them how to teach him. And, of course would they listen? No! Out with their little drills! I really became

aware of that in the last couple of years and in my classroom -- is how much children have to teach us, and how foolish we are to ignore it.

Learning from Gwen's words. By choosing a pastoral setting to describe the pleasure she derived from watching her children explore, learn, and grow, Gwen highlighted tension between a mother's appreciation of children's natural development and her reception of "experts'" advice on how to influence development (i.e., control nature by imposing feeding schedules, etc.). This theme of contradiction and associated conflicts recurred throughout Gwen's talk. Like several other participants, Gwen claimed that the experience of raising a first child enabled her to recognize the contradictions and to accommodate them better in the raising of subsequent children. That the contradictions persisted to plague Gwen's motherhood, however, is evident in the stories about her learning disabled, second son.

Gwen rarely found acceptance in schools for either her own or her son's knowledge of the individual and natural characteristics of his learning style and development. Gwen's attempts to draw these to educators' attention, especially at the secondary level, earned her the title "overprotective mother." Gwen found abhorrent this response to her attempts to gain some control over decisions about her child's learning environment. She claimed, however, that if mother/teachers forget that many factors which influence development are outside of their control, they may suffer the pain of taking ownership of their children's or students' problems.

Gwen's talk revealed three reasons why although mothers learn to both challenge and allow natural development, that is, to blend the natural and the imposed, they continue to experience a tension between the two. First, there is an ongoing struggle to relinquish the "father's" belief that the "one right way" can be found and should be followed. Second, the pervasiveness of the belief produces feelings of guilt when the right way cannot be found, even in those who have learned that it cannot. Finally, the resulting assumption is that only those who are acquainted with a "right

way" have something to be assertive about and, thus, we cannot hear assertiveness in the voices of those who wish to embrace more than one perspective; we hear that they cannot stand up for themselves. Some other participants' talk suggested that the commonly held conception of assertiveness and what can be asserted might influence the reception of maternal knowledge in schools.

PARTICIPANTS WHOSE TALK FIRST PROMPTED ME TO INVESTIGATE
MOTHER/TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF "ASSERTIVENESS," "HUMILITY,"
AND "EMOTION."

Some participants claimed that they experience difficulty in asserting their maternal knowledge. Three participants' talk drew my attention to the possibility that not only "assertiveness" but also "humility" and "emotion" might be important terms to investigate with regard to maternal knowledge and mother/teachers' experiences of its reception. The three were Helen, Yvonne, and Olive.

Helen

Helen had seven and a half years of teaching experience at the primary level. She was around forty years old and had a thirteen year old son, a ten year old daughter, and a seven year old son. Helen had grown up on a farm in Scotland, and she had begun her teaching career in an extremely poor area of Glasgow where she had remained for two years before emigrating to Canada with her husband. In Canada, Helen lived first in a small northern town in British Columbia where she acquired a Grade 1 teaching assignment. Two years later, Helen began a ten year career break to raise her family. Her first son was born in the Yukon, and there Helen took up volunteer work with handicapped pre-schoolers at a child development centre. Continuing as a volunteer, Helen assisted in public schools, ran a pre-school for two years, and taught literacy and English as a second language courses to adults. Before Helen's return to public school

teaching, the family had made another move; this time to the lower mainland of British Columbia. There Helen resumed her teaching career. She began by substituting for six months, next she held a part-time position for a year, and finally was assigned to a full-time position which was in its second year at the time of the study. Helen had recently acquired a permanent contract and had three years of seniority in her school district.

Helen's words. I was very happy for many years that I was able, in a position to be at home with my children. I, er, that was one thing that having worked with other children who had not had that, I really felt strongly that to be at home with your children was something I really wanted to do. I kind of took that role on as - - this is my job ... but ... when I had [my third child] ... there definitely had to be an outside kind of an existence and not just a mother and wife existence. There had to be a me also ... it was then I started to do some outside things and, uh, and enjoyed them.

I came from a two parent family, there was enough money, we lived on a farm, and life was really very wonderful. When I started teaching the first time, I met, in a very poor area, many families who didn't fit that mould and I felt sorry for them but I didn't understand. I think that through volunteering at the child development centre in Whitehorse ... working with handicapped pre-school children on a one-to-one basis, I learned a lot doing that. I think the thing I learned most was kind of an empathy and understanding of the parents and where they're coming from, and that not everyone deals with the same criteria as a I do. As a pre-mum in teaching, I was very funnel-visioned in many ways. Like, I used my own childhood background as my reference point -- yes, parents were at home with their children, parents work with them. Yes, they have employment, and everything was safe and secure and fine, and everybody should be providing that for their children. I still think that, but sometimes that's not an actuality, and I think that through being a mother that's what kind of hit me -- rather than being annoyed at parents who weren't providing that, trying to be more understanding of those (pause) who weren't. It's not just the child that is in the classroom, it's the whole family, and so I do family visits at the beginning of the year for my Grade 1 children. I meet the family before school starts because to me, it's a whole, it's a whole family thing, it's not just a child. I think all the volunteer stuff I did throughout, I think contributed to that. Even working with the adults who were unable to read. That was a major thing -- of course, they can't read to their children!

Our responsibility as teachers to communicate with parents, I always thought that was important, but I think it even more important now. You don't have that trust automatically, you have to work at developing it. You have to be ... prepared to give a little more time and a little more of yourself to do that job, to see where they're coming from and to meet them in any way, and I feel very strongly about that.

One thing that really upsets me -- I know it upsets me more now that I'm a mother than it would have previously -- is teachers' attitudes towards children and the way that they speak to them. I find it unbearable to hear teachers being

sarcastic to children ... it's so detrimental to [the children's] feelings of well-being That's something that I feel very strongly about.

[In staff discussions and meetings] I think what I do is speak from a feeling place.

I think -- if guilty's the right word -- I'm guilty of waiting sometimes until I feel very, very strongly about something I should probably put my two bits worth in sooner than I do because I think once you get emotional about it then it's, it's, er, doesn't do your cause any good.

Learning from Helen's words. The first passage quoted above from Helen's interviews offers another perspective on mother/teachers efforts to seek work outside of the home. Helen does not claim to be seeking a "meaningful role," rather she recalls, "there had to be a me also." This implied Helen's concern that restricted to the home, she was becoming immersed in the lives of family members and was in danger of losing her sense of self.

Helen, in common with many other participants, had volunteered in a variety of organizations that had educational purposes. Helen said that her volunteer experiences had taught her that parents, family, and home are often not what educators might assume. She proposed, consequently, that educators' understanding rather than pity is needed by students with less than ideal home situations. Helen implies that to achieve this understanding teachers need to examine reflexively their assumptions about and expectations of parents and to be flexible in response to the differing family situations of their students.

Helen frequently used the word "feeling," and she often spoke with feeling when describing how her mothering experiences had provided her a fresh understanding of children and parents. She claimed that this understanding provoked her to have several concerns about parent/teacher communication in particular. Helen said that to bring this maternal knowledge into staff meetings, she speaks from "a feeling place." She claimed that although her talk was heard within small groups of her primary teacher colleagues, it was not heard in staff meetings. Helen's descriptions were the first to

suggest to me that mothers may use emotional feelings pro-actively to speak their maternal knowledge, but that this may make its assertion difficult. That humility might also be a problem in this regard was revealed to me by Yvonne's talk.

Yvonne

At the time of the study, Yvonne had been teaching for over twenty years and was on leave studying full-time for her M.A. She was the mother of a blended family of six now aged between twenty-two and twenty-seven. The marriage had taken place when her second husband's youngest child was still a baby. Yvonne, however, had taken only three short breaks from teaching: a few months after her first child was born; two years at university completing her degree part-time while her first husband studied for his M.A. and she cared for their two babies; and one year while working as a faculty associate in a university's teacher education programme. The largest and latter portion of Yvonne's teaching career had taken place in one urban school district. Prior to that, she had taught for one year in a private school, and for a few years in a small town where she and her first husband had begun their teaching careers.

Yvonne's words. I didn't have much time to take time with [the children] because of teaching and then I'd come home and there would be those kinds of things that you do to keep the household running and, um, there was too much of that, and I look back now and feel badly that I didn't have more quality time with these beautiful little kids. We did a lot of different things but it was like a mother with her ducklings, sort of scoop them all in behind and see that they've got their runners done up and their little coats on and then away we'd all go as a group. So the individualizing of my children is happening now. That's what I'm working on now as they're older -- who are you as a person, and I want you to know me as a person not just as a mother administrator of six. I had a job to do as a mother. I had to bring up these children. I had to pass on the 'right way to do things.' I say that with quotes around it because I think my husband and I had things that [we thought were] the right way. This sense of order -- of the right way to do things, umm, we couldn't -- with, with six children you don't have that freedom to be more laid back and more hippy like, for example. But now I'm at that stage in my life where I'm examining a lot of what I've done in the last twenty years and finding, um, finding, um, (pause) it prickly! Yes! I feel a bit like -- I feel prickly because I'm not sure I've done it -- I did the best I could at the time but I'm not sure I did the best, I wish I had had more time -- I wish I had really, really planned that and not been so absorbed in, um, maybe doing it right.

From where I am now when I look back, I feel that I've been this incredible manager. And the children through the kind of managing have grown up to be, er, quite individualistic interesting people. So it hasn't been a bad thing to do that, but I didn't have the time when I'd come home from teaching to sit down with one little child and chit-chat or, or play with their cars over the chesterfield. I didn't have that. So I would have story time and however many decided to join on the chesterfield had stories.

J: If a staff meeting discussion topic reminds you of something that you have knowledge about because of having a family, how do you find your knowledge is received by the members of staff?

Well, my mind goes into overdrive thinking in my head ... 'Should I say anything? Will it be held against me? Should I mention my experience re: this child or that happening, or that situation?' I don't spontaneously talk. I keep quiet because I'm afraid of coming through -- again I don't want to be thought of as 'Miss Know-it-all,' or too powerful, or assertive or -- I'm afraid of that there's a reluctance, I have to play that heavy tape through and weigh 'is this important enough to come through with my opinions?' I think part of it, um, perhaps, er, it's only our experience, and that doesn't make it generalizable to the schoolkids at large.

Learning from Yvonne's words. Yvonne's talk indicated that in retrospect she saw herself as a mother who had too little time to have either thought about or attended to the individualities of her children, and this seemed to worry her. Often throughout her interviews, however, Yvonne's comments implied that she had a longstanding appreciation of her six children's individual qualities, and that both she and her husband had encouraged each of their children to develop accordingly.

From Yvonne's comment about "storytime" and "those who decided to join," I inferred her respect for the individual choices and moods of her children. It occurred to me that Yvonne's storytime group may have had less potential to become individually impositional than the regular routine of one-on-one reading that a mother of fewer children might practice. Rather than deciding that she had too many children to read to on an individual basis, Yvonne seems to have improvised a way of reading to her children which enabled her simultaneously to respect individuality.

Yvonne occasionally talked of successful achievements in raising her family of six. However, she spoke more often of her "prickly" feelings about what she had "done

in the last twenty years." Yvonne's talk implied, moreover, that at school as a teacher she preferred to be humble about her motherhood achievements. She wanted to avoid conveying the impression that she thought of herself as an authority on children just because she had raised six.

Yvonne spoke the last passage quoted above firmly and assertively. When listening to the audiotape, I wrote in my journal, "I feel uncomfortable with the tone of Yvonne's voice here. I feel that she is telling me off." Thinking reflexively about my reaction, I had to face my own reluctance to permit a woman's voice an assertive tone. I wondered whether such feelings stem from childhood when no doubt we prefer hearing our mothers speak in kindly rather than in reprimanding or controlling tones. I realized that whatever the reason for my discomfort, its presence indicated that I should investigate mother/teachers' conceptions of assertiveness. Olive's talk was also among the earliest to suggest this need to me.

Olive

Olive had two sons aged 27 and 23 years. She had first taught in Canada thirty years ago. That was for one year only before marrying and moving with her husband to California, where he began graduate study and Olive began a nine-year break from teaching. During the break, Olive's two sons were born. Also, she had worked variously as a pre-school teacher, as a secretary for a book-publishing company, and as a volunteer tutor and tutoring co-ordinator for juvenile delinquents aged 12-16 years. Most of this period was spent in California, but for a while Olive and her husband lived in Wisconsin and for one year in England and Sweden.

Olive resumed teaching in British Columbia about twenty years ago; first as a substitute teacher, next as a part-time teacher, and finally for eight of the past ten years as a full-time teacher. Meanwhile, Olive began to complete her bachelor's degree through part-time study. The twenty years were interrupted by a year of full-time

undergraduate study, a year of teaching in Ontario, and two years leave for graduate study. At the time of the study, Olive had completed an M.A. degree and was working full-time. She was teaching a primary class and was working also as a consultant on instructional supervision both in the school and across the district where she taught. Her husband was a university professor and the family's various relocations had accommodated either his postgraduate studies or academic career, and their childrens' health.

Olive's words. The whole time that I wasn't teaching, I was always involved in volunteer work ... [for instance] tutoring kids ... working with kids who'd been juvenile delinquents within the justice system. What it did was just increase my awareness of, er, not just single mums, but what single black mums are up against and what black kids, or kids are up against, um, when they are not a majority in the system.

I did consciously want my kids to be well rounded and I'm not quite sure where that came from, I don't know if it's because I met a lot of academics when my husband was a grad. student and, er, didn't want my kids to be narrow like that I wanted the kids to have lots of experiences in sports, an appreciation for music, and opportunities for travel and [to] meet other people and appreciate other people. And that's hard in teaching, I think, is I'm always fighting to keep that same balance.

Mostly, I solved questions [regarding my children] by talking, just sort of reaching out I think that's what I do in my life, too, just think of lots of different alternatives ... until you find one that seems to be reasonable ... quite open-ended, not, er, not definite, like there's only one way to do this. I think mothers do that because one of the things that you learn as a mother is to be really flexible. Your schedule can -- if you ever did have one to start with -- can be upset at a moment's notice. I think that's exactly what teaching is, too, because you're responding, you're doing many different things all at once. You're responding to many different individuals all at once.

My kids grew up seeing me as a, you know, I worked all day and then I was a student at night or in the summers. They were both really good students, and I think a lot of that modelling was -- it wasn't anything that was planned, it just happened, but I think it was really good for them to see and both of them in their relationships with women, uh ... they assume that women are going to work and study and, you know, and have a mind of their own.

J: You suggested that you take your mothering knowledge to teaching. How do feel it's received if you talk about it, for instance, in a staff meeting?

My reaction when other people do that in a staff meeting is I'm not ... always sure it's appropriate because your own experience is that sample of two or three or four or one child or how many, it's very small. My reaction is that it's just too

limited. I think as a parent, you know my children are different from your children, different problems, so many different variables, that, uh, (slight pause), it would just be simply put forth as one point of view. I think that perhaps, um, when you put forth a point of view like that you have to, if you feel strongly about it, you have to back it up with a lot of factual evidence because I think that if you don't, uh, you have to put it in context. And when you're talking about your own children, I'm just not sure just how much objectivity you have and so I don't know about the accuracy and so you, it's sort of self-report isn't it?

Learning from Olive's words. While composing her life as a mother/teacher, Olive had blended together a complex array of bits and pieces of experience and responsibility. When not teaching in school, she had utilized any available opportunities to work otherwise as an educator and, thus, had broadened her understanding of children and their family situations. Within her forever changing lifestyle, she had developed an appreciation for people with a broad rather than a narrow range of interests. Moreover, Olive implied that she had learned that one seeks reasonable but not definite solutions to questions about children and people.

Olive had deftly patched together her career requirement for continuing study and her task of rearing two sons. In retrospect one pattern in her quilt provided Olive a positive view of herself as both a model for her sons as students and an exhibitor of the capabilities she wanted them to recognize and respect in women. Although Olive evidently blended into her teaching work a rich store of experience gained outside school and in motherhood, she was skeptical about whether these provided her with knowledge sufficiently valuable to offer as a contribution in school staff meetings. As the last passage quoted above indicates, Olive brought academic values to this judgment. This I found troublesome considering the extent of her mothering experience. However, because Olive had delayed her postgraduate studies until her sons had completed university, her M.A. was an achievement patiently awaited while Olive supported in various ways others' academic successes. Olive had earned the privilege to speak as an academic, and I realized that in such circumstances, it could be impositional to suggest she should be promoting her maternal rather than her

authoritative knowledge. Olive told me a few months after the study that she had changed her views (i.e., those expressed in the last quoted passage) because she had learned during the group discussion that other mothers shared her experiences and knowledge. She added, however, that she still felt unable and unwilling to voice her maternal knowledge in staff meetings because "old habits die hard."

SUMMARY

The analysis and findings which I presented in this chapter were derived from interview data only. The data not only enabled me to form profiles for each mother/teacher, but also revealed eleven key words in participants' descriptions of maternal knowledge. This early analysis revealed that through experiencing the responsibilities and activities of motherhood, the mother/teachers had gained much knowledge that they found valuable in their work as teachers. It also showed, however, that participants attached value to other knowledge which they had gained from the experience of living a mother/teacher's life. This latter knowledge seemed to result from two sets of circumstances that were common to many participants' lives.

First, the career patterns of most participants had been irregular; they were marked by interruptions for childbirth, childcare, and relocating to accommodate husbands' career opportunities. Mother/teachers who had experienced a haphazard career pattern implied that they knew a model of achievement that differs from the conventional. It was not the "model of an ordinary successful life" that involves "early decision and commitment" and ambition that remains steadily focussed (Bateson, 1990:6). Many mother/teachers apparently gain knowledge of routes to achievement other than setting firm goals and having clear visions.

Second, many of the mother/teachers had engaged in voluntary and part-time occupations outside of the home. Their talk indicated that during each hiatus in their

careers, they had engaged temporarily in voluntary or part-time work that was invariably connected with education. For example, they assisted in, taught in, and sometimes organized, pre-schools, tutoring services, and adult education. Many gave volunteer help in their own children's Kindergarten and Grade 1 classes. When participants described this temporary work, they often claimed that the experiences had provided them knowledge which they found useful as teachers. For instance, some claimed to have gained knowledge about families and people whom they might never otherwise have encountered, such as, underprivileged families, and adults (some of them parents) who could not read. I noted that although participants claimed they had transferred and found this knowledge very valuable to their work as teachers, only Pat had received any credit for the experience which had provided it.

Prior to conducting the study, I had not anticipated hearing about mother/teachers gaining knowledge through temporary occupations. Since the occupations were a consequence of their motherhood, and because the mother/teachers claimed that the experiences had contributed to the knowledge which they took back to teaching, I was prompted to develop a new research question: What temporary occupations did the mother/teachers experience and what knowledge would they claim these had provided them?

In participants' talk about the knowledge gained from their motherhood experience of raising children, and of the recognition afforded the knowledge in schools, I noted eleven key words. I realized, however, through thinking reflexively about my adverse reactions to some of the words, that each might be diversely conceived and, moreover, that some popular conceptions could be of detriment to the task of promoting maternal knowledge. This prompted me to ask two more research questions:

(1) What conceptions do mother/teachers have of each of the eleven words?

and

- (2) What would the mother/teachers want each word to represent in a description of maternal knowledge, its usefulness, and its reception in schools?

The eleven words are instinct, intuition, sensitivity, individuality, caring, nurturing, controlling, mothering, assertiveness, humility, and emotion. To gain additional information on participants' conceptions of the words, I presented each for group discussion. To find answers to not only the additional questions, but also the original research questions listed in Chapter 4, I analyzed both group discussion and interview data. These analyses and findings are presented in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

Chapter 6

HEARING ABOUT THE ROOTS OF MATERNAL KNOWLEDGE

In this chapter, I focus upon four words that figured prominently in the mother/teachers' talk about their maternal knowledge and provided me with an image of its roots. The words are instinct, intuition, sensitivity, and individuality. One of each of the four words is the focus of each section of the chapter. While composing each section in this and the following two chapters, I attempted to give precedence to participants' voices by following a five step procedure. First, from the interview transcripts, I excerpted the talk that had drawn my attention to the particular word, for example, "instinct." Second, I explained my reaction to the talk and why it prompted me to present the word for group discussion. Third, from the transcript of the whole group discussion, I excerpted the reports of each small group's reactions to the word. Fourth, I searched through the reports for recurrent themes or categories of information regarding participants' conceptions of the word. Finally, using the transcripts of the small group discussions to aid my understanding of each of the themes, I wrote what I had learned about participants' conceptions of the word in relation to maternal knowledge.

INSTINCT

Instinct was referred to implicitly by many participants and explicitly by a few. Among the few, three spoke strongly about the role of instinct in maternal knowledge. In this section, I report, first, the three participants' talk about instinct and my reactions to it; and, second, the group discussions and what I learned from these about the mother/teachers' conceptions of instinct.

Hearing Interview Talk About Instinct

The three participants whose words spoke "instinct" the most loudly to me were Ruth, Doris, and Pat. In this subsection, I report the talk of each of the three participants separately, and follow each one's talk with an explanation of my reaction to it.

Ruth's talk. Beginning with the first interview:

J: Before you became a mother what did you expect being a mother would mean to you?

Maybe it was total naivety but ... I thought that ... with my own children I would ... not ... have to learn ... but I think that you do click in on a very instinctive level that I wasn't expecting -- an instinctual understanding of needs and problems facing your child. Giving birth and going through pregnancy, there were so many things that suddenly were not intellectually within your control. This other part of you suddenly reared very, very alive and when your body would take over the birth ... the baby and your body working together ... you were learning that here was a power, or whatever, that was part of your nature. Part of your natural (pause) humanness took over. You were there as part of it, but you were not the controlling factor. Basically your education up to that point is that if you were intellectually sound everything can be within your control because you can intellectualize, and I think that a lot of that got thrown out the window. It changed a lot of perspectives for me.

Continuing in the second interview:

J: You talked about 'instinctual understanding' and instinct as opposed to intellect. Would you explain more to me about what you mean there?

I think that motherhood opened up for me a whole window of perception and sensitivity to human relationships ... a different level of understanding. It wasn't something that I could have definitely attributed to, er, learning in terms of formal learning, and so I think that I'm using instinctual in that it seemed to come from within as opposed to from outside. This was something that seemed to grow out of the relationship within motherhood ... between yourself and this small being. I think that there are probably people who don't open themselves up to that. You come to trust, I think you come to trust your instinctual self more through motherhood because you are juggling so many things. I think you're almost supposed not to trust that.

J: Do you feel that the instinct was operative before you became a mother?

I think it probably was, but I think I tried to ignore it because that wasn't a part of my intellectual training. You're trained to evaluate over the course of regular education -- to always have the supporting evidence, the supporting documentation. It can be very difficult to defend an instinctual reaction in the

face of an intellectual reaction. 'I know' is not as easy to stand by as 'this can be proven by ... etc. etc.' I touch bases with a spot in me that I don't think I really trusted before motherhood. I listen to that part much more. I do that -- it's not just my children -- I would do that with anybody's children now. Actually, I would do that with all people.

Reacting to Ruth's talk. Ruth's first interview was one of the earliest, and she was the first to mention instinct. I found the word immediately unsettling because it presented me with images of birds migrating and bears hibernating; activities perceived to occur naturally and without need for the human ability to reason intellectually. More unhappily, the word prompted me to recall how having been assured that I would know instinctively how to handle my first baby, I felt ashamed to find that I required instruction and practice. So, I received Ruth's references to instinct uneasily. I heard passion in Ruth's tone, however, which increased my discomfort but told me I should reflect upon my reaction. Moreover, I detected an irony, for although I had presupposed that maternal knowledge could not be explained by epistemology as I know it, I was apparently unprepared to accept participants' using words which traditional epistemologies reject. Part of me hoped that instinct would not be mentioned again, but soon it was by Doris who situated it explicitly within her talk on maternal knowledge.

Doris' talk. From the first interview:

J: What knowledge do you feel you gained from being a mother?

I think an understanding of people, patience at a personal level, an understanding of other people, and a much more caring approach. That's the role I think society casts us in, the nurturers, the nestmakers, and so forth, but those attributes aren't necessarily always there. I think you're cast in that mould and so you find them. You do have to look after the children, and so those kinds of attributes develop -- and an understanding of human foibles, I think.

J: So, you're saying they're not there naturally, they have to be developed?

I think that maybe they're there naturally and you pull them out. Those were the kinds of things that developed more once I became a mother. Now whether they

were there to begin with? Yes! I think they are naturally there. That is, they're instinctive but developed to a greater or lesser degree in different individuals.

Doris' second interview:

J: What does 'instinctive' mean to you?

Innately present -- something that is innately present. It's either genetically coded, but, uh, it is something you do, I think, without having to think about doing it. You instinctively reach for something when it is going to fall. I think that those nurturing things are there but they're not necessarily developed. I think everybody has those instincts but not necessarily the same ones. Biologically the woman is the mother so therefore there are those instinctive things ... the father can't really do some things ... but there are other nurturing, holding things. It's the mother's instinct to feed the child though and if it's not fashionable to [nurse] ... are you suppressing instinct? Are you intellectually rationalizing that the doctors say, 'It's much better to give them [formula], therefore, I will do that because science tells me that's better. But holding and those kinds of things, I mean that's a very instinctive thing to do. So they are there in everybody, but developed to a greater or lesser degree.

Reacting to Doris's talk. To me Doris's talk implied that she thought some form of instinct underlies the development of maternal knowledge. But I could not determine how she might conceive of this instinct. I felt that sometimes Doris was suggesting that instinct prompts mothers to react automatically to their children. Fearful that this might suggest that there are natural reactions to children which occur in mothers (or women) only, my discomfort regarding participants' references to instinct increased. I did not want to use instinct to describe maternal knowledge. However, Pat's opinions convinced me that I was retaining a bias against associating instinct with knowledge. Her words persuaded me not only to accept mother/teachers' claims about instinct and the development of their maternal knowledge, but also to listen carefully to how they make the association.

Pat's talk. From the first interview:

J: What knowledge do you feel you gained from being a mother?

I don't think knowledge is the correct word, I think it's instinct, or the honing of instincts. I think some of us probably have better instincts than others. Um, I

think it's probably a honing of our instincts rather than development of knowledge.

J: When you talk about 'honing instincts', how would you describe that and 'instincts'?

Well, that urge to make the nest and to fill it with babies and care for the home and, and it is an instinct and an urge. Why are women so desperate -- women who can't have children so desperate to have children. That's the thing that we want more than anything is to have babies -- well, not all of us, I think the woman who says, 'I don't want children' probably has suppressed it. I don't know where it comes from because I don't ever remember my mother saying to me this is the wonderful life, get married, have babies, wash dirty socks, er, I think it's instinct, I think it's nature.

Continuing in the second interview:

J: I thought that 'honing of instincts' was an interesting expression and I kept thinking about it as I listened to the other mothers after your first interview. I wonder ... through the closeness we have with our children, do we develop a particular kind of sensitivity ... something from inside [that] comes to life during motherhood. Is that part of the 'honing of instincts'?

Oh, yeah, and I think it is instinctual and I think it's not anything that's unique to us as human beings. If you watch a mother bird protecting her nest, or a cat protecting her kittens it's the same thing. I'm, going to digress (Pat tells a long story about animals on her sister-in-law's farm). We all want to mother, all of us I think it's animal, I don't think it's anything -- it's about, I think, the need to protect and nurture and mother. 'Instinct' does seem to be basic -- primal, and we seem to think that knowledge is -- to me knowledge is something that happens out here and goes into here, into my brain here, whereas instinct is already here.

Reacting to Pat's talk. By implication, Pat narrowed the concept to an instinct to protect, and this seemed applicable to both Ruth and Doris's descriptions. When Pat suggested in reference to the knowledge she had gained through experiencing motherhood, that "instincts or honing of instincts" was a more appropriate descriptor than "knowledge," I felt reprimanded. The firmness of Pat's tone convinced me that I must investigate further what mother/teachers would want to claim about instinct with respect to maternal knowledge and how they conceive of that instinct. Thus, I presented "instinct" for group discussion. The next section opens with the small group reports on instinct, which were presented and responded to in the whole group session.

Learning About Conceptions of Instinct from Group Discussions

The talk of reporters was frequently interspersed by others' "mm-hmms," "yes, we said that," etc. There were no disagreements with any of the reports. To begin the subsection, I display each small group reporter's synopsis of her group's discussion of instinct.

- Gp1: We looked at 'instinct' and we thought that it was a very intense protection and caring type of idea, um, involuntary -- a response to needs that [arise], that need to be attended to in a child. It happens because it needs to happen, it underlies thought. It seems that mothers are tuned into our own children completely, but not so much with nieces or nephews or other children -- although we can be aware of it. But the most intense bonding is with our own children which we tend to look at instinctually.
- Gp2: Immediate response words to 'instinct' were 'physical,' 'animal,' 'a bit of a cliché,' 'the mother's instinct we are all supposed to have.' The word 'trusting' came up and I'm assuming that was an echo of 'trusting your instincts.' And then we wondered were these instincts being learned in our society any longer? If they exist, has our technology served to somehow separate us, separate us from instinctual mothering to the extent that now we have to relearn some of those instincts? Three of us right away, all together, came up with -- when we said what are some examples of instincts -- the desire to protect, and that was strongly felt.
- Gp3: We were also making similar connections to a lot of the things that have already been said. It is really very interesting to have things affirmed [here]. In the 'instinct', we also felt that it was very intensive powerful kinds of reactions to given situations. We brought up something even more intense, it was like just protect your child in terms of a survival kind of thing, like if something was going to attack your child, you wouldn't even think, you would just go. And it was something that you would not hesitate to do.

The group reports revealed three themes with respect to conceptions of instinct, which I named: basic/primal origins, survival/protection role, and tuning-in function. I used the transcripts of the small group discussions to clarify my understanding of the substance of the themes.

Basic/primal origins. In each group the word instinct conjured up thoughts of "animals' physical reactions"; "actions that are not thought out," "actions that are involuntary" and "are not conscious." "Instinct is primal, basic -- a primal level of getting

at things," they suggested. But some decided that the "idea that instinct is basic, that the instinct to be a mother is basic" can produce cliches which suggest that mothers know by instinct what they should do with their children and how to do it right. Instead, they claimed, for instance, "I did not instinctively know how to care for my children, I watched my sister with hers," and "I did not know what to do with my kids. I had to read a book."

In Group 2, participants expressed a fear that the advent of expert advice on mothering from medical practitioners, books, and television has brought about a decline in mothers' willingness to trust their instincts. Thus, they pondered whether we need to relearn to trust our instincts. Because according to the audiotape of the Group 2 discussion, "learning to trust instincts" was the only sense in which members of the group used the term "learn," I inferred that the Group 2 reporter was referring to this when she spoke to the large group about "instincts being learned."

Maternal instinct was discussed by some in relation to nursing babies. They decided that either the maternal instinct does not extend to nursing or mothers can be conditioned to deny it. They noted too that the choice not to nurse has been made by some women throughout history and across cultures. Dubiousness regarding the maternal instinct to nurse children surfaced. These discussions elided the fact that both bottle feeding and nursing represent a mother's efforts to protect her child's physical well-being. Yet, in all groups, participants agreed on both the existence and the salience of a basic maternal instinct to protect.

Survival/protection. Discussions about the protective instinct mostly began in reference to animals' instincts. Some discussed "birds flying south in winter -- it needs to happen because if they don't, they won't survive, but nobody needs to tell them to do it." In response, participants talked about birds not only migrating, but also protecting their young for survival purposes. Hearing this talk, other mother/teachers claimed that the

instinct they experienced the most strongly as mothers was an "overwhelming desire to protect their children." They declared that upon seeing the newborn child "the world suddenly appeared as a very dangerous place," and when that first baby was born "you realized that you had to protect it at all costs."

Participants expanded the concept of the human protective instinct, as compared to animal instinct, in two ways. First, they claimed that it extends to children other than their own: "After I had my own children, I realized other people's children were treasures -- I developed more of a sense that I wanted to protect other's children." Second, they proposed that survival of the human species is unique in that it depends on "thriving emotionally as opposed to just physically." Thus, there is a human instinct, they decided, to protect not only the physical but also the emotional wellbeing of the child, and the latter requires the protector's "tuning in" to the child.

Tuning in. Some participants said they thought that "the protective instinct is strongest for your own child" and underlies an "involuntary bonding" which enables a mother to be "tuned in to" the child. One mother claimed to have literally "tuned in" at childbirth. She explained that at her first two children's births she had suppressed any urge to cry out, but for the third, she gave in to an instinctive feeling to scream at a particular pitch, and she said that she believed it had supplied her muscles just the right amount of oxygen to ease the birth. Other mothers responded to this story with credulity. Realizing, however, the dubious currency that non-mothers give such stories, participants noted that "education tells you to deny your instincts." "Yes," said another, "I still do, for instance, I feel I need a lot of factual evidence if I'm stating a case in the staffroom at school." Another noted that "I can't make my instincts make a lot of sense, whereas for my intuitions I could give a reason why." Whether or not this latter was an opinion shared by all the mother/teachers will be seen in the next section on intuition, but first I summarize what I learned from the talk on instinct.

Summarizing Mother/Teachers' Conception of "Instinct"

The common conception of instincts as animal-like and primal is both problematic and promising to attempts to describe and revalue maternal knowledge. The problematic conception of maternal instinct equates human mothering with animal mothering, associates it with involuntary behaviours only, and disassociates it from intellectual behaviour. This conception thereby neglects the human mother's intellectual capacities. Several participants repeatedly claimed that instinct is basic, but implied that it is acted upon thoughtfully except in the case of emergency responses which may, or may appear to, omit thought and favour immediate action.

The conception of maternal instinct as "primal and animal like" offers promise to the revaluing of "maternal knowledge" when its association with protection and survival becomes inclusive of the human requirement for "emotional survival." It appears that "emotional survival" requires the mother to "tune in" to the child, and that "tuning in" may be the juncture between instinct and intuition.

INTUITION

Intuition, like instinct, was referred to both implicitly and explicitly by participants during their interviews. Although the references spoke to me of the importance the term held for participants, I found them unsettling for two main reasons. First, they reminded me of timeworn cliches about women's intuition and women being intuitive by nature which made me reluctant to allow intuition any association with knowledge. Second, although participants' persistent and enthusiastic use of the term "intuition" challenged my reluctance, I was unable to discern a clear picture of how mother/teachers conceived of intuition and its role in their maternal knowledge. Thus, I sought clarification of the concept by including it in the group

discussion. In this section, I present and discuss, first, participants' interview comments and, second, their group discussions on intuition.

Hearing Interview Talk About Intuition

Participants spoke of intuition most often in response to my question on how they seek answers to questions they have regarding their children's upbringing. Some references were explicit, but as I endeavoured to understand how participants conceived of intuition, I also heard the same meaning being attached to expressions such as "gut feeling," and, so, began to receive these as implicit references to intuition. To report the interview talk about intuition, I present and discuss, first, participants' explicit references and, second, participants' implicit references to the concept.

Hearing explicit references to intuition. The quotations presented below are excerpted from several mother/teachers' interview transcripts.

Thelma:

J: You were saying that you would go to several different sources for solving problems?

Oh, many, mm-hmm, and actually, I would probably sometimes just do what I already knew -- it was sort of intrinsic ... a lot of things, you just knew intuitively, I think, from my own conditioning as a woman.

J: You said, you knew intuitively, could you explain that?

I think so -- the things that I learned as I was growing up My grandmother was very, uh, strong in my life and, um, I think I intrinsically picked up how she dealt with problems and situations ... and, um, those kinds of intuitive things you don't actually sit down and say, a,b,c, or d, like you just learn them. It's not some model to follow. Like, there was not 'this is the way a mother is' and 'this is the model or the format that you should follow.' At least, I never felt that.

I think that intuition is something that you should be proud of. I would say, yes, it's a gift, and I think some people are more intuitive. So, that would have something to do with your feelings and, and that sense of knowing. It's not something that you learn through facts (brief pause), um, maybe it is -- a knowledge. Well, it's a combination of facts, knowledge, experiential learning (pause) and then what? Where is the next? Is it the missing link? I think your feelings and emotions are more tied in with intuition, whereas, instinct is involuntary ... like an animal's instinct. I don't think you can learn intuition. To

be intuitive ... is to feel something; not to just know it but to be able to feel. Maybe your feelings would be stronger in intuition than, er, say if you're rational, or logical, or, er, intellectual, but intuition, you're, you're -- that gut feeling ... is stronger than the intellectual. So, maybe intuition is tied up with your spirit or your soul and maybe the instinct with your body I would think intuition is definitely different from basic instinct, definitely different. If you ever say that people 'know it intuitively,' I mean, it's right here (points to abdomen) and people do, I mean, if you're not upset or angry or anxious or whatever, you have that centre

Gwen:

Intuition is knowledge -- there can be wrong intuitions. But there are good intuitions, and surely part of learning how to learn and how to know should include paying attention to that and starting to learn, to discern -- this is my favourite word recently -- to discern valid instincts, valid gut feelings, and less valid ones, and to pay attention to that. Oh, absolutely.

In teaching you've got to have a context to apply the strategy and you've got to have a gut understanding -- you have to learn the strategy and then forget it. And then it has to come from here, you know, or way back here. I'm not sure where it is that it comes from.

Olive:

Women are great I think at communicating all their faults and their doubts and stuff like that

J: I wonder, do we absorb information through our feelings, store it, and draw on it for such thinking and communicating like we draw on information we store in our minds.

Intuition, yes. Maybe we allow ourselves to do that, whereas, men, you know, the conditioning has been to not use your feelings and they, so they sort of shut that aspect of themselves off more. Whereas, it's important for us as mothers.

Ruth:

J: What are the differences between instinctive and intuitive?

Intuitive means feelings that are there, emotional reactions that are there, and there's a certain amount of -- still, there's a certain amount of intellectual process, it still -- you do sort of weigh things, there's sort of almost a sense of weighing the factors out. I think maybe instinctual is a little less logical. There is so much emphasis on order and logical sequences during our learning and growing-up that, for me, I would and will deny instinctual reactions.

Reacting to the explicit references. From the explicit references to intuition, I learned that I must not only accept that mothers would want intuition included in a description of maternal knowledge, but also clarify what conception of the word they would apply. This was impressed upon me by four aspects of the explicit references: (1)

the mother/teachers associated intuition with knowledge; (2) the talk presented rather than answered the question of how and whether intuition was learned; (3) participants hinted not only that intuition is used in conjunction with "the intellectual" and is possibly a "missing link," but also that in anxiety producing situations, it may be difficult to draw upon intuition; and (4) to contrast intuition with the intellectual, they associated it with feelings and emotions rather than with facts and logical sequences.

Hearing implicit references to intuition. The implicit references to intuition presented in this subsection are from several different participants' interviews.

Amy:

I was wondering how you would ask questions [about mothering] because so much of it is more of a feeling, you know, than facts.

Trudy:

J: When you have questions regarding your daughter's upbringing, how do you seek answers?

I usually turn to my family, my friends, [her] father, and ask for opinions, and I've taken my own personal opinion, I mean, I may have had one already, but was still seeking outside opinions ... just to reassure myself that what I had thought to do was correct, or just re-evaluating it, yes.

J: That's interesting, I'm just trying to come to grips with ideas about what intuition is, so, does one begin with an intuition there but doesn't just stay with it?

That's right, that's right, yes, you have your own personal feeling.

Ruth:

When [my son] ended up going in for testing, we ended up in a room with the school psychologist, speech pathologist, etc. etc., and there was advice given but for me, even with all those -- quotation marks -- experts, it was all part of a synthesis process. It was never like their word sort of weighed more heavily, it was much more my gut level reaction and what the children had been able to, um communicate to me through word, deed, or whatever. I'm not really an advice seeker. I rely more on my basic instincts and understanding of my child's personality.

Reacting to the implicit references. From these comments, I discerned that the mother/teachers were claiming that feelings occupy a large space within their maternal knowledge, and that they use feelings (or intuition) to guide their judgment of the

usefulness of other forms of knowledge such as that of "experts." That is, they implied that a mother uses her intuition to check whether, and if so how, that other knowledge is applicable to her child. One feature of the group discussion on intuition became its usefulness in helping to discern differences between participants' conceptions of intuition and instinct.

Learning About Conceptions of Intuition from Group Discussions

To begin this subsection, I present each group reporter's entire synopsis of her group's discussion of intuition.

- Gp1: We tended to look at it as your sixth sense, and again intuition is directed primarily at our own [children] with the most intensity. Your own child is your focus with this intuition, not other children. However, we tend to talk about -- that other mothers know, you know, or are intuitive to other children, and so on, but the most intense one is toward your own. And where does this intuition come from? We weren't sure, we explored things like -- we've been with our children since birth, and so we were tuned in to facial expressions and behaviours, and we could sense moods, and we knew things that were wanted before they were aware of them which might have had to do with the time that we had spent with them. So, we looked at intuition and had lots of good stories about it.
- Gp2: We came up with emotional connectedness and bonding. And, again, as women we are told, we are supposed to have intuition. It was referred to as a sort of an umbilical cord that we have, and I thought that was interesting because it immediately sent me ahead in the list to 'nurturing' and nourishing. We felt that intuition was acquired/developing, and, the 'developing' came up quite strongly. We talked quite a lot about it -- that from your experience of how that works you begin to develop it in teaching. The other thing was that for intuition to be learned, uh, or to be acquired, it must be valued and we felt that it perhaps wasn't valued -- perhaps, er, as an over-all rule by society.
- Gp3: We felt there was a difference that we could put between instinctive and intuitive because we felt that the 'intuitive,' although it relied on a whole bunch of different levels of things, it still was something that was conscious that you could take the input and process it, whereas, in the instinctual, it wasn't on that level. So, you could use some of your instinct and process it intuitively but you could not, you can't use the intuitive stuff on an unconscious sort of level [frequent mm's or mm-hmm's can be heard around the table]. We also said that the intuitive could be not valued. I think that was one of the -- we also felt that it could be roadblocked, and obstacles were easily put in our way, even if we felt very strongly about some of our intuitive ideas. And we thought that it was indeed like a sense, like something that was very much on a conscious level and that it was something that was worthy of listening to.

The reports revealed four categories of information that helped me to discern what mother/teachers would want the word intuition to represent in a description of maternal knowledge. In the transcriptions of the small group discussions upon which the reports were based, I found talk that further informed my understanding of the four categories: (1) distinguishing between intuition and instinct; (2) intuition as umbilical cord; (3) intuition: natural, developed, or acquired?; and (4) intuition: valued/not valued?

Distinguishing between intuition and instinct. In each group, participants declared that a fine line divides instinct from intuition. They succeeded in not only distinguishing between the two, but also preserving a conception of their inseparability. One group agreed that "instinct tells you to respond" while "intuition enables you to distinguish [what you are responding to]," and another decided that "you do something by instinct, but intuition is in the act -- intuition is something that we operate with -- a sixth sense." I inferred from these statements that the mother/teachers were saying that activation of instinctive sensibility precedes activation of intuitive sensibility.

A "fine line between instinct and intuition" was tentatively drawn by referring to conscious behaviour and unconscious behaviour. The line was described in statements such as, "When I think of instinct, I think of times I have done things to help my children without knowing why -- without any thought at all. Intuition involves some consciousness that I am doing something or am about to." Others conceived of the consciousness in terms of knowledge by saying, for instance, "intuition is based on knowledge." They offered insights into the knowledge by saying, for instance, "she knows somehow that there's something wrong" and "I know when things are going well." Participants did not claim that intuition is infallible. They implied, however, that they perceive a sensitivity underlies their intuition and that it is associated with connectedness between mother and child.

Umbilical cord. The terms "sense" (in verb form), "connect (ed) (ion)," "tune in," and "bond" were used frequently in descriptions of intuition. Participants suggested that to be intuitive, one needs to be "aware," to "connect emotionally," and to develop "a deep bond." To summarize, one speaker suggested, "Intuition ... is this umbilical cord that isn't totally severed." Participants suggested that intuition operates most strongly with regard to one's own children. They attributed this to the fact that being with their children almost constantly, mothers develop a sense of their "wants and needs" before the children are able to be "totally aware" of them, or when the children cannot express or do not think about them while pre-occupied. Some speakers were adamant, however, that the intuition acquired through motherhood is extended by mother/teachers to the children with whom they work in school.

Intuition: Learned, Developed, or Acquired? Some participants pondered whether intuition is learned, for instance, "[Does] intuition become a learned thing because you're using past experiences to forecast what will happen," but others argued, "That would be just knowing [one's children's] behaviours, intuition is a bit deeper than that." One speaker noted that mothers learn "there's all different reasons for a child refusing to do something." Another suggested that from experiencing such situations with their own children, mothers acquire intuition with which they "start trying to explore" the different possible explanations. In agreement, yet another claimed that mother/teachers take this acquired intuition to the classroom and when they see "bizarre behaviours [they] start intuiting" rather than reacting immediately. She stated that mother/teachers begin "to decode [their] children's behaviours [intuitively] and I think that it's a great bonus [in the classroom] because you're not going to just put a child in a boxed situation -- you see outside the situation and look for other things."

Participants decided that intuition is acquired and continues to be developed if you are a carer, "but you're not going to develop it if you're not going to care." Pondering whether "some women are more intuitive than others ... more tuned in to their kids," one group decided this "would depend on a lot of things, such as, how happy you are in your home, how much you wanted this child." Following these remarks, one mother/teacher spoke in a concerned tone about the popular belief that intuition is "something women are supposed to have. We're not [considered to be] good mothers if we don't have intuition."

Intuition: valued/not valued? Noting that she wants to trust her intuition because she has "learned that I get nailed if I don't follow my intuitions," one mother/teacher spoke of wondering why she did not always do so. In response, another mother stated that intuition unlike instinct "can be roadblocked by obstacles," but that motherhood "has affirmed that little voice was right a lot of the time." She claimed the "little voice" has sometimes told her "a way of doing things with a child [in school] that seems contrary to reason, but works." However, she has tried "to hide what she was doing for fear of what others would think." Hearing this claim, another participant noted that "they always say women's intuition -- they never say men's." The group decided this should not imply that men are not "open to intuition" but rather that "they have been conditioned to deny these things." Again they implicitly linked intuition to feelings by adding, "Men keep their feelings under control."

The question of whether intuition is "valued as an asset by the community at large" prompted a participant in another group to announce that "the masculine side of me has caused me to devalue it." She expressed concern at the irony of the fact that since seeing intuition praised in a book written for the men's movement, "hearing it from the mouth of a man, [she has] been better able to accept the value of intuition." Another participant insisted that intuition should be valued as a "caring person's

research tool." "Yes," noted another, "you use it for interpreting," while another insisted that intuition utilizes sensitivity. Other participants decided that "to develop intuition you have to be sensitive." Thus, sensitivity will be the focus of the next section, but first I summarize what I learned about intuition from the mother/teachers' talk.

Summarizing Mother/Teachers' Conceptions of Intuition

Participants claimed that although in our culture the "good mother" should possess intuition, the quality is not valued within the community at large. Their talk implied that this double standard produces situations wherein mother/teachers' "intuition can be roadblocked" or "they tried to hide its use." Upon hearing the term "little voice" applied to intuition, I received it as evidence of the imprinting of the double standard on mother/teachers' own minds, for the "little" suggested both the speaker's fondness for and tentativeness about the voice of intuition.

Because participants' talk implied that warning signals which precede instinctive response can be detected through intuition just as they can through sight, hearing, etc., I discerned that they conceived of intuition as a sixth sense. Moreover, I understood the mother/teachers to be saying that by using this sense a mother detects warnings in her children's behaviours, facial, and bodily expressions -- even ones that she may never have observed previously. I inferred that participants were claiming their protective instinct prompts mothers to respond to intuitive warnings just as it does to warnings issued by other senses. If the mother chooses to act upon the instinct, she uses her intuition not only to discern the meaning of the warning signals, but also to guide her response to them.

I understood the mother/teachers to be saying that the human protective instinct relies upon not only the five conventional senses but also intuition, which plays an important role in protecting children's emotional wellbeing. Participants suggested that intuition is acquired through sensitivity rather than being learned or taught. Because

intuition is acquired, they decided, its development is continuous in carers but can be thwarted by stress and anxiety. The mother/teachers' talk about sensitivity is discussed in the next section.

SENSITIVITY

Hearing participants refer to sensitivity while attempting to describe their maternal knowledge was not unsettling. I did not note it in my journal until I began to infer that mothers think of sensitivity as an ally of intuition. Then I proceeded both to listen carefully for "sensitivity," and to investigate its usage in earlier interviews. To clarify what the term meant to the mother/teachers in relation to their maternal knowledge, moreover, I included the word "sensitivity" for group discussion. Consequently, I learned that for some of the study's participants, the term rang a troublesome tone which I had not heard during interviews and will be explained in the second part of the discussion. First, however, I report what I heard about sensitivity during participants' interviews.

Hearing Interview Talk About Sensitivity

The term "sensitivity" was included in participants' responses to several interview questions but most often in those describing knowledge gained through mothering experiences. I inferred the nature of sensitivity from stories which did not necessarily contain the term. The interview talk provided me three main forms of information: (1) on the development and nature of mother/teachers' sensitivity to their own children; (2) on the transference of sensitivity between mothering and teaching; and (3) on mother/teachers' application of the sensitivity to teaching tasks.

Hearing about the development and nature of mother/teachers' sensitivity. This information I heard most sharply from Ruth, Thelma, Nancy, and Lauren.

Ruth:

J: Could you describe the knowledge that you've gained through being a mother?

I think I'm much more sensitive to watching children being squished ... than as a pre-mother. I think it's different when you've watched the hurts and pains of small people from the beginning. I've watched my kids get squished, and I think that as a mother you tend to be emotionally so attached to your children that when they get squished, there's a part of you that gets squished and so you're very aware of what that feeling is. The emotional reality of it is so clear. I'm not saying that this particular brand of squishedness, um, affects everybody, but [my son] had a disastrous Grade 1, just disastrous! He had a teacher who told him -- and you don't tell [my son] this -- that he couldn't do reading, he couldn't do writing and that it would come later -- 'It was alright.' So [my son] took that and went, 'I can't! I won't try!' He was squished and he went into major stress -- he was sucking on his sleeves ... and bells were ringing like crazy We did remove him from the classroom and ... into a scenario that was very much more nurturing ... but he had been squished and it took him eighteen months to become un-squished. And that was very intense, so ... if I hadn't gone through this personal thing, my sensitivity to these kids that I come in contact with that have also obviously been in high stress situations ... I would just dismiss as -- I would dismiss that much more lightly.

Thelma:

My older daughter, she cannot spell, and ... by Grade 4 she was not in French immersion any more, she went to straight English -- Grade 4 English. So, there's a gap. Her Grade 4 teacher had this spelling bee, and the first person to sit down in the spelling bee was Jennifer. She was absolutely humiliated! And, er, I thought to myself, 'I'll never have a spelling bee! Ever!' Because that one child who has to sit down first -- that first one -- and, of course, it was Jennifer. So, I went to the teacher interview, and I mentioned this to the teacher and, uh, she was unsympathetic -- just, 'That's the way it was,' you know, she couldn't spell the word and that's the way the rules were and that was it and so I can remember that, and that time. She wasn't that interested. She had a pre-conceived idea that this is Jennifer, she can't spell and she probably had -- well, that is fine, she does have to work, she's no genius. But I just felt that maybe [the teacher's] approach was a bit edgy.

Nancy:

When [my son] was in Grade 4 -- 'cos I keep picking the bad examples, but they're really interesting -- they kind of reveal to me a lot about my child -- it was a hard year for him in Grade 4 and I had to do a lot of things to help him. I saw the loss of spirit -- you can -- right in the first week of school. And he wouldn't say anything. So, I kind of had to draw it out of him -- my son. I taught him how to survive in [that] class. By the second report card, he had quite a few A's, and [his teacher's] comment to me was, 'Oh, he's a different kid.' But, he wasn't a different kid! She just didn't understand him. He wasn't a different kid, I just taught him to play the system. I don't begrudge his year in Grade 4 or anything.

My husband does -- you want to see different views of it! I saw it as teaching him how to cope with the system, and my husband thought it was just awful.

Lauren:

I didn't like what was happening to [my children] in the private school because it was a boarding school. It wasn't, I mean, the academic part was separate. They were living in a boarding school which was ultra-conservative, and I didn't like what was being done to their minds -- they were being closed -- they were just being narrowed down into these little scrunched up people. I didn't like to see it, I couldn't allow it to continue. I couldn't allow them to continue in that situation where they were not able to grow as people, or as thinking people. The thinking processes that were being developed because of the ultra conservative evangelical home that they were living in was just too narrow. I couldn't leave them in a situation like that. So, I had to take them out.

Maybe as a mother you become more sensitive to -- through your children -- to what other people are feeling. I don't know if that's true or not (pause) -- maybe because you are responsible for this child and its development and the love you feel for a child is different from love that you would experience in other situations. Uh, it just seems logical to me that you would -- a caring person would become more sensitive.

Discerning the development and nature of mother/teachers' sensitivity. Ruth's talk of developing sensitivity through seeing one's "children being squished" provided a strong image that prompted me to recognize similar examples of sensitivity in the mention of "humiliation," "loss of spirit," and "little scrunched up people" by Thelma, Nancy, and Lauren respectively. Because, through Ruth's words, I recalled feeling my own children's hurts and pains, I asked several other participants how they had experienced their children's feelings. In response, they spoke of sensing and consequently sharing their children's feelings of both hurt and happiness, but claimed that they retain the feelings of hurt for longer than their children, and maybe never forget them. For instance, Lauren mentioned that she could still recall and re-feel some of her adult son's childhood hurts which he claims he has long forgotten. Participants implied that sensitive attention to the hurts is important because although children may forget the hurts, the effects can last many months or even years.

I inferred from several of the above passages that the mother/teachers' sensitivity to children's hurts does not prevent them from recognizing that for purposes of learning children require challenge. Rather the talk implied that the

mother/teachers believed challenge should be accompanied by respect for the child's spirit. Lauren had feared the effects upon her children's spirit of the narrowly focussed beliefs to which they were subjected in boarding school while she worked in the mission field, and she exercised her option to remove them from the school. However, Nancy's talk illustrated that the mother who senses her child's loss of spirit in public school may be restricted to the option of teaching the child "to play the system" if she can. Because she was part of "the system," Nancy was able to teach her son this form of coping. Her talk implied, however, that the compromise was not what her sensitivity with respect to her son would have influenced her to want.

Hearing the transference of mother/teachers' sensitivity. In the talk of Nancy, Eva, and Trudy, I heard about the transfer of sensitivity between teaching and mothering.

Nancy:

I have found as a parent that -- I think you speak from a different point of view. I don't mean you intend, you don't intend to but you really can see what they're going through very clearly and they know it. You have a different -- I don't think you're so harsh on the parents. Really, I -- that's one thing -- I don't know if I mentioned to you that if I look at -- if you're looking at teachers who are not parents, they're much harsher on parents.

Eva:

I think it works both ways, too, I mean there must be a sensitivity -- something that I've learned from my own children, and I take it to school; and then I deal with students and it makes me aware of what my daughters are coming into. So, there is this constant, I guess, back and forth, kind of a -- maybe, being in the classroom has helped me, I think, better to deal with my daughters at home, and I think probably being at home and having children has helped me in the classroom.

Trudy:

J: What would you say being a mother has taught you?

Uh, I think I'm talking about a teacher, but a different kind of teacher. I'm probably more empathetic with a lot of children. I think I tend to be a bit of a mother to them in some ways -- not that kind of a mother 'cos I think I also am quite demanding of them, but if they need me I'm there. The kind of a teacher, you know, I will also support you if you need help emotionally -- somebody to talk to. I think -- an extra sensitivity towards the child because I don't really think that my style of teaching ... has specifically changed. No, I would still have taken

[a sick] child down to the office, but I think I maybe express more concern than I might have done earlier -- or more awareness -- or sensitivity, yeah. I'd say that's what it is -- I'd say more of a sensitivity.

I guess if I'm learning anything, it's, it's just watching the sort of emotional development of a child and, er, the depths which you don't normally see on the surface and the fact that [my daughter] -- as I said with the story about the balloons -- had been through the thought process of making sure that I wasn't going to be upset when she was gone. And I was, well, obviously quite, I was, I was very touched by that and, uh, the realization that she had gone through that thought process and she ... was empathetic to another person. Just watching the development of another human being, I think, is wonderful and I don't think you get the chance to really see that in teaching 'cos you only get a child for such a short time. I already had [an interest in watching the development of children], but I think that I have, sort of -- it closes to an emotional, you know, core which I probably wouldn't really see as a teacher -- not to that depth.

We can be very quick as adults to say the wrong thing and not realize the damage. I think that being a parent is very helpful, um, just to kind of keep you on your toes, keep you in touch with that -- but I don't necessarily know that it will make you a better teacher. I think that having a [child] keeps you from drying up -- especially in teaching -- from [losing] that personal edge.

Learning about the transference of mother/teachers' sensitivity. Like the mother/teachers whose sensitivity did not blind them to the need for challenge in their own children's learning, Trudy stressed that taking sensitivity into her classroom does not reduce the challenge she provides her students. Trudy's eighteen years of teaching experience (ten before becoming a mother) add weight to her comment that the opportunity to observe and appreciate children's emotional growth and development is much more readily available to a mother than a teacher. Eva revealed that the transfer of sensitivity between school and home can be a two-way process for mother/teachers. Other participants spoke similarly. By saying, "understanding what they're going through," Nancy like others conceived of her sensitivity extending into relationships with her students' parents.

Hearing stories about mother/teachers applying sensitivity as teachers. Pat and Amy both told illuminating tales about taking their motherhood sensitivity to the work of teaching.

Pat:

I'm a better teacher for being a mother. I'm better in that I'm a nurturer. I think there's a sensitivity there that wasn't when I was single and free.

J: Can you describe that sensitivity?

Oh, just sensitivity to other people's children. I understand them better. I can read them, I know them. And that could be just a people sense, and all the years of experience you've had in the classroom, but I also think it helps to have children [of your own] -- just the way the child carries himself into the classroom ... the little girl who comes in and just sits like this. I think anybody who goes into teaching has to have a certain amount of people skills ... [but] I think being a parent has helped me understand the child, how he's feeling -- hurting or happy -- and what his day is like. I understand them from the parent's point of view -- that this kid that is just driving me crazy in class is somebody's child, is somebody's special person. I can look at the kids and know that somewhere there's a mum that loves them. I have to stop and think that 'Your mother loves you -- I may not, kid, but your mother does!' I often think that. I can look at the child and [think], 'You're going to give me trouble, and you are giving me trouble,' and then his mother comes in to parent interviews and that's a real help. I had a mother that came in this year, into every interview so concerned about [her son]. I think I was more careful with him than I would -- if she hadn't come in and shown me that she was so concerned about her boy and she wanted him to succeed. He had a real chip on his shoulder and a real attitude, and in comes this nice mother who's so worried about her boy.

Amy:

I've had several [of my students'] mums comment to me that how nice it is that I'm a mother myself -- in fact this just came up the other day at Sports Day, there was a problem where a little girl had a place on a team with no other girls on the team, and she was so upset she apparently cried most of the night before. And her mother casually mentioned this to me -- this little girl isn't even in my class -- she was in my Kindergarten class last year, but she's now in another classroom. I explained, 'What happened was that we very carefully placed boys and girls on these teams, but the [other] little girl who was supposed to be on your team has gone off to Disneyland and nobody knew this.' But, that mum said she had just talked to her [daughter's] teacher, and the teacher said that this was a learning experience and she needs to learn that life isn't always perfect and we have to adjust. And I said, 'Well, that's very true and I agree with that in lots of cases, but' I said, 'you know, that's kind of tough to go through a whole sports day and be the only girl on the team and be very unhappy, and be so upset that you're crying the whole night before.' So, I said, 'Let's see if we can make a switch.' So, I arranged something with another team that had an over-abundance of girls, so it was very simple, I just switched two children and they were quite happy with the move. And the woman said, to me, 'Boy, I can sure tell you're a mum!' And, I thought well, that's true because I could feel how the girl was feeling because I kind of related it without even consciously thinking of my own daughter -- I knew that something like that would really upset [her]. Some children it wouldn't bother at all.

Learning how mother/teachers apply sensitivity to teaching tasks. I wondered if I was hearing about a meta-sensitivity when I noted that what Pat was talking about was her sensitivity to her students' mothers' sensitivity to their children. Pat's comment about being able as a mother to receive each student as "somebody's special person" revealed the availability to mother/teachers of an advantageous edge on sensitivity to the uniqueness of each child's being. This sensitivity was extended to both student and parent in Amy's story. Despite her realization that not every child would be bothered by the sports day problem she described, Amy was respectful of individuality in her treatment of both the mother's and the child's feelings about it. As a result, the student's mother sensed that Amy was a mother. Amy said the mother's pronouncement of this prompted her to realize that her sensitivity to the little girl sprang from her experience of sensing her own daughter's feelings. In this story and other interview talk, a concept of sensitivity as pro-active was evident, yet in the group discussions the mother/teachers realized that usually they conceive of sensitivity as re-active and negative.

Learning About Conceptions of Sensitivity From Group Discussions

Group reports are presented in their entirety below. However, by this stage the whole group was beginning to discuss rather than to merely listen to one report at a time. For instance, if Group 2 reported something that Group 3 had also agreed upon, a member of Group 3 might interject their comments. Thus, the reports began to overlap slightly. To ease reading and discussion, however, I have reassembled each report so that it appears uninterrupted.

- Gp1: Sensitivity is tied up with all the terms that we're talking about, but then again we talked about how at times mothers can be too sensitive. And is that tied in as well with instinct and intuition? We didn't really come to terms with that other than just exploring the idea itself.
- Gp2: We defined it as awareness, openness, intuition. It's kind of an attitude, you stop assuming things, you put yourself in another person's position and you try to see a situation and not just thinking that you know it all. Then we got on to talking

about, um, sensitivity is valued in women but not in men. We joke about a sensitive man. There are other gender associations because also, if I say, 'She is sensitive,' I immediately picture someone bursting into tears at the least excuse. (Sounds of agreement around the table.) And if I say, 'He is sensitive,' I picture someone who is caring. There are two levels to the word, though. If you talk about a sensitive child, you can think about, 'Oh, God, she's going to burst into tears next time I look at her sideways.' But the newer, perhaps buzzier meaning, which is closer to what it is, is that sensitivity is a kind of awareness -- an openness to, and a respect for somebody else's being.

Gp3: We also didn't react very well to 'sensitivity.' We sound terrible! It came across as -- we would have said, if we considered someone sensitive -- almost a kind of negative connotation because we felt that they would be oversensitive. Like they would over-react to something as opposed to being, um, to be nurturing. It just seemed to be overdose, but at the same time it did come across as not at least self-absorbed in terms of they could see the issue around them. It was not just 'What can I get out of this situation?' But it still didn't, we felt that it really didn't have anywhere near the kind of glow that nurturing had for us, like nurturing just, it, we couldn't see how nurturing came across as negative at all. The sensitivity, we also said was gendered -- had some gender connotations for all of us as well. We all, we liked the idea of -- we were much happier with the idea of a sensitive male.

The group reports prompted me to explore the small group discussion data for two sets of further information: (1) on conceptions of sensitivity that produce a valued/not valued tension; and (2) on the mother/teachers' conception of the role of sensitivity in their maternal knowledge.

Sensitivity as valued/not valued. In the group where the word sensitivity evoked comments that mothers who are "too sensitive to their [children's] needs," who are "totally giving," discussion centred on participants' observations of other mothers rather than on their own experiences or behaviours. In the negative view expressed, sensitivity was conceived as proactive. Others' talk revealed, however, that sensitivity is more often viewed negatively when conceived of as reactive. One example discussed was the "burst into tears" reaction which in public is unacceptable in either men or women. The speaker claimed that the reaction is, nevertheless, identified with women because "when you say, 'She's sensitive,' you might as well put the 'overly' in front of it."

Others spoke of a tension regarding conceptions of the "sensitive man." They claimed that when identified in a man rather than a woman, the proactive form of sensitivity is more likely to be revered publicly, even though many seem to retain a private view of the "sensitive man" as "icky." In two groups, participants decided it preferable not to "think of [sensitivity] as gender-based," but as "an awareness" -- an attribute of "somebody who is not totally self-absorbed, has an awareness of the needs of others, but does not make it their whole purpose in life to please other people."

The role of sensitivity in maternal knowledge. When conceived in relation to maternal knowledge, sensitivity was typically spoken of in all three groups as "all tied up with the rest -- intuition, caring, nurturing, being sensitive to needs." It was claimed that

If you're sensitive to [your children], your intuition tells you to do something that needs to be done. Even though it's not something that you would think at that moment is the norm, you still feel, or intuit, that it's right for this moment or this occasion -- you know it, and with your students too.

Sensitivity was also referred to as an openness which participants implied is required to complement intuition. In one group, a teacher from a multi-cultural high school reported that sensitivity was now frequently being requested of staff in her school. She defined the sensitivity as "a real awareness that every [student] isn't going home to the same type of situation, not thinking the same ideas." She added that this means the teachers "really have to stop assuming a lot," to learn to understand differently "by looking outside of [their] view of the world, really seeing instead of just thinking that [they] know." She told a couple of stories about occasions when sensitivity had influenced her to intuit that to avoid correcting students harmfully, she needed to critically re-examine her own interpretations of their behaviours. She indicated that this process did not amount to finding excuses for the students' behaviours, but rather to discovering how to correct the situations without compromising respect for the cultural construction of the students' ways of thinking and being.

Summarizing Mother/Teachers' Conceptions of Sensitivity

I discerned that the form of sensitivity that participants viewed positively can be developed in mothers when the instinct to protect children's emotional well-being becomes activated. Participants claimed that their sensitivity develops because of the mother's closeness to and opportunity to observe the emotional development of the child. Participants' talk implied to me that through observing her child's reactions to being "squished" or humiliated, a mother senses and experiences the child's feelings. Moreover, the talk suggested that a mother realizes the fragility of the child's emotional being when she observes, for instance, loss of spirit or closing of mind. On the negative side, the mother/teachers' talk implied to me that they believed mothers need to be aware of the fragility of their own emotional being. That is, mothers need to understand that if they absorb others' feelings too readily or over-anxiously, they may not only cripple their ability to use sensitivity proactively, but also restrict themselves to being able only to respond to others' feelings reactively.

According to participants, the development of sensitivity enables the mother/teacher to be empathetic toward both students and parents. This includes becoming able to perceive any student from the perspective of the student's mother, to whom the student represents a "special" child. Participants claimed that the mother/teacher also knows the necessity of reflecting upon her own values so as to prevent herself from acting upon assumptions about students, parents, and families. Finally, they suggested that mother/teachers know that much can be said or done to damage children, but they recognize that this varies according to the individuality of the child.

INDIVIDUALITY

Although I had anticipated that mother/teachers would speak about children's individuality, I was, nevertheless, surprised that everyone did so at some time during her first interview. All participants either claimed or implied that a new understanding of people's individual uniqueness was an integral part of the knowledge they had gained as mothers. The word "individuality" was presented for group discussion to ascertain what conception of individuality mother/teachers would want to be applied in a description of maternal knowledge.

Hearing Interview Talk About Individuality

Interview conversations supplied four sets of information on what conception of individuality underlies maternal knowledge. Participants claimed that the mother/child relationship (1) gave them a fresh respect for human individuality, and (2) revealed the salience of individuality in child development. They explained, moreover, that these new understandings influence the teaching philosophy which they apply to (3) their teaching, and (4) their responsibilities with regard to their children's schooling.

Hearing about a fresh respect for individuality. This was a popular topic wherein some mothers even claimed that the salience of individuality is apprehended in childbirth.

Yvonne:

J: How did your experience of motherhood compare with your expectations of it?

Oh, a shocking eye opener! I grew up myself -- a lot. I had to face the fact that these little people were really a gift to me and that I could not impose my will on them. I was fascinated by the fact that these children came into the world, regardless of what I did or what I said or my family and so on, with a genetic predisposition to be certain types of personalities. I still feel that way I'm much more inclined towards, uh, the gifts that we're born with than the idea that environment can do it all.

Ruth:

Childbirth for me was very awakening. It was almost a rebirth everytime I had a child, which sounds very romantic, but I really felt that the experience from the point that you went into labour to the point where the child was born -- that basically there was a meeting even in the birth, and how the child went through the birth process with you was very much an indication of the personality already.

Amy:

Right from the first day in the hospital, I thought -- there was such a difference between their personalities. You realize that as soon as that baby's born that -- I feel very strongly that there is a pre-programmed intellect and, er, personality and I think you can certainly modify it, but, certain children I think are meant to be certain ways.

Ivy:

It was very exciting to realize that here [was] this little someone that you could mould, but then I came to realize very quickly that he was born with a set of characteristics that were his and that I couldn't really do too much about. His responses to things were his kind of responses -- I could sort of direct him but if he chose to respond in his own way, he was born that way and no matter how I might try to mould him he wouldn't necessarily change to the way I would want him to be or the way I would want him to view certain things -- it was just his way. And, I know in speaking to other parents, they have come to the same agreement. You read about the environment having so much effect on the child, and granted I could see a positive environment would help to support the child and make sure they had good self-image, but as far as just his own little idiosyncracies and characteristics, these are just sort of things you can't change no matter how much they might irritate you, that's the child. Another thing ... even though both of you have produced this one child, the second one isn't necessarily going to be the same way, so that was an eye opener. Even though you did possibly see it in other people[']s children] it's not something that really registers because you're not dealing with it twenty-four hours a day.

Helen:

I think that dealing with different personalities in your own children -- my oldest was a very determined little fellow, very set in his ways, and had to know before the day started what the day looked like. If the day plan changed, he couldn't cope. If I'd watched another parent and a child in that sort of situation [before], I'd have said, 'Oh, for heaven's sake, just get on with it!' But that just wasn't the way Andrew was! And [my daughter] was totally the opposite! Everything was just fine any old way -- very flexible and easy-going.

Nancy:

I think having children made me, makes me believe that it's nature more than nurture. They seem to come with their own personality. I think if they grow up in any normal family -- whatever that range is -- they would be the kid that they are now. We don't seem to have that kind of influence on them -- they're programmed and when you have two and they're so different, you sort of see that. And you have two boys, are they different?

Doris:

What I'm saying now sounds so platitudinous because it's to me now very obvious that everybody is an individual, everybody has certain attributes and talents, and depending on their upbringing and their background and their education, and so on, those attributes are brought forth or stifled or whatever as the case may be. But everybody has a potential and, and one has to try and cultivate that potential and nurture that potential but if they don't, if that potential isn't completely fulfilled for whatever reason, it's not necessarily the child's fault. And so just looking at, well, I'm coming to the teacher's side of it, but I know I learned this as a mother, but they're all different these kids out there and you have to accept the fact they're different.

While talking about individuality and difference, participants referred variously to their children's personalities, pre-programmed intellects, attributes and talents, potential, characteristics, and responses. From the assortment, I gleaned an image of mothers' comprehending that the essence of each child's being is unique and potent, yet also fragile. Although each of the speakers had been teachers before becoming mothers, they credited their understanding of individuality to mothering experience, and to this they credited also the growth of a fresh perspective on child development.

Hearing about a fresh perspective on child development. Each of the mother/teachers quoted below had entered motherhood with knowledge about child development which they had acquired during teacher education.

Amy:

J: Could you explain the knowledge that you feel you've gained from your mothering experience?

Something that really struck me -- I had taken the child development courses in my [teacher] training -- they start at birth, they talk about stages, but it wasn't until I became a mother myself that I became so aware of these distinct stages that children go through in their development, and maybe you have to live through it to really appreciate them. You're sort of in awe of it, and I found it even more amazing with the second one that they would come along and in many ways seem to be very different.

With [my first child], I'm sure this was a big mistake, I'd read every book available -- typical first-time mum -- and although he was pulling himself up and walking around furniture, he wasn't crawling and I thought this wasn't right, children have learning disabilities if they don't go through all these stages and I got all worried.

Nancy:

Developmental timing, I think that it's set somewhere! And I think [now] ... I'd have more than the intellectual understanding. It makes sense until ... you're actually working with -- if it's your child and it's personal, or your class and it's personal, sometimes you want to force things 'cos you worry about -- not that you always want to force them ... but you worry if they don't have this -- that later on when they're grown up they're not going to be able to do this. But I don't do that any more.

Helen:

There's a kind of knowledge -- more of an understanding of how children develop. And again it's not expecting them to fit the mould right now. For instance, some children start speaking later ... children develop at their own rates, and as teachers we have to have a knowledge of that sequence of development and an understanding that children will get there when they're ready to get there. I think that as a pre-mum teacher, I knew they were supposed to do this, this, and this, but I expected they were all going to do it now. This is what the curriculum said we were supposed to cover, this is what they were supposed to "get," and if they didn't then obviously I was doing something wrong. Whereas, now -- and I think it's reflected in the Year 2000 philosophy¹ -- I know children go through these stages but they go through them when they're ready to go through them. But I have -- maybe it's more an understanding again -- that children come to school in different places in that sequence.

In common with several other participants, Amy reported that she began with an academic (i.e., textbook guided) approach to the rearing of her first child. Also, like others, she alluded to an apparent tension for first time mothers between the textbook and their encounter with the child's individuality. Eventually, although maybe not until the second child, participants said the textbook becomes secondary; the book is not discarded but rather the mother decides to judge the textbook information in terms of the child rather than the child in terms of the textbook. I discerned that her new knowledge of individuality persuades the mother/teacher to become not a denouncer but an enlightened critic of texts on childraising and child development.

¹ Participants' comments on the "Year 2000" refer to initiatives for education set forth in 1990 by the British Columbia Ministry of Education in a publication entitled *Year 2000: A Framework for Learning*. The publication followed the 1988 report of the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education in British Columbia.

Hearing what "teaching individuals" means to mother/teachers. Many of the mother/teachers described how their changed view of individuality affects what it means to them to be a teacher.

Thelma:

I think you tend to see each child more as an individual than maybe than I did before [I experienced mothering]. I just see the child's individual needs a bit more.

J: Why do you think that is?

I guess because you as a mother are dealing with an individual. It doesn't matter how many you have, each one of your children's going to be different. So, you see [your students] as individuals rather than as a collective group.

Ivy:

I think it's given me more patience -- more understanding of the fact that they're not all going to be able to whizz through their work. Just being more tolerant, too, with different learning styles and different capabilities because you see your own children and see that they are all different. Even when they're coming from the same family, you know, they are different with different capabilities and different responses to things and you do have to respect that.

Helen:

Since I've come back into teaching -- because I have had children, rather than just expecting the children all to fit in, I think, that to me that's the one big thing -- it's an understanding that children are all different and that you take them from where they are and that you can't expect them all to fit a mould, and they won't And similarly with parents -- I think for me that's one of the big understandings. I don't think we should be fitting children into moulds. I think there's certain social conventions that they need to comply with. For the classroom to function, there are certain things that have to happen and that's fine, but I love the way that we're being encouraged to teach [in primary grades] these days because I think it recognizes individual differences both in academic, social, emotional -- all areas. Then we can find something in those children. They may not be academically with it, but they have something else there. And I think that the education system now is allowing us to find those, those differences.

J: How would you compare the knowledge that you've gained through your mothering experiences with that promoted in schools via professional development, etc.?

I think there's a lot more similarity in the professional development that we've had over the past couple of years and, um, it fits better with how I feel about children through mothering, and, again, I think it's a reflection of the Year 2000 document and the sense that children are individuals and we're recognizing them as individuals and appreciating them as such.

Amy:

The primary programme is changing tremendously with the Year 2000. There are some problems, but there are a lot of really neat things because they are accepting each individual child at their own level, realizing that at 6 years and 6 months they're not necessarily going to be reading at the same stage. And it's like if you take a twelve month old baby -- a twelve month old baby could be running, or a twelve month old baby may not be walking at all, but that doesn't mean that at eighteen months they're not going to be walking, and by two years of age, you don't have a clue which baby walked at eight months and which one was fourteen months.

Ruth:

I hadn't ever made a list of things that I felt those eight years at home had given me ... hadn't really recognized that I had learned It wasn't until I got back into [school] that I started to see there was a real change ... just because you are more willing to ... accept differences ... to adjust ... and give each of those remarkable little beings just a little bit more space than I think I would have before I'd been a mother. I'm not so quick to analyse and say, 'I think that this would be the direction that you'd be most comfortable in.' I'm much more patient, I'm slower, I would tend to wait longer ... not trying to process them too quickly, because they're people. And I think that I was very quick to sort of just label kids, and say, 'Okay, I can expect this from you and this from you.' I don't think I do that anymore. Just because there's so many reasons that things can happen, and I wouldn't have thought of half of them before.

The mother/teachers suggested that through comprehending individual differences in their own children they had learned the difficulty of moulding children to pre-selected patterns. Indeed, they had become disdainful of "fitting children into moulds," even those presumed to be individual. Ruth implied that individualization for her prior to motherhood was enacted by promptly labelling children and making consequent assumptions about what to expect from each. As the mother of a school child, Ruth described how she had observed the dangers in this approach. She said that motherhood had shown her that there are "so many reasons that things happen," and so it had taught her to resist jumping to conclusions about a child. She implied that she had found it important to patiently seek alternative perspectives on children's behaviours.

Helen and Amy, both primary teachers, claimed that they had found in the Year 2000 philosophy a parallel to their maternal knowledge of individual differences in child development. Helen revealed a possibility of the tension between fostering individuality

and conforming to both social conventions and the requirements of a well-functioning classroom. She did not address either tension, but, as the next section will show, the former was addressed by other mother/teachers during small group discussions.

Hearing mother/teachers' concerns about school and their children's individuality. Other participants expressed similar concerns to those quoted below from Eva and Nancy's transcripts.

Eva:

[My daughter's] teacher for next year -- I have heard some awful stories about this woman. Actually I went in to the principal [about something else], so I talked to him about this teacher and, I don't know, I guess administration has to look to the positive side and, you know, I'm questioning how is she going to handle these kids and are they going to be, you know, treated as individuals and as little people who have hearts of their own, and he's looking at, well, she's very creative, her classroom is all done up. I mean! She looks good ! But how is she going to deal with all these little individuals here? I don't know!

Nancy:

If [my sons] are going to have problems, they tend to be sometimes the kind of teachers who don't see children as individuals, haven't gone far enough in their -- how do you put it -- in their philosophy of children or learning -- because I think any teacher who's competent should be able to deal with siblings who are different and accept them as individuals and ... it's not so much whether they have problems, it's how the problems are dealt with.

Ivy:

Seeing people as individuals and seeing people each as an individual, I think there's a distinction between the two, and, I think, you know, that's an area where perhaps being a mother steps in a little bit more, especially with your own children. I was at my son's Grade 7 awards day, I was listening to their description of the people they were going to give work habit awards to, and the more I listened, the more I was thinking, 'They're describing a certain type of individual,' and this type of individual was probably born this way and will always be this way, like a type A personality, or whatever -- always on time with projects, always have their equipment with them, always organized, everything always neat whether a rough draft or otherwise, always can find their materials. I thought, 'If my child is not that kind of student, he will never get this kind of award.' You know? But every time they brought up this award for the different grade levels, I thought, 'They're describing a specific type of individual that you can put a stamp on.' So, I realized, 'Hmm, I never thought of that before.' And then I thought, 'During our awards are we doing the same?' Then I thought, 'We allow for more diversity because our statements are a bit more general. When we're talking about effort, we're not like, effort every single day, you know, this is the way they are, [but rather that] in general, they put out this effort in three or more of their courses. So, I was pleased to think that at least we're not awarding

a type of personality that is born that way to begin with and you're just awarding them for the fact that they were born that way.

The recent break in her marriage gave Eva a special concern about her children's emotional well-being. During the group discussion, she spoke at length about the individuality of one of her daughters and how she feared it might be in tension with the conventional expectations of schools. This is discussed in greater detail in an ensuing subsection. Eva's tone while speaking the last four phrases in the passage above conveyed feelings of frustration. Her closing "I don't know," however, suggested the possibility that her intuition may have been in danger of being roadblocked.

Awards days, sports days, and competition in general, were discussed by several mother/teachers during their interviews. In Ivy's story about what she observed and thought while attending an awards day at her sons' school, I discerned an example of a mother/teacher applying critically her understanding of individuality.

Learning About Conceptions of Individuality from Group Discussions

From the group discussions, I hoped to discern what conception of individuality would be agreeable to all the mother/teachers. To begin, I present each group reporter's synopsis of her group's discussion.

- Gp1: We realize that each child has their own characteristics and we look at them as unique and distinct individuals. We still have that protective instinct to protect their individuality so that we know who they are as unique individuals and we want to protect that. We talked about the mother that wants the child to fit into her, her norms, you know, her rules, her regulations.
- Gp2: We looked at individuality on two levels: one was one's own individuality as a mother, vis-a-vis yourself, that you never really are an individual -- I'm somebody else's wife, or somebody else's mother -- that was one aspect of it; the other one was that each child is different, every child is different, and this you learn as a mother by watching your own children. Every child is different and needs to be treated differently and you react to children from your experience of dealing with your own. When you are dealing with children you react to them differently because they are different individuals. Children and other adults perhaps who don't have children see fairness as being the same, but Nancy brought up the point that she had treated her second son differently from her first, and the first came and said, 'But when I did it, I had to do this, that, and the other thing' (several sounds of quiet but enthusiastic agreement are heard around the table).

And children see fairness as being the same and so do many other people. But we were saying that 'fairness' is doing what's right for each one, for each individual as the situation demands.

- Gp3: We came to the conclusion that in motherhood -- we felt that as mothers that we had -- as a threesome -- that we had nurtured our children to develop their individuality. But on the other side of the coin, sometimes the mother's personality and individuality was sublimated for this to take place. So then we got into this huge discussion about balances and what are we showing by example by sublimating our individuality while trying to encourage our children's individuality. The one comment that came up was because we have done this sublimating that sometimes (brief pause and Olive interjects)
- O: It was about grades in grad. school and Yvonne's and my [grownup] kids had both come up with the same kind of question, 'Mum, what does it matter if you get a first-class in a graduate course or not?'
- R: The kids felt that the mothers were taking it very, very seriously, but the catch phrase was just -- Olive said, 'I don't want to be a dummy just because I'm somebody's Mummy!'

During group discussions, talk about mother/teachers' understanding of individuality matched that of the interviews. In Group 1, Pat summed up cogently what teachers should know about mothers' regard for their children's individuality. She said,

You recognize [your children] to be very distinct individuals, and that's why that protective instinct happens when your child isn't, well, in school -- is not happy. And this is why when my child with all these wonderful individual qualities that no-one is recognizing except me (pause) -- So, you go flying into the school to find out what you can do about it.

The group discussions brought into focus, moreover, three facets of mothers' knowledge of individuality which had been vaguely and occasionally referred to during interviews: (1) a new conception of fairness; (2) the limits placed on individuality by cultural expectations; and (3) the sublimation of the mother's individuality.

A new conception of fairness. Referring to remarkable differences between siblings, Group 2 participants contemplated how a mother's observation of individuality influences her knowledge about how to deal with children. After hearing a participant's story about dealing with her own children differently, another asked, "Where does fair

come into this? Do we really owe children the same things in a classroom setting? How do you balance things?" In response, the group decided that there is no such balance "and you don't really come to know that until you've experienced your own children," and before then a person is more likely to "conceive of 'fair' as same." They stated that beginning teachers and young children usually conceive of fair as same, but mothers know that "it is a disservice to the individuality of children." An older mother in the group said that she was still struggling "to get a handle on" this aspect of maternal knowledge. Another participant agreed that it can be difficult to grasp because it is not "just black and white any more when you realize that fairness does not equal same" and that "each child is different and [needs to be] treated differently."

Sublimation of the mother's individuality. The mothers of older children were the most vocal on this topic. They talked about mothers knowing individuality as something they can easily lose while experiencing that the "tying of mother to family" results in her being commonly introduced and/or received as "somebody else's mother" or "somebody else's wife." They implied that mothers become consciously aware of this "otherness."

A mother of adult children claimed that the mother's individuality can begin to re-emerge when her children leave home. She feared, however, that in her teaching she may be repeating behaviours and attitudes that will perpetuate the sublimation of her individuality and, therefore, she had decided to resign. Other older mothers who talked about struggles to regain individuality also implied that they attribute its loss to their own behaviours, attitudes, etc. They suggested, however, that awareness of this loss motivated them to safeguard and foster their children's individuality, but they admonished themselves for setting a poor example of preserving individuality. Although speakers did not discuss the role played by cultural expectations in their own loss of

individuality, they acknowledged the limitations these place on their efforts to foster that of their children.

Limits imposed upon individuality by cultural expectations. Feeling curious about the closing statement in the Group 1 report, I searched for an explanation in the transcript of Group 1's small group discussion. I found that the reference to mothers' norms, rules, etc. had actually been drawn from a discussion of cultural expectations. The discussion had been prompted by a story told by Eva and which was referred to briefly above.

In her story, Eva described her appreciation of one of her daughters as an original thinker possessing creative potential. Eva attributed to these qualities her daughter's inclination to be dreamy and "pokey" at times. She said that although these behaviours used to irritate her, as a mother, "she had to recognize [the irritation] and use it in a positive way." Eva implied that critically examining her irritation enabled her to link the "dawdling" to her daughter's finer qualities. Eva explained that although she wants to challenge her daughter's abilities, she feels obliged also to challenge the dawdling so that her daughter will conform socially. To successfully challenge the dawdling, Eva said she felt required to be sensitive to both her own irritation and her daughter's needs because she must find "a way that isn't yelling at her and push, push, telling her to get going." I thought of the conflict between the two challenges as a conflict between a mothers' perception that her role requires her to perform both "controlling" and "nurturing" activities. These activities are discussed in Chapter 7, but before introducing that chapter, I present a summary of the mother/teachers' conceptions of individuality and, finally, I present a chapter summary.

Summarizing Mother/Teachers' Conceptions of Individuality

All participants claimed that as mothers they had learned a new appreciation and respect for the uniqueness of people's individual characteristics. They spoke of their children's individual differences in terms of attributes, talents, idiosyncracies, personalities, and pre-programmed intellects. They attributed difference to genetic predisposition of persons to have certain personalities and certain talents, that is, to be composed of a unique set of characteristics. Speakers said that individual characteristics can be either brought forth or stifled, but ideally the mother/teacher aims both to protect and cultivate them. Moreover, they said that she recognizes this requires her to be accepting of the child's individual characteristics. Participants claimed that in their work as teachers they extend this acceptance toward the individual differences among their students' parents and families.

Participants claimed that mothers learn that children display individual differences not only in personal characteristics, but also developmental patterns and the timing of their development. Participants implied that armed with this understanding and respect for individuality, the mother/teacher ideally will be patient and neither attempt to force development nor fit children into moulds. They claimed that to a mother/teacher, recognizing individuality means respecting each student as a unique individual with particular abilities, potentials, and needs. It does not mean identifying the child as a particular type of individual; the child is not classified as a particular personality type and then responded to as a member of that category. The mother/teachers implied that to foster children's individuality they have to navigate among constraining cultural expectations and the social norms of the classroom and school.

Through their understanding of individual difference, the mother/teachers claimed that they develop a conception of fairness wherein, for instance, they endeavour to assure that each child receives what s/he needs when s/he needs it. They

spoke of being dubious about the fairness of insisting that all children should be treated the same as one another. In this and other ways, the mother/teachers' talk implied to me that individuality was an important concept with respect to the roots of their maternal knowledge. However, although they used a variety of words and phrases to discuss individuality, they provided no explicit definition of the concept. While summarizing this chapter, I discuss the conception of individuality that I inferred from participants' talk.

SUMMARIZING THE CHAPTER

To accept that instinct and intuition play a role in maternal knowledge, I had to recognize and set aside a bias which made my acceptance of the concepts difficult initially. To begin, I also found the two concepts hard to distinguish because participants tended both to use them interchangeably and to have difficulty defining either. During group discussions, however, participants agreed that instinct was basic and operates at an unconscious level, and intuition operates at a conscious level. The instinct which participants associated with their maternal knowledge was the instinct to protect. I inferred that mother/teachers consider this protective instinct to be the catalyst for maternal knowledge; and if a mother chooses to act upon her protective instinct, it calls upon her to use and to develop intuition. From participants' talk, I discerned that when a mother's protective instinct and intuition together warn that something is amiss for her child, the protective instinct prompts her to act, and her intuition helps her both to decipher the warning signals and to know how to respond to them. But how is the mother's intuition acquired? And what exactly is she protecting?

From participants' talk, I learned that they considered mother's intuition is acquired through sensitivity which is activated by their instinct to protect. Participants spoke of their belief that mothers develop a sensitivity to the spirits of their children

and to any loss of spirit suffered by their children. They implied that this sensitivity to children develops within the close relationship of mother and child wherein the mother experiences and senses the child's emotional development. The sensitivity, they claimed, also prompts mother/teachers to recognize that they need to reflexively examine their own values in order to avoid acting upon incorrect assumptions about students, parents, and families. In their preferred conception of sensitivity, it is not just an emotional reaction but is more a catalyst for pro-activity. Participants' talk implied their belief that the child's individuality and individual development are the focus of the mother's sensitivity.

Participants enthusiastically and unanimously claimed that through experiencing motherhood, mothers develop a special respect for the individuality of persons. They said they believed mothers learn that protecting and cultivating children's individual characteristics is of vital importance. The mother/teachers claimed that from their opportunities for close observation of children's development, mothers learn that each child blazes an individual trail through the developmental stages and that, consequently, attempts to force development are ill-advised. According to participants, maternal knowledge of individuality prompts mother/teachers to reject notions of "fairness" as "same" and, thus, they become dubious that equal treatment for students is equivalent to fair treatment.

Participants referred to individuality in terms of personality, talent, spirit, potential, etc. On the basis of this collection of terms, I began to conceive of individuality as the essence of a person's being, and that the essence of her child's being is the focus of a mother's protective instinct. Participants' talk presented to me an image of mothers' protective instinct as the main root of maternal knowledge. Interconnected with it, I envisaged two subsidiary roots. One was sensitivity, which enables the mother to sense the feelings of others, to store the feelings, and to draw upon them as ways of

understanding other people and situations. The other was intuition, which prompts the mother to draw upon and act upon the feelings.

Participants claimed that their intuitive thoughts can be "roadblocked," especially because such thoughts are not conducive to the kinds of support available to those based on other forms of knowledge. Moreover, the mother/teachers described how other knowledge they possess can dissuade them from using their intuitive knowledge. This will be discussed further in Chapter 8 wherein problems regarding the promotion and assertion of maternal knowledge are addressed. Meanwhile, in Chapter 7, I discuss what knowledge the mother/teachers claimed to have developed through engaging in the motherhood activities of nurturing, caring, and controlling; and how they would want "nurturing," "caring," and "controlling" to be conceived of in talk about maternal knowledge.

Chapter 7

HEARING ABOUT MATERNAL KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPED THROUGH
EXPERIENCING THE ACTIVITIES OF MOTHERHOOD

The words which I focus on in this chapter are "nurturing," "caring," and "controlling." Because "nurturing" and "caring" are popularly used to name the activities of motherhood, I had expected to hear them in participants' talk. In contrast, "controlling" was not a term that I had anticipated hearing or being required to think about. Participants' talk, however, revealed that mother/teachers find controlling plays a substantial part in motherhood; that experiencing the requirements of controlling contributes to the development of maternal knowledge; and that as mothers, they encounter a tension between their expectation that control is both possible and required and their discovery that it is not always feasible. Because each of the three words can represent more than one concept, my purpose in this chapter is to present my attempt to discern how mother/teachers would prefer the terms to be conceived of in a description of maternal knowledge. It is not my intention, however, either to present exact definitions of "caring," "nurturing," and "controlling" or to propose clear distinctions between the three. Rather, I present mother/teachers' claims about the knowledge they have gained from experiencing as mothers the activities which they name "caring," "nurturing," and "controlling," and the usefulness they have found the knowledge has in their work as teachers.

I separate my presentation and discussion of participants' talk into three main sections so that the focus in each is on the activity of either caring, nurturing, or controlling. Because I am not proposing absolute distinctions between the words, this separation is intended only as an aid to thinking, presentation, and discussion. I choose in the first section to focus upon caring because on the basis of participants' talk I

discerned it to be the more general of the three terms. Nurturing and controlling appeared to be special forms of caring. Each section in this chapter is composed in the same way as the main sections of Chapter 6. I report first the analysis and findings pertaining to the interview data. Then I follow with a report of the analysis and findings regarding the discussion group data.

CARING

Although participants' talk on nurturing and controlling was similar to that on caring, it contained additional detail which implied that participants conceived of the two activities as specific forms of caring. In this section, I present and discuss talk which I discerned to contain general information on caring that was not specific to nurturing and controlling. I present and discuss information obtained, first, from participants' individual interviews, and second, from the group discussions.

Hearing Interview Talk About Caring

When the mother/teachers spoke explicitly about their work of caring as mothers, they described physical and mental activities of caring for or looking after their children's needs. When an activity fitting this description was talked about but not named by a participant, I inferred that the talk was on caring. To present and discuss participants' claims with respect to what they learned about caring from experiencing it as an activity of motherhood, I classify their talk according to four requirements of caring to which they referred: (1) a flexible attitude amidst unpredictable circumstances; (2) a flexible approach in problem solving; (3) a reflexive approach to listening and observing; and (4) provision of firm support.

Hearing that caring entails a flexible attitude amidst unpredictable circumstances. In the talk of many participants, I heard that mothers' activities of caring take place in a world full of surprise rather than certainty and predictability.

Ursula:

As a mother, you're continuously dealing with the unexpected and, um, you always have to be very flexible 'cos you never know -- you learn to just sort of cope with whatever is thrown at you. I mean, you can just come home with the groceries and find you have to go -- your son's on the way to the hospital in an ambulance 'cos he fell off a ladder at pre-school. Whatever comes your way is, is what you have on your plate for that day.

Helen:

I think in just being with my own children, a lot more tolerance and understanding developed, more sort of flexibility in my outlook to life. I guess for the teacher -- before having your own children -- children are there from nine to three and they fit into this nice little compartment, and children don't do that at all. I mean, you learn it's a false thing to think that, you know, that they're always going to be healthy, going to be ready to learn, and always, going to be willing to. They're not. I think you learn that by having your own children and realizing that schedules fall all to pot -- particularly with babies and sick children, and that you just have to be flexible with that, and plans that you, uh, just get put off, or have to be changed.

Ruth:

Fathers can know about unpredictability, too. There's one [at my school] in particular -- he and I sat in on an interview about a child, and there was a couple of single teachers and I don't mean to be critical, but they would come up with these quick like, 'That child should be doing that, that, and that, and there's just no excuse for this, this, and this, you know,' and all this. And [the teacher who's a father] and I are sitting there sort of going, 'Hmmm!' because there's just, well, the predictability, we know that's just not the reality We realize that the reading [at home] may not get done precisely at the same time every day because, for instance, it's not just this one child in your life but two others and someone's got to go to the hospital because someone's split their head open suddenly, and maybe we should stop and get this bit of reading done before this one gets his head stitched up?! Your knowledge of how much you can expect from a family and how rigid the structures that can be set out for children can be -- really changes when you're a parent, and I'm not trying to make excuses for maybe being a little softer.

In this talk, the mother/teachers implied that the responsibility of caring for their own children presented them a situation replete with day-to-day and minute-to-minute uncertainties. They expressed the belief that through frequent encounters with unpredictable events and circumstances, mothers learn that caring requires them to be tolerant, and that to become tolerant requires them to develop a flexible attitude

toward people and circumstances. Ruth's story implied that she believed her maternal knowledge of unpredictability armed her against making not only unfair judgments about students' parents, but also unwarranted assumptions about the feasibility of parents providing the kinds of home support that teachers often seek.

Hearing that caring entails a flexible approach in problem-solving. The talk of many participants implied to me that the understanding of caring they had acquired during motherhood was influenced by their new understanding of individuality, which was discussed in Chapter 5.

Amy:

When you're going for advice, you know, with a problem -- whether it's a problem with your own children with your motherhood, or whether it's a problem with children at school, again, I think it's really important to go to different people or to look at different resources realize that, er, there isn't just one way. I mean, there might be for that child -- one way will work wonderfully for that child -- but, it doesn't mean that will work for all children or for that child in all cases. And sometimes even one way -- you have to combine.

Olive:

There are always many answers to a problem, um, I think the most important thing is, is, is, er in life is to realize that there isn't just one answer -- that you have lots of choices. All we have to do is think about our own kids, our families, or the kids we teach, too -- whenever there's problems that come up there are always so many different things you can try. So, you just try to find the right one to suit that particular child or individual or situation.

Eva:

At [a junior high school] the year I was there, we spent a lot of time on the Myers-Briggs model of different teaching strategies. It was really neat because I know I have taken that information and thought of my own children, and I've thought of kids in the classroom and where they fit. Are they the 'abstract random' or are they, 'concrete sequential.'

J: How would you take the Myers-Briggs information to your classroom?

I know that I can't just take the information and apply it to the students in the classroom and say, 'This is where you fit.' Perhaps with mothering -- it's given me some understanding and some patience and knowing it's not always going to work, you know. There's a little more flexibility that you learn through mothering. Not being a mother, another teacher, may take this directly to the classroom and see where all these kids fit. Whereas, yes, I think there's much more flexibility and understanding and patience that develops through mothering.

The mother/teachers said that through experiencing motherhood they had learned that a carer has to accept that there are no set solutions to problems or questions regarding children (or other people). Moreover, they implied this requires carers to become flexible thinkers. Their talk suggested that as mothers they had learned that caring problem-solvers reject proposed solutions which ignore either the context of the problem or the individuality of the subject involved. They implied that the new understanding of individual difference acquired in motherhood influences the thinking that mother/teachers apply when solving problems regarding those entrusted to their care. Participants said they thought that as mothers they had learned it is preferable to seek and think through many sources of information rather than just one, and to adapt and blend the gathered information to suit the situation and the individual in question.

Hearing that caring entails a reflexive approach in listening and observing. From the talk of several participants, I discerned that as mothers caring for their children, they had learned that carers need to reflexively examine their own thoughts and values when listening to or observing those entrusted to their care.

Olive:

I believe that everything [children] do and say there is a reason for it and, er, and you have to sort of listen to them and find out just where they really are at. And I think that being a mother, that experience helped me with teaching because it does make you more empathetic and understanding and raises your level of awareness about, er, children's needs, when you've had that first hand experience twenty-four hours a day for ever and ever (chuckles). I think as a mother you realize there are lots of things even with your own children that you can't always understand!

Amy:

When you're living with the children on a day to day basis and taking them from this little infant who appears to know nothing about the world, seeing them controlling their environment, and watching them develop, I think you have a much better understanding of how that child is thinking. And, if they do something that goes right against your grain, or if they give you a wrong answer --

and I find this in school, now when I've gone back to work as a mum, a child will answer something wrong -- and there are a lot of times that I misunderstand or I just think, you know, that's wrong and that's not right -- but if I'm really on top of things and really feeling good that day, I'll think, now maybe they're giving me the right answer, they're just answering a different question. They have, they have a different interpretation of what I've said, and often if you have the time to talk with them ... it's just incredible, you know, what they're thinking. And sometimes their knowledge is so great, and we're not giving them credit for that, because they're not fitting it into the neat little categories.

Doris:

[As a mother], you don't stop and think, 'Oh, that child looked at it from that perspective, I should do that, too,' but I, you know, it does broaden your approach to things. You really do stop yourself and think, 'No, this is not something that I had ever thought, had ever thought about.' You stop and you think if this is the way the child feels then I have to respect that feeling. My son [when he felt left out because of my attending to the puppy and his sister's broken leg] had to show me how to feel. I was not acute enough or intuitive enough to recognize what he might have been feeling without him having to say it to me. I'm much more aware of a child being 'off' on a particular day, or 'on' on a particular day for whatever reason. Sometimes you read almost too much into what you see, but I'm certainly much more aware of the child as a whole as opposed to this little boy that comes into my class for five hours a day, and he's supposed to sit down and I'm supposed to teach him how to read and add two and two to make four, and then he goes home again. Because you're aware of it you respond more as to the child as a whole, which is what you do with your own children, right? When they cry, you don't say, 'Oh, shut up and stop crying' (laughs) -- No, I don't mean it quite that crassly, but you know what I'm trying to say? You really, really listen to children, you know, you try and act as a sounding board for a child to express their fears or anxieties or whatever or their concerns. Before being a mother, I would have tried to correct the behaviour rather than try and find -- listen to the causes and manage it in some other way. I would have thought, 'Oh, Johnny's just being a pain to-day!' It may be that he's just being a pain to-day, but most of the -- nine times out of ten there's a very real reason why Johnny's 'off' today.

Helen:

I hope I'm always open to looking at how I'm doing stuff. If somebody comes to me, I hope that I would be open enough to say, 'Oh we'll look and see what we can do. Now this is the way I'm doing it, maybe it needs to be a little different in here,' rather than, 'I'm sorry your kid's being a problem maybe you could do this with him at home.' Maybe there are other ways, or maybe I am doing this in a way that this child finds difficult to understand, or well. I've learned there's never just one right way to do anything.

Participants claimed that as mothers they had learned that caring for their children required them to exercise sensitivity toward the children's feelings and ways of thinking. They implied the belief, moreover, that they had learned that the ongoing development of such sensitivity, or awareness, required them to be flexible in mind

while listening to and observing their children; that is, to be prepared to examine their own thinking and values reflexively. In Chapter 5, I reported how reflexive thinking as a feature of caring was first drawn to my attention by four participants, and particularly by Doris. The talk presented then, like that above, indicated that mother/teachers believe they take this knowledge of caring to their classroom teaching and their interactions with students' parents.

In Chapter 5, I suggested that reflexive thinking might be thought of as the intellectual work of caring. On the basis of the mother/teachers' talk which I have presented in each of the above three sections, I discerned that they had found that caring entails much intellectual work. Moreover, I inferred that the mother/teachers considered such work necessary for finding how to support children's needs with respect to the preservation of their individualities. Some participants seemed anxious to stress their knowledge that such support often requires firmness.

Hearing about caring as provision of firm support. Lauren and Trudy were among participants whose interview talk provided information on how mother/teachers believe that they reject conceptions of caring which limit it to the provision of cushioned comfort.

Lauren:

[In school], caring becomes interpreted as being that you can only say positive things about a child. Well, that isn't -- for some children that's fine, but for others it becomes almost an impossibility. With some children there isn't a whole lot of positive stuff you can say, and there are problems that need to be dealt with. Um, they can be dealt with in a positive way, hopefully. But there are children with tremendous problems that come to us, and if they are functioning at a level that's two years behind their age and you write on the report card, 'So and so is an emergent writer.' Then the parents don't understand what you're saying. They don't know that I expect [their child] to be able to write with paragraphs and capitals. So, when I write that kind of a report card, I feel I'm dishonest. But some administrators want this, they think this is just fine and dandy because it's saying where the child is functioning, and that's what we should say.

Trudy:

I had a male friend of mine over and his daughter the other week. And both of [the children] were making fun of us -- the adults -- at the table. And I just

turned to my daughter ... and said, 'You continue and you're going to go to your room. We are not here for your amusement. So, stop!' That to me is a form of discipline, that she understands that adults are not to be used as butts. And, if she had been doing it to another child, I would have said the same. So, that to me is a form of discipline -- raising somebody who's well-mannered and knows how to behave. I don't like children who back-answer. I have no time for them. That's not really to do with my being a teacher, I just don't think that children should be given that right. I don't like an adult who does it to me. Why should I take it from a child?

Trudy:

I think that structure's very important for children because it gives them a sense of security. If you waffle in decisions or you're inconsistent, uh, I think children feel quite nervous. If you are fair but firm, it gives them a sense of security. I think they like that. I think they test constantly to find out, to make sure -- I call it 'the wall' -- to make sure that wall is solid. And then they're quite happy. Of course, the teacher's a wreck. I've noticed with my own child, that she will just constantly push me and then I, you know, something usually happens or I get angry, or something happens and then she's quite calm. I'm the one who's [shaken], you know!

Lauren's talk suggested to me that she had a knowledge of caring which made her fearful that children can be harmed if a mistaken or overly narrow conception of caring is applied in schools. Her talk implied her belief that because the gentle form of caring which she, as a teacher, is being asked to provide is not appropriate for some students, it represents non-caring with respect to both the students and their parents. Trudy told a story of caring for her child's social developmental needs. Together, the story and her comments implied that Trudy believed her experiences of caring for her own child had confirmed for her that firmness rather than gentleness is often required in caring. The tone of both Lauren and Trudy's talk indicated they wanted to stress that they know caring includes challenge, albeit with the aid of firm support for the child's feelings of security. Lauren feared that misconceptions of caring can be harmful to children. During group discussions, other participants spoke more often about fears regarding certain conceptions of caring than they had during interviews.

Learning about Conceptions of Caring from Group Discussions

During each of the group reports on caring, the listening participants uttered comments and sounds of agreement. I display the three reports below.

Gp1: We looked at 'caring', and thought mothers tend to care for the whole child -- holistically, um, we want the child to be, you know, successful in school, with friends, and in every endeavour that the child takes on. That's one caring aspect, but then another side we looked at -- the idea of caring by setting limits and boundaries with the child, as well, and that these show that we care.

Gp2: Somehow we seemed to be talking about caring in more general terms, um, it seemed to come out that when you have your own children that you learn a lot of qualities in caring. One that we came out with was -- after having your own -- that caring is learned, that it's difficult to learn and it involves putting off some of your own wants. Um, it has an unselfish feeling, and it's a mothering kind of knowledge. Some of us felt that it was very close to 'nurturing' and that caring didn't just involve children but, um, you know, you care for, I guess you care for your children or for people, in the same way you care for gardens or ideas. You really learn to be caring when you find yourself being completely responsible for another human being. We also talked about, um, two kinds of -- two meanings of caring. There's caring in the nurturing sense and then there's a kind of a more general caring; being sensitive to other people, aware of other people, intuition and compassion, and that having your own children sometimes you become more caring and you also develop social consciousness that you wouldn't have had before.

Gp3: We had a really negative reaction to 'caring' and we immediately -- we felt that all of us had been into Carebears or something like that. We found that it had a really saccharine kind of taste to offer all of us. We felt that there was, um, and also a gender thing for all three of us. When you talk about a 'caring person,' it didn't come across as positive in a sense for us in terms of, uh, like 'nurturing.' We felt that it really had a different feeling, almost like self-sacrifice in the name of another person, No balance in it, sort of overboard. Especially, we felt that it was gendered -- that if it was caring and female, it was almost overdone, it wasn't natural, it became too much. But we said that if we heard about a caring male it didn't come across quite as negatively. We also decided that if we said a child was caring, somehow, it was suddenly beautiful -- it was, and we don't have any explanations for that.

Olive:

But I did have an explanation. I think that for the caring thing at least for Yvonne and I who are approaching mid-century ... I thought in middle-age, women not only care for their kids, but they care for their parents, and it's just, we're just, we're just 'cared out.' You know, you care for your school kids, and

Thelma:

Yes, and self-care in women, we equate with selfishness!

The wide assortment of ideas contained in the group reports suggested that participants associated many concepts with caring, and that they were fearful of some of these conceptions. I discerned from the reports that the group discussions contained three main sets of information: (1) on a positive conception of caring developed through experiencing motherhood; (2) on feared conceptions of caring; and (3) on feared conceptions of carers.

Conception of caring developed through motherhood. One mother/teacher suggested that people "cannot really learn about caring until they are faced with the twenty-four hour responsibility that a child presents." Others claimed that when a mother obeys her instinct to protect and accepts the responsibility, she becomes a carer, which requires her to learn and practise unselfishness. Some participants stressed that although the latter includes putting "others ahead of yourself," it does not have to eliminate "care for yourself."

The mother/teachers claimed that motherhood had taught them that to be caring "requires the mother to have empathy," to "care for [the child's] point of view," and "to be sensitive to the plights of others." They said this makes caring "difficult to learn." The members of one group agreed that the mother who comes to know caring in these terms develops compassion which can make her a valuable member of society. Despite their positive expressed opinions about maternal knowledge of caring and its usefulness to their work as teachers, some participants recognized that they held conceptions of caring and carer that caused them to fear applying the term to maternal knowledge.

Feared conceptions of caring. In Group 3, the immediate response to the word caring was negative. They feared its inclusion in a description of maternal knowledge because it is an "ugh word." They claimed it is "devastating to say she is a really caring

person -- something in there is too saccharine." Such a conception of caring would indeed be in tension with the conception of caring represented in talk between members of Group 1. They implied that mothers learn that much caring is not "saccharin" sweet because firm -- and sometimes unpopular -- rules must be set and applied to assure children's safety. In this group, participants also said they thought that despite children's complaints, mothers "learn that kids want limits," and that limits afford children feelings of security which enable them to grow.

Feared conceptions of carers. Two members of Group 3 strongly feared negative conceptions of carers, and both were mothers of adult children. Like other such participants, both had referred during their interviews to mothers' efforts to regain an identity when their children grow up. In the group discussion, one stated her belief that "caring doesn't go with individuality, control, and assertiveness, but rather it connotes people who don't care enough about themselves -- like their only identity is looking after others." While such dangers might be inferred in the association which other participants claimed that mothers make between caring and unselfishness, Group 3 members narrowed the concept of "unselfishness" to self-sacrifice. One of them added after the Group 3 report, perhaps mothers whose children are grown, are just "cared out!"

Summarizing Mother/Teachers' Conceptions of Caring

The mother/teachers spoke of caring as a commitment to respecting, protecting, and nurturing a person for whom one has responsibility within a relationship. They claimed they had learned that in caring, protection and nurture is extended to all facets of being from the physical through to the spiritual, and respect is extended to the uniqueness of both the qualities and combination of these facets which constitute the person's individuality. Participants spoke of their belief that if mothers accept the

responsibility and thereby experience the activities of caring, they learn that caring requires them to develop flexibility and adaptability. They claimed that this development occurs in response to both the uniqueness of individuals, and the unpredictability of people and conditions which constitute the environment wherein mothers care. The mother/teachers implied they had learned that caring requires mothers to listen to their children and to observe them with a flexible mind, that is, to develop the habit of thinking reflexively in order to understand their children's feelings and ways of thinking.

Some participants feared applying the terms "carer" and "caring" to talk on maternal knowledge. They said, for instance, that caring presents to them a "saccharin" image, and carer represents a mother who practises self-sacrifice by making caring for others her only purpose in life. A conception of caring as "saccharin" would cause the term "caring" to misrepresent caring as the mother/teachers claimed to understand it through their maternal knowledge. According to participants' talk, caring incurs firm -- and sometimes unpopular with children -- means of supporting children's safety and developmental needs. During their talk on nurturing, participants claimed that as mothers they had learned that nurturing, as a special form of caring, often requires the presentation of challenge which in turn requires the provision of firm support.

NURTURING

I discerned from participants' talk that they think of nurturing as a specific aspect of caring. I understood them to claim that nurturing activities have the purpose of fostering the growth and development of an individual's unique set of characteristics and abilities. I present in this section, first, what I heard about nurturing during participants' interviews and, second, what I heard during the group discussions.

Hearing Interview Talk About Nurturing

During the interviews, I heard mother/teachers express the belief that as mothers they had developed knowledge of nurturing not only through being nurturers of their children, but also by observing their children's teachers. I also heard participants make claims about the usefulness of this maternal knowledge of nurturing to their own work as teachers. Accordingly, I present in three subsections participants' talk about (1) what they had learned through being nurturers; (2) what they had learned about nurturing from observing their children's teachers; and (3) the usefulness of their maternal knowledge of nurturing to their work as teachers.

Hearing about what mother/teachers learn from nurturing their own children. In Chapter 5, I reported how Thelma was the first to draw my attention to the claim that as mothers, mother/teachers learn that nurturing requires them to focus upon and to appreciate a child's individuality. Other mothers, several of whom are quoted below, also provided information about how mothers conceive of nurturing and its contribution to their maternal knowledge.

Thelma:

J: Why did you say that as a mother you didn't want a model that you were going to fit your children into?

It probably has something to do with the way I feel about them being a person, an individual. I think if I insisted that the child fit into every situation that I set up for them that the uniqueness of them as a person might not have the chance to come through. So, I never thought about this before, but I wanted them to grow in, in their own way as strongly as they could, with some set rules but few -- a few set rules and work them in along the way.

Ivy:

J: What do you think being a mother has taught you?

Well, basically that [children] are all very different individuals and definitely have wills and minds of their own that need to be respected, especially, in any decision that needs to be made where they are involved and in the carrying out of that decision. Even though you can impose certain things on them, you have to understand where they're coming from, too. You have to accept maybe, you know, that you have certain guidelines but you might have to bend them a bit in

order to accommodate the way they feel about something. You have to make it work both ways.

Doris:

All parents have expectations, and generally they're pie in the sky, right? Something very real that I learned about when I looked at my own children, was, 'No, they can do what they can do, and you provide them with the necessary infrastructure and scaffolding and support and all the rest of it, but if they can't do it, they can't.' There's no point in getting aggravated by, or getting mad with them. Everybody has a potential and, and one has to try and cultivate that potential. Part of creating an ambience for someone to achieve their potential and to develop as a person -- whether it's your own child or someone else's -- is to provide a very nurturing situation. It's no good chatting to kids and telling them it's useless, they can't do it -- and nurturing is part of that, that whole bringing them along and encouraging (pause). I wasn't and I'm still not the most patient of people, but I have learned to bite my tongue (laughs). I have learned, I mean, tolerance at all levels. Tolerance for differences, it's part of that whole accepting thing.

Trudy:

J: You used the term 'mollycoddling,' how do you link mothering and mollycoddling?

By mollycoddling, I mean, I have known teachers who have said to a child, 'Oh, it's all right, don't worry, it's too hard for you.' And that's not my view. It's not my view of mothering. To me it's placating the child, but at the same time I think it's an extremely negative thing to say to a child because it's saying, 'You are not capable of doing this, and I understand that.' It's the last thing I'd want to say as a mother. I sometimes do think that as mothers to give comfort can be negative. I remember my own mother -- I used to get terrible marks in math, and I think to comfort me, she used to say, 'You know, I was never very good in math, either, dear.' It was the worst thing in the world to say to me because it became an excuse, I mean, I've always thought, 'Oh, I am never good in math. I just don't have the ability.' Rather than saying, 'You can do it, if you apply yourself, I know you can,' my mother mollycoddled. She placated me in a negative fashion to make me feel better, but she just gave me an excuse not to work harder. I think there are many mothers who do that, I mean, in the whole span of this universe, I'm sure there's many mothers that do that.

Sometimes I have to be quite cautious what I say with my own daughter. For example, she was very nervous about riding a bicycle, and we've been out with friends who have had children of equal age who are whizzing on a little bicycle and doing this, this, and this. And she was like, 'I don't want to go too fast!' It would be very easy for me to say to her, 'Oh, well, riding a bike's just not your thing.' But I just have to say, 'Well, it does take some people a little longer to catch on, but you'll be fine, just keep practising.' And what I get back is, 'Oh, I don't like this, oh, I don't, I'm just not good at this.' You know, it would be easy to say, 'Oh, well, you're not always good at everything.' The bicycle, she loves it now. We went bicycling the other day -- and I heard this voice, 'This is fun!' I thought how I could have said, 'Let's put the bicycle away, we won't bother about it.' But, no, I just kept at it, and now the bicycle's fun.

J: Mollycoddling then could be an easy way out?

Well, I think in a sense, you don't want to see the child being unhappy, so you deal with the immediate presence not realizing there's going to be a negative somewhere down the road.

In this talk, I heard the mother/teachers claim that through experiencing motherhood, they had developed an understanding of nurturing as a combination of both guiding children and assuring preservation of their uniqueness. They expressed the belief that through attempting to guide their children's development, ideally mothers learn that they are required not only to support and encourage, but also to recognize and respect that the directions or areas of development they favour may not match those befitting their child's potential. They claimed that mothers, therefore, can learn that expectations of their children may be not be fulfilled and that to accept this requires tolerance.

Trudy and Doris implied there is a danger that knowing the requirement for tolerance can prompt a mother to comfort her child with the message that the child "can't do" something. They implied, however, that ideally mothers develop the knowledge that nurturing children includes challenging them and providing accompanying support and encouragement. That is, their talk suggested that mothers can learn that nurturing excludes "mollycoddling," which according to Trudy's illustrative tale appears to be related to the "cheery denial" which Ruddick (1989) refers to as a destructive form of motherly protection. Trudy was fearful that many mothers do not learn that mollycoddling is detrimental to children's individual growth and development.

Hearing what mother/teachers learn about nurturing from observing their children's teachers. Several mother/teachers claimed that their maternal knowledge of the usefulness of nurturing in schools had been enhanced by their observations of their children's teachers.

Eva:

My daughters seem to respond, you know, to more of a nurturing sort of a teacher than somebody who's not. They look at each kid as an individual, um, sort of treating them as people rather than objects. They're warm, very welcoming, as a parent they let you in, they listen, it's not that they bend over, I mean, I'm one parent in there with 24 parents so if there's something I want for my child, I don't expect a teacher to, you know, (imitates impatient finger clicking) that's what she wants so that's what she gets. But, I can go and talk to the warm teachers, they'll listen, and then they can talk to me and answer my questions.

Ursula:

I'm not as concerned or as expecting that teacher to cram my son's head with knowledge as I am with her to show that she accepts him, that she knows him as a person, knows his strengths, knows what he could use to work on, and that she is patient and creates a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom. If that's going on then I think the learning will go on, too.

Yvonne:

We had a math teacher in our children's high school who set such high standards for the math programme that most of the kids doing university entrance math couldn't pass it. They had to go off to take the night school course and get credit for that to get into university. [The high school teacher] used to send off bright students to do the math and international math competitions and all this sort of stuff -- genius. However, we're talking about kids who are not going off and on in math and sciences here. Drove of these kids would be driven by mummies and daddies, like us, once a week to do extra math so they could get through. There were complaints from quite a number of us, but that was not respected that year. It took about three years. Parents were complaining ... but, no, the attitude was that, the kids if they just put their nose to the grindstone could do it. The big thing was, well, you know, so-and-so is the best math teacher in the lower mainland, or whatever, because on the high end, he got fantastic results. But nobody was looking at the average, low end, and I wouldn't even say low end. These kids came through with 'A' and 'B' from the night school course, or what you want on your transcript so that you can get into university.

Gwen:

They had to take a science course in high school and [my learning disabled son] elected to take this certain science course. He liked the course, enjoyed it, enjoyed the material, but he couldn't keep up with the homework assignments. There may have been some lack of effort on his part, but I don't think so, I think there was intent to do the course as well as he could. On one occasion, [my son] had finished work late, went to give it to [the teacher], but the guy turned his back on him and walked away from him down the hall -- wouldn't even speak to him about it. That was when I said, 'Enough,' and went in to see him. I could see his point but I thought, 'Damn it! You can treat students with respect -- you don't need to behave with students like that.' That's another learning for me because I bring that into my teaching, you know, these are people in front of you. They are not bodies. They're human beings and they need to be treated as such, treated as individuals. I received the impression from the teacher that to preserve the quality and the standard that he wanted to teach at meant that [my son] would

either have to be able to keep up or withdraw from the course. It was a clear case of pressuring him to withdraw and no other provision made for him.

In this talk, the speakers implied that from observing their children's teachers, they had learned that the more thorough the teacher's knowledge of the child, the better s/he is able to provide nurture. To gain this knowledge requires that the teacher be open-minded not only toward the child, but also in listening to and communicating with the child's mother (or parents). Yvonne and Gwen told stories of incidents which had shown them as mothers that children's development can be threatened by inappropriately narrow conceptions of nurturing; in these cases, conceptions that do not allow for individual differences. Each of the described incidents occurred in high school. In Yvonne's story, both students and families were inconvenienced, but the students' development was maintained because night school classes were available and the parents could afford the fees. Gwen's son had the misfortune of his learning disability, and his individual development was placed in jeopardy because no alternative to the unsuitable class was available to him. Participants' talked about how they think their maternal knowledge of nurturing is useful to their own work as teachers.

Hearing about mother/teachers applying maternal knowledge of nurturing to their work at school. The talk of Coral, Lauren, Amy, Pat, and Gwen, contained strong examples of the claims participants made about taking their maternal knowledge of nurturing to their work as teachers.

Coral:

[As a mother] you have to accept your children the way they are -- each individual, and accept them day by day, you know, as they grow. And I think that's the way it is at school -- you watch them grow in school -- develop in school -- take them day by day, and work on their good strengths. And if you bring, if you have, if you have, um, a good attitude and if you bring out their strengths then I find that, er, they're much more -- you don't have the behaviour problems in the classroom. And you try and have them help each other, be tolerant of others, accept others for who they are and what they are, take responsibilities and take ownership. Then your classroom runs much more smoothly, and you try

and do the same with your own children at home -- take ownership, feel responsible.

Lauren:

Our evaluation system, is, it's only half an evaluation system. When you can only write a report card that says what a child can do, you really are giving only half a picture unless a parent is very aware of the word games you are playing and how to interpret them and to ask the right questions. I find it almost to the point of dishonesty when I'm writing report cards. Self-confidence and self-image are tremendously important, but they've sort of denied other aspects of our society in focussing on that. It's just unbalanced, that's what it is. There are some teachers who are totally against giving out awards because it acknowledges excellence in people who try hard. Somehow, in their minds that is bad because the children who haven't succeeded are going to feel bad. And so ... we pat them on the back and say, 'Oh, you're doing fine and you are progressing, you should have maybe progressed five times as fast, but you haven't, but that's okay because that's where you're at.' I'm not sure that we should be doing that. I think they should be challenged.

Amy:

[Two other mother/teachers] and I were all saying and I think a lot of parents and mother/educators are seeing it this way ... that [teaching] should be totally free in accepting the child, but there are things that they do need to be taught -- whether it's with your own child -- for example, like brushing teeth -- and other different skills that we actually set out to teach our children. It's the same with school, and some children learn -- it doesn't matter what you do with them, but there are children that need real definite instruction It's wonderful to give children freedom to explore on their own, but sometimes you have to sit them down and instruct, check to make sure that instruction has had the result you expected it to, and if it hasn't then you've got to look for another way.

Pat:

We have a knowledge base from years of living and experience, for instance, I know that [my son's] marks have to be good to get into university, he's got to compete, he's got to be mainstream, so, he can't be weird. He's not going to get a job if he's -- hear this noise (referring to sounds of her sons playing loudly in basement) -- if he's doing this all of his life! (Laughs) He's going to have to change in order to be a success as an adult and to fit into that awful mould! I think it's a problem for teachers, too. I think as a teacher, you can see a child who is an individual, but, boy, don't we try and squash him right into that classroom mould so that he's not either giving us trouble or giving himself trouble! These little boys and girls who are weird -- put that in quotation marks: 'who are weird.' If [they're] going to not be picked on, [they've] got to fit in.

Gwen:

I acknowledge that I perhaps felt a lot of ownership of [my younger son's] problems and in leaving my teaching job for my leave of absence, I recognized that I was responding in the same way to my students with difficulties whether learning, social, or familial. For me I felt I was carrying over a kind of caring that was not helpful to the child and that was certainly harmful to me. I have had to look long and hard at the way in which I care for others and my motivation in doing so. I'm saying here that I learned some 'bad' things from my experience of

parenting which were a detriment in the classroom, and unlearned this as a result of teaching.

Coral's talk implied that she believed that from mothering she has gained knowledge of nurturing which is of benefit to both individual students and the class as a whole. She also implied that she teaches her students to nurture one another. Coral claimed that nurturing includes encouraging students to accept responsibility and ownership. Both Lauren and Amy implied that they have experienced a tension between their maternal knowledge of nurturing and the conceptions of nurturing which they have seen adopted in schools. Lauren said she thought motherhood had taught her that children benefit from being nurtured in ways which challenge them to become responsible for their behaviours and learning. In her talk about report cards, Lauren implied her belief that overly narrow conceptions of nurturing can be harmful if applied in schools. That is, she implied that the misconception that nurturing is merely support for self-esteem can disallow report comments that challenge students to stretch themselves to achieve their true potential. Amy's talk also implied that she thought her maternal knowledge cautions her against the application in schools of overly narrow conceptions of nurturing. She said, for instance, that teaching which provides students opportunities to explore is necessary but is not sufficient to students' development of individual potential.

Pat talked of a tension she has experienced as a mother between nurturing her son's social need to conform to society's norms and nurturing his unique potential and individual characteristics. She implied that she recognized a parallel tension between teachers' attempts to nurture students as individuals and their encouragement of students to conform to the school's normative standards of behaviour.

As mentioned previously, Gwen's younger son was learning disabled. She had sometimes encountered difficulties communicating with his teachers especially at the high school level, and upon one occasion she had been labelled an overprotective

mother. Gwen explained that because she made the error of forgetting that some contributing factors were outside of her control, she suffered unwarranted feelings of guilt when her efforts failed to assure nurturing school situations for her son. Gwen claimed that she recognized this error when as a teacher she found herself at risk of taking ownership of her students' problems. As displayed in her talk reported in Chapter 5, Gwen said that she thought this recognition occurred because it was easier for her to accept as a teacher that her caring for students could be impeded by factors which were outside of her control. Some tensions associated with nurturing were described during participants' group discussions.

Learning About Conceptions of Nurturing from Group Discussions

The group reports indicated that participants found some difficulty in distinguishing nurturing from caring and from other terms which are commonly associated with motherhood. Some reports also implied that participants found neither the terms to be separable nor the activities they associated with caring and nurturing to be entirely distinct. I present the three group reports below.

Gp1: So, 'nurturing', we thought what most mothers like to do is nurture totally; the social, intellectual, physical, and emotional. And it requires an awareness of the individual. Could it be just because you are around your children, that you are nurturing them? Is it just taking care of their immediate and external needs, or is it more? We thought maybe parents need to question about childrearing, 'Are we nurturing children from our perspective without looking at the individual child or are we looking at the child individually and respecting and honouring individual needs and nurturing in those ways?' We talked about all that kind of thing, and asked what happens if the child doesn't fit into what your expectations are in this kind of nurturing capacity.

Gp2: We thought 'nurturing' was a very positive word. We came up with instinctive, parental wholeness connected to care and feeding of infants, connected with people, with being fed, being nourished, with physically and emotionally connecting people in an affective way. It is not separated from feeding or physical care. It was an attitude, it was knowledge, it was a spiritual act, psychological, caring. We kept connecting words like caring and instinctive. Too, we kept connecting a lot of the words that we talked about. In fact, I think that at one point we said that some of these words we used interchangeably, and that 'nurturing' and 'caring' were very close and used that way.

Gp3: We could connect 'instinct' and 'nurturing' because we felt that nurturing in some senses for your own child could be on a lot of levels, but could be just very unconscious. You just go on automatic on a lot of nurturing kinds of things. One of us gave an example of some children that had lost their mother at a very early age and they knew that they needed nurturing and would go off and would sit, you know, just sort of crawl into people's laps looking for that nurturing and just -- affection -- they knew what they needed and just went about getting it. And in retrospect because she was connected to these children on a slightly removed but still close level she was quite capable of nurturing those children because it was almost on an instinctual level that they need, you know, and it's such a simple thing to give. 'Nurturing' came across to us as very positive; not a word that we saw in this society is turned around as negative.

In the reports, I heard the mother/teachers make two claims: (1) that as mothers they have learned that nurturing should be applied to the whole child and on an individual basis; and (2) that because they have learned that nurturing requires acceptance of individual differences, they have also come to know that this requires mothers as nurturers to think reflexively about their values.

Nurturing the whole child on an individual basis. The members of one group began their discussion by associating nurturing with feeding and nourishment. To continue, they decided that the first of a child's needs to be nurtured are the physical, but "nurturing means looking after needs from the physical all the way up to the spiritual if necessary." They decided, "We're talking about the whole child -- physical, emotional, social, intellectual."

Participants claimed that as children's new needs arise, mothers learn that the earlier ones are not necessarily eliminated. For instance, the provision of food nurtures a baby's physical development principally but, as facilitation of family mealtimes, the activity serves additional nurturing roles for older children. Meals, one mother claimed, become "a way of connecting at a deeper level," that is, it brings "the family around the table at which we sit and feed each other by our presence and company ... a kind of nurturing." On the basis of this talk and that of other groups, I inferred that the mother/teachers believed that as the growing child's personal needs expand beyond

being mainly physical and increasingly include emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs, the mother's understanding of nurturing expands to accommodate the additional needs.

Participants claimed that through motherhood, they had learned that nurturing entails support and encouragement, and it fosters growth and health in all the areas listed above. Moreover, they claimed that they had learned that nurturing entails being aware of children's individual qualities and providing "opportunities to grow in their areas." Wondering how they know when each aspect of the child's being requires nurture, the group members concluded that the role of "intuition is high, and sensitivity."

Speaking about the usefulness their maternal knowledge of nurturing can have in their teaching work, some participants claimed it helps them to understand, for instance, that if parents sense they have a gifted child or a child with other special needs which are not being met in school, there "can be frustration, stress and tension in the family." They claimed to know that this happens if the "parents aren't aware of programmes available and extracurricular help you can get for the children." They said that they thought having such understanding of parents' anxiety with respect to the nurture of their children leads mother/teachers to recognize the importance of good communication between parents and schools.

A possible tension between a mother's values and her child's personality. In one group, participants questioned, "Since kids are born with individual personalities but mums also have personalities, how does a mother adapt to the differing personalities of her children?" In their response, they expressed the belief that through her maternal knowledge of individual difference, ideally, a mother learns to accept people for what they are. They said that because a mother learns "people don't fit moulds and [her] idea of the perfect child and the perfect student doesn't exist ... if [she's] going to survive she

has to look for the positive in each one." In another group, members decided mothers learn that nurturing requires them to recognize both faults and virtues in their children. They speculated upon the problems of "raising a person who is not like you in temperament," and of nurturing a child whom you find "obnoxious," or who is "gifted," or more or less intelligent than yourself.

Some mother/teachers spoke of experiencing a tension between nurturing the development of a child's individual qualities and directing the child's behaviours and attitudes toward socially accepted norms. For instance with reference to her teenaged son, one participant explained,

I would like him to be more social. He's a recluse. I would like him to be out more, and yet I look at the kids hanging around the mall and yet I complain about a boy whose favourite pastime is going to the bookstore.

In response, another participant discussed a similar conflict with regard to her teenage daughter. Yet another stated, "Well the thing is if they're happy with themselves, that's just the kind of person they're going to be." The mother/teachers then contemplated, if the child doesn't want to do something that the mother thinks he should, "how do we pull back and say, 'That's where the child is.'" One mother/teacher claimed that "the key [is] being aware of when the child doesn't fit with your thinking." Similar talk in each of the groups suggested that participants believed motherhood had taught them that nurturers are required to be reflexive about their values; to make themselves aware of what these are and how they might affect their children. The talk implied that mothers learn this requires them to think about the social messages which influence their thinking and, moreover, to examine whether, and if so, how the messages interfere with the project of nurturing their children's individual characteristics.

Summarizing Mother/teachers' Conceptions of Nurturing

The talk of mother/teachers implied their belief that nurturing is an activity prompted by both their instinct to protect and their sensitivity to human individual

differences. They consider that nurturing applies to the whole range of growth and development needs including the physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social. Participants claimed that mothers learn not only that children (and other people) do not fit and cannot be fitted into moulds, but also that it is necessary to accept children for what they are and to look for the special qualities of each one. According to study participants, mothers learn that nurturing should incorporate challenge. This includes learning that nurturing should exclude "mollycoddling" whereby, for instance, mothers readily offer comfort and excuses for unnecessary failure.

As mothers of schoolchildren, participants claimed to have learned that their children have greater success with a teacher who respects and nurtures students' individual characteristics. Participants' stories matched their claims that they apply their maternal knowledge of nurturing to both their classroom work and their understanding of parents. Participants said they thought mothering experience had taught them how frustration builds for the parents and family of a child whose special talent or special need is not being nurtured in school. Moreover, they claimed they had learned that the frustration becomes pain when parents do not know or are unclear about how or if the school can assist. In this regard, the mother/teachers suggested that many schools need to be more communicative.

Finally, the mother/teachers talk implied that they thought maternal knowledge includes recognition of a tension between nurturing the development of a child's individual qualities and nurturing the child to suit the norms and expectations of society. Participants spoke of the possibility of conflicts between a mother's values and her child's individual characteristics, and that societal norms impact upon these values. Some participants questioned how does a mother cope with the problem of raising a child whose qualities do not match what the mother values most in people. They decided that in such situations, mothers who accept the responsibility of nurturing will learn to examine reflexively both their thinking and values. Because the

mother/teachers regarded the word "nurturing" to currently represent only positive concepts, they spoke in favour of it being used to help describe maternal knowledge. This was not their opinion, however, with respect to the word "controlling."

CONTROLLING

I had not anticipated that "controlling" would be among the terms that mothers would use to talk about their maternal knowledge. However, as mentioned in Chapter 5, Amy's interview talk informed me that mothers experience tension between what they expect to be able to control and what they find themselves able to control. Participants' talk on controlling implied that they think of the activity as a form of caring and, moreover, they feel that some controlling activities support nurturing. In this section on controlling, I report first the analysis and findings with respect to interview data and, second, the analysis and findings pertaining to the discussion group data.

Hearing Interview Talk About Controlling

In participants' interview talk, I heard five main sets of information regarding maternal knowledge of controlling: (1) why and what mothers feel required to control; (2) surprise encounters with the uncontrollable in motherhood; (3) fears about losing control when children enter school; (4) mother/teachers' empathy toward control as a problem for their students' mothers; and (5) control that mother/teachers can access as mothers of schoolchildren.

Hearing why and what mothers feel required to control. In the talk of Lauren, Gwen, and Ivy, I heard clear examples of the reasons mother/teachers gave for feeling required to exert control.

Lauren:

Whether we were accepted or not by the mission depended on how my children behaved. Virtually, whether I could control my children or not was part of it. We had an internship, a three-month internship in Missouri, and there were people there who were not accepted by the mission because their children controlled them. And I had been aware of this, and I wanted my children to behave properly. So, they knew exactly what was expected of them

Gwen:

I would say my perception up until they hit about twelve/thirteen, you know, that awful age, was that a good parent controls. If you don't have control, you're not a good parent. And that comes from my experience of my dad because my dad was total control. Um, at that point, they start being their own person, you know, and er, you, you come to this realization, well, I don't really have control of this person, you see, and you start learning about trust, according trust and, er, what that does for the kids.

Yvonne:

The teenage years -- I feel ... as if we swatted it through with various problems and the kinds of things that one has with teenagers and, er, we were still parents with an agenda, and in some control. For example, we always went to church on Sunday. That would -- now you can imagine getting six children up and dressed and breakfasted and down to the church? Every Sunday! But we, uh, that was a given. That was what we did!

Ivy:

So we have them doing music as well as sports. If we gave them their druthers, they -- all three of them are very athletic -- would rather do all the sports activities and forget the music. 'Mum,' you know, 'Why are you torturing us?' But ... it's a trade off, you know. We tell them this, we discuss it and say, 'Well, you know, if you want to do the sports, you have to do the music as well. If we stop the music, we also stop the sports. Right now, we can say that because most of the time they need transportation (chuckles) to wherever they are going. Once they get on to the stage where they say, 'Well, I'll just go myself, Mum, thanks, goodbye,' um, I don't know how that'll work, but I'm just hoping we've, you know, instilled enough -- they value our values enough -- that when the time comes, they'll listen when we say, 'No, you can't do this unless something else is happening.'

Both Lauren and Gwen spoke about controlling their children's behaviours and why they thought for them this activity had been a socially prescribed requirement. Lauren said she had been required to control her children's behaviour to assure that it conformed to the norms set by the church, i.e., the social institution, with which her family was affiliated. As noted in Chapter 6, however, Lauren said that she believed that when her children were subjected continually to this control in boarding school,

their development as individuals was placed in jeopardy. She implied that observing this helped her to learn that excessive control can threaten nurturing. Gwen's talk revealed that she also responded to an external authoritative voice. The voice provided her a social description of the parental role, which told her that a good parent controls. Gwen implied that when experiencing the relationship between mother and teenagers, she found it inappropriate to focus upon control because it could thwart the development of mutual trust.

Yvonne talked about controlling her children's living environment and implied her beliefs that this activity was required as a part of caring; i.e., it facilitated an environment conducive to caring for her six children. Yvonne implied that as a mother of six she had learned that family routines and traditions can play a useful role in controlling the environment. Ivy's talk described an activity whereby she controlled both her children's behaviour and environment. I discerned from this talk that Ivy had believed herself required to exert control in order to support the nurturing of her children. At first, I thought that Ivy's control might be considered impositional, but it became apparent to me through some of her stories that Ivy's actions were prompted by her confidence that her sons enjoyed music. For instance, she described observations of them having fun playing tunes together spontaneously, and she explained that these influenced her feelings that she should persuade her sons to develop further their musical interests. I discerned from the talk of these four mother/teachers that although they believed that control of children's behaviour and living environment is required as part of caring, they also believed that mothers learn control needs to be administered *care/fully* in order to support rather than threaten the nurture of individuality. In other participants' talk, I heard that motherhood had taught them that controlling children's behaviours and environments was less feasible and more complex than they had anticipated.

Hearing about surprise encounters with the uncontrollable in motherhood.

Several participants claimed that upon becoming mothers they learned that control is much less available to child-raisers than they had previously believed. The talk of some participants suggested to me that this realization produce unnerving effects which were compounded because becoming a mother had also, according to their descriptions, been an encounter with feelings of lost control over their lives.

J: Before you became a mother, what did you picture motherhood would be like?

Amy:

I really had high expectations! I pictured that I was going to have a son and a daughter and they were going to be three years apart. That's about the only part that worked out! (Laughs) I thought that here I had a degree in education, training in both pre-school and primary education, I'd taken all these psych. courses, I had taught for several years, and I had seen these horrible mistakes that the parents made! You know, children that had problems in school, I'd look at them and say, 'Well, you know, your mum or your dad' -- but usually 'the mum,' I'd say, 'really messed up here!' I decided I was going to be perfect, and I think it was much harder -- at least, for me personally -- to have that background and then, you know, to come down to earth with a thud when I had my own children. For my ownself, if I had gone into a totally different career, I mean, I wouldn't have had those same expectations. I thought motherhood was going to be so easy. And, it wasn't! And [my husband] was travelling -- he was out of town when I actually went into labour.

Helen:

I think I had very definite ideas about how I was going to be as a mother. Um, having watched other relatives and friends with children and having been with young children in the school system, I had definite ideas about what I thought about things, which I hasten to add, changed -- very, very quickly when I had my own children. (Chuckles)

Louise:

That whole thing -- even giving birth -- I, um, used to think that people who made a fuss about childbirth were a bit odd because ... we all have children so what's the big fuss. And when I had [my first child], I felt like someone had played quite a dirty trick on me. This whole idea about natural childbirth and controlled childbirth, um, made it all just, you know, everything would be in control. Childbirth is not about being in control at all! Pregnancy itself feels very out of control. I think that was quite frightening. I found pregnancy itself to be such an altered state. That in itself prepared me for the uncertainty of being a parent. I thought, 'This child is in here growing away, I have no more say over this, I have no more say over the fact that I'm more tired, and there's this ever present sort of state of feeling ... just, oh, my goodness, this is going to change everything!' And ... I had so many unrealistic ideas about, 'My children will, of course, behave properly when they go to peoples' homes, they will always pick up after themselves, they will never be noisy, and they will never make messes. This

is the way it's going to be.' And we found prenatal classes [for our second child] absolutely hilarious. [First-time] parents were saying, 'Well, I'm just not going to let this child interfere, I'm a very busy person ... I'm just not going to let this baby run my life and I'm just going to do what I want to do, and the baby's just going to have to come along.' And [my husband] and I are just, 'Hmhmh, hmhmh!' You know, oh, please, let me see this mother six months from now, and let me hear, um, 'I'm just not going to run every time the baby cries.' It was just quite comical to hear them pronouncing away about how it was going to be ... and people who don't have children have no idea realistically.

Amy:

We got married when the two of us had finished university -- and, um, our decision was that we would wait several years to have a family because we both wanted to travel, we both wanted to have a house -- get ourselves sort of established. And we both decided ... that I would quit teaching and stay at home for evermore because that was what my mother had done, and I was going to do the same. My husband travels a lot and, particularly, at that ... stage of our life when the children were little, he was gone sometimes for a month at a time. So, I was, you know, for that period, I would be like a single mum. And, er, by the time [my son] was at least four, I thought, 'I think 'we've made the wrong decision here, I don't think I want to do this!' And, um, so, it was wonderful to get into that pre-school situation and see that I wasn't a bad person because I had some of these negative feelings ... it was a tough job to be at home.

Both Helen and Amy expressed their belief that prior to becoming mothers they had not only definite ideas about childraising, but also confidence in their ability to apply the ideas. They implied that their ideas and confidence had been gained from both observing children in school and having made assumptions about "horrible mistakes parents had made." Amy's talk suggested to me that teaching experience might heighten a mother/teacher's expectations of the control she will be able to exert in childraising and, consequently, compound her astonishment upon encountering the contrary. Ursula, however, said that pregnancy and childbirth provided experiences of the "out of control" and of "not being in control" which prepared her for the "uncertainty" of parenting.

According to participants, the problem of "not being in control" seems to be compounded by the changed lifestyle that mother/teachers encounter following childbirth. Ursula discussed her amusement when as a mother she heard women who were expecting their first children proclaiming intentions to maintain control over their lives. The surprise which Ursula knew to be awaiting the women is illustrated in Amy's

description of the bewilderment she experienced upon encountering her unanticipated loss of control.

Hearing about lost control when children enter school. Among others, Thelma and Eva talked of experiencing disquiet when their children entered school.

J: What was your expectancy of your role as the mother of a school child?

Eva:

Well it was an active role ... not the same kind of a role as ... playschool when you're there and you really know what goes on all the time. I suppose it's kind of a scary time initially in that, you know, you are, or I was letting the kids go and, and I wasn't there all the time, and [I was wondering] what is going on? And I know what kind of hit me, too, you know, was who are these kids playing with? You sort of become more [concerned about], you know, where are the other kids coming from, and what's going on? Kindergarten wasn't so bad, but Grade 1 it was sort of the going for that full day and having to let go more, uh, and losing, actually, it was sort of losing more control over who they were playing with. I think that's probably -- that's when I felt the loss more, that's when I was in tears because it was, it was all day. In hindsight, I mean, I think it's all very normal and it can be expected, but at the time, uh, I probably felt kind of silly. I mean, you know, standing on my front steps in tears as this kid is going off to school. The not knowing, the not knowing and losing more control and the fact that we don't know where the kids are.

J: There was a concern that you couldn't see things were okay for them?

Emotionally! 'Cos kids, they can hurt, they hurt each other. And when they were younger, I was there all the time to see what went on. You know, maybe something happens at school, but by the time they get home they can't tell it exactly as it happened. They may even forget about it entirely and yet it may show up in a behaviour.

Thelma:

I did have apprehension when I took my first daughter to kindergarten. I thought, 'Oh-aah! She's in the system now!' I just had this feeling of, you know, er -- her uniqueness and her creativity and all those things that I value along with the other skill type of developments in children, I just wanted to make sure that she was with teachers that cared [about all those things], that liked children, and wanted to be teachers, you know. So, er, when I took her to kindergarten, I was a bit sad in a sense that she was going now into the system and I'll see her when she comes out in Grade 12 or 13, as a grown adult. That was kind of interesting, you know, wondering what are all the things ... the externals that are going to interact on her. I, I can remember that feeling.

Thelma and Eva described anxiety which they claimed to have felt when their children entered school. They implied that they felt apprehensive about not having any

control over the school environment. Thelma wanted control over whom would be her daughter's teacher, and Eva had misgivings about losing control over whom would be her children's playmates. I discerned from their talk that they feared protection of their children's wellbeing was at risk. Eva feared that her daughter might come into contact with children who would behave in ways which could endanger the child's spirit. Thelma was also concerned about preserving a nurturing environment for her daughter, for she wanted teachers who would appreciate and help foster her child's individual characteristics and capabilities.

Hearing about mother/teachers' empathy toward control as a problem for their students' mothers. Several participants said that they thought that being teachers who have experienced motherhood enables mother/teachers to empathize with controlling problems experienced by students' mothers.

J: When you went back into teaching after being a mother, what were your expectations regarding the usefulness of your mothering experience for teaching?

Helen:

My expectations were definitely that I would have more of an understanding of parents. I was very aware that [before motherhood] I had ... not understand what it was like to be a mother who was busy, to be a mother who was working, to be a mother who was maybe single. I had no idea. Having had children, I think I had a little more idea -- obviously, not [of all mothers' circumstances] -- more understanding that life is not always that smooth and easy and predictable, that there are circumstances beyond our control -- so, a better understanding of parents and more willingness to see their side of things.

Nancy:

If a parent doesn't do what [some teachers] think the parent should do, you know, it really bothers them. For instance, this other teacher and my partner and I, we had siblings -- we had one of the brothers and she had the other -- and they were always late. The other teacher was much more upset about it than my partner and I were. The other teacher was more upset with the parent. [The two children] were always late, and she was really upset about that.

J: The person you shared with is also a

She's also a mother, yes. Well, one of the reasons we get along is that we don't take all of those things seriously.

J: Why do you think that you were less upset than

Because my kids have been late, too. All these things that parents do that you see happen in the school, I've done them at one point or another. Being a mother, you know that a home is not run like a classroom. I mean, you can be more structured in a classroom. A family isn't run that way. Not that [my partner and I] condoned -- it drove us nuts that he was late, and we did work on it, and we did manage to get him not being late any more. But we really did also handle it differently. She would think -- and I know this because she's said it -- that, um, there's no reason why a parent couldn't get children out of the house on time. If you tried to explain [to her] that it wasn't always that easy, then you would be, it would be, the reason would be that you [as a parent] just couldn't get your act together, and there's no reason why a parent shouldn't get their act together.

Helen:

[Most] mothers when their children come into Grade 1 really don't understand the school system and are really fearful that they have to give up that, um, that control, or that responsibility, um, that now it's the teacher who decides this, that, and the next thing. And, um, I find that really sad, you know. Parents are still parents -- this is your baby, you have every right to be in the classroom if you want to see what's happening, you know, providing [that] you're behaving reasonably. Every parent I've ever had in has been wonderful. Um, er, just that, just the lack of knowledge that they have about how the school works. Many parents, I think find it a very threatening place. I've seen mothers crying as they bring their children into Grade 1, and I say... 'It's the next stage, it's not that you've lost your child, and it's not that,' but they don't understand. They don't know what's going to happen now, and for many of them it's just like, 'well, I guess that's my bit over now, the school's got them.' That's not what they want, but they think that's what the school wants.

Gwen:

We are just reconstituting our Parent Advisory Council after a situation in which we had for three years a parent advisory group of one woman. And she was a person like -- like her whole sense of self -- she (chuckling) strutted around the school like, you know -- I felt desperately sorry for the woman because it was very clear that she -- this was her sense of self, you know, it was her position in the school and it gave her status in her own eyes. Nobody could stand her, nobody could work with her, people would refuse to get involved in [the council] because of her.

I guess I would tend to characterize it as 'I can be a big frog in a little puddle, or I can be a little frog in a big puddle,' and some people have a real need to control, and she -- my perception of her would be as a very controlling parent. Yeah, and she kind of needed to be controlling in her kids' education. But, uh, who can fault her because what do -- what do we [mothers] have inside of ourselves that gives us a sense of self-worth, you know, and we all need to feel useful and worthy. I'm sure that for this lady having her family and her children and doing what she felt was best for them made her feel that way, and so she sought out ways to be in the school just to be in the school, you know, because that was part of her. But she was highly resented by the staff.

In Nancy's talk and the first quote from Helen's talk above, I heard their claims that control is difficult to achieve in family life. Nancy and Helen implied that as

mothers they had gained knowledge which both prompted and enabled them to be reflexive with respect to their thoughts about parents. From Nancy's closing words about the siblings' lateness, I inferred that a mother/teacher might risk being thought a bad mother if she speaks of having engaged in a parental behaviour that is being subjected to criticism by another teacher.

In both Gwen's talk and the second quote from Helen's talk, the concept of control as something that is lost by mothers when their children enter school was discussed. They implied that their experience of motherhood enables them to empathize not only with non-teaching mothers' anxieties about losing control when their children enter school, but also with the mothers' consequent attempts to gain some control over what happens to their children in schools. Many participants' said that they thought, however, that being mothers who were also teachers gave them advantages over other mothers with respect to accessing control in their children's schools.

Hearing about control that mother/teachers can access as mothers of schoolchildren. Several mother/teachers claimed that knowledge of the school system which they had gained as teachers offered them an advantage as mothers of schoolchildren. The talk of Helen, Yvonne, Nancy, and Amy contained typical examples.

Helen:

I think as a mum, I'm very privileged to be a teacher, too, because I think that I understand how that system works and so I understand more about what my children are doing during the day. Many mothers don't have that.

Yvonne:

I think I was idealistic. I thought [my children] would not have problems with school because I was a teacher, um, maybe by osmosis these kids would just be fine. Then I'd take that a step further and say that if they did have problems, well, of course, I would be able to help them with their problems because I had the advantage of knowing how to, to talk to the system, to the teachers, and to understand the system. What was interesting in our case is that I taught in the local school and all six children were at one time in that one school, in Grade 7

down to Kindergarten. And, um, I have taught all of them at least something like art.

Nancy:

I felt that because I'm a mother and because I'm a teacher, it works positively and I've had a lot of privileges in, in my children's school that I don't think I would have had if I weren't. [Other teachers] trust you and if they trust you, then they'll include you. I don't know quite how to explain it. You can get the best, the best of both ends sometimes. I don't quite know. I think I've had really great relationships with many of the teachers because I'm also a teacher. It's given me an 'in,' and ... they allowed me in, they will talk to me as a teacher, not just as a parent. So, I really enjoy that, to be involved in that way, but not to meddle, not to correct. I think it's because I'm a teacher that I got that. If I had another job, I don't know that I would have had it to the same degree.

Amy:

I think I had a strong feeling that I wanted to be involved in the school myself. Probably this came when I had the experience in the parent-participation preschool -- I realized how much I learned by seeing other children in the same age range and how they dealt with life, and I really wanted to continue this. So, I always was volunteering to, er, you know, work in the classrooms and help out in the school. It wasn't done just for their sake. I knew they benefitted, but I also felt I benefitted. I really enjoy working in a classroom. It is a really nice way to get to know the teachers, too, if you are involved in the school, you have a different feeling. Then if a problem does arise, you don't feel that you're only the mother that rushed in because there's a problem and you sound like you're criticizing. You can talk to the teachers.

Helen claimed that being a teacher and knowing how "the system works" gave her an advantage over other mothers because it provided her a better understanding of her children's school day. Yvonne said she thought that "understanding the system" and knowing "how to talk to the system, to the teachers" offered her a privilege when problems arose for her children at school. Nancy also said she thought that being a mother/teacher had given her this advantage. She said that she thought it had given her an "in." Amy implied the belief that she had accessed similar advantages by volunteering in her children's kindergarten and primary classrooms when she was a fulltime mother.

While speaking of their advantage, none of the mother/teachers quoted above referred specifically to "control." I discerned from their talk, nevertheless, that they believed having an "in" with their children's teachers provided them a better chance than other mothers of monitoring and enhancing the nurturing potential of their

children's school environment. I heard in the talk of these and other participants, however, that being a mother/teacher also has its disadvantages with respect to relationships with their children's teachers. These will be discussed in Chapter 8. Meanwhile, I present information from the group discussions of controlling.

Learning about Conceptions of Controlling from Group Discussions

Although all three groups devoted ample time to the discussion of each word, controlling was one which each group gave extra time and attention. The small group discussions of controlling were all lively. One group began by declaring, "That's the big one -- the one my kids would like to stick on the 'fridge' door!" A member of another group claimed that "That word 'control' is such a -- it just lights up everybody's switches!" To help convey information contained in the small group discussions, I report first the group reports and follow them by naming and discussing the themes which I discerned therein.

- Gp1: Thinking about 'controlling' we asked, 'Do we keep the child's differences in tune; i.e., in tune with things, um, a mother's norms, rules, and regulations?' We thought it was good to channel the differences, which again is a form of controlling. We thought also that at a young age there's more boundaries -- less as they get older, um, although that's, there are different boundaries when they get older. We questioned whether there's more or less? Uh, we thought that we respect with the child within limits, when we 'control.' Most of us thought we are in charge! (Chuckling)
- Gp2: We felt that without maternal experience, uh, what 'controlling' meant was 'total control': you will eat your dinner, and you will eat it now, and you will eat it all, and then you will go to bed and sleep for eight hours. To somebody who has no children that's total control. 'And you will sit down and you will do eight pages of math.' Right? But with experience of dealing with your own children, you recognize that you deal with, uh, each situation as it arises and you're -- Ursula said that you deal with individuals, and in a particular place, on a particular day, and at a particular time -- for instance, whether they've come, er, from somebody yelling at them going out the front door, or whatever.
- Gp3: 'Controlling' for us was not controlling people's lives. It was how we manipulated control, er, some of that is a self-control ... in that we pull back ... to sort of reclaim, um, kind of individuality. The balance shifts. So, 'controlling' for us is basically keeping a balance. Because we're mothers, in a classroom we have a better sense of all the different personalities, um, Yvonne came up with 'balancing the ethos of the room,' which I thought was, uh, just a wonderful way

of expressing what you have when you have thirty faces in front of you [showing] all different kinds of reactions. Basically we came out for the 'controlling' that is for positive outcome, like, for stressing the individuality of your children. Hopefully, also enabling you to keep your balance with yourself so that you can control your life so that it's positive for you as well and it's not, er, it doesn't swallow you -- you're still growing, learning, expanding, as well, like the children are being able to do that. So, and also we thought about controlling in terms of there is a control factor in organization and just the needs for the basics of life -- in terms of just the logistics of being a mother and feeding and providing shelter, etc. So, 'controlling' is just such a huge, huge topic, we just barely -- but we also thought that we all of us hated the verb 'to control,' yeah, we didn't like that. So, it came out that we thought the noun is, uh, 'control' and 'individuality' are really big though.

Within the group reports, I discerned two themes with respect to maternal knowledge of controlling. In the transcriptions of the small group discussions I sought for further information regarding the themes, and I present it under the titles that I assigned them: (1) distinguishing between *care/ful* control and total control, and (2) controlling: a balancing act.

Distinguishing *care/ful* control from total control. In Group 2, the first speaker declared that experiencing motherhood had taught her "there's no such thing as control." A second member of the group said that when raising her first child, she had the notion that "good parenting equals control." In response, the first speaker claimed that is what outsiders expect of mothers, and whether a child appears to them to be controllable or not is considered a reflection upon the mother. Another complained that "there are all those people out there who have unrealistic ideas about control of children." The group decided that although control of children is necessary, it cannot be the total control which outsiders expect of mothers, and which first time parents predict they will exert over their children. In all three groups, anecdotes were used to illustrate how parents are surprised to discover the limited amount of control that is possible with respect to children, and even babies.

In Group 3, Yvonne claimed that she could not conceive of control as bad because "how else would I raise [my six children] to the point where the family unit

functions day-to-day. There's food to be prepared, and clothes. I had to have control." In other groups, this type of control was referred to in terms of both preserving children's safety and conserving social standards of behaviour. Participants suggested that the younger the child, the more such control is applied. In Group 1, the possibility of too much control within the family was discussed. They mentioned this in connection with "religious fundamentalist" groups. One participant spoke of the long term effects such control had on a now adult friend. This reminded another member of how control in families always becomes connected to mothers, which reminded another that she gets "tired of mothers being blamed for everything." To this the first responded, "It's that Dad's never there. It's like the mother is home all day, so, if anything happens to the family or the kids -- it's the mother's responsibility -- so, it's always just, 'Well, you're too controlling. You're always just nagging!'"

In all three groups, control was thought of as important to "channelling individuality." That is, participants implied that control was linked to the work of nurturing individuality. Their talk suggested that participants believed that as mothers they had learned that controlling children entails finding a *care/ful* balance not only between attempting to control and accepting what cannot be controlled, but also between exerting too little control and too much control.

Controlling: a balancing act. In Group 1, following their discussion of the situation wherein children are subjected to too much control, perhaps because of a family's religious affiliation or because of a "too controlling" mother or teacher, they questioned, "What does that do to the child?" They answered that "the child never becomes an individual." Members of Group 2 agreed that the experience of mothering had taught them children cannot and should not be totally controlled. They agreed that mothers learn to appreciate that every situation pertaining to children is different because it involves a unique individual in a particular place and time. They said that,

thus, mothers know all situations should be dealt with individually as they arise. They claimed that although mothers continue to believe control is required, they learn that it involves *care/fully* controlling events and behaviours to support nurture and avoid damage to any aspects of the child's individuality. Similarly, Group 3 members implied their belief that from motherhood experiences they had learned nurturing requires that control should be *care/fully* kept in balance. They claimed that in the classroom or in a large family such as Yvonne's, management of the group requires one form of control, while nurturing the individual personalities comprising the group required another form. Participants implied that mothers learn the importance of maintaining a balance between these two areas of control while giving precedence to preserving respect for the individuality of the child. They said that they thought the balance needs to be maintained in the mother's own life, too. That is, she should not allow nurture for her own individuality (i.e., what Group 3 named "self-control") become outweighed by other controls over her life.

Summarizing Mother/Teachers' Conceptions of Controlling

Participants claimed that upon becoming mothers they were surprised to find that they could not control what they had previously believed they should. They said that they did not think they had anticipated encountering difficulties in controlling either their children's behaviours and lives or their own lives. Some participants' talk revealed that when mother/teachers perceive they have lost control over their lives, they sometimes blame this on themselves. Moreover, the mother/teachers implied that they believed others would assign them the blame.

Some participants said that prior to motherhood they had associated good teaching and parenting with total control, but from being a mother they had learned that total control was both impossible and undesirable. They claimed, however, that as mothers they had learned some control is required in order for care and nurturing of

their children to occur. In this regard, they made two claims about the purposes of control. One was that they had learned that controlling children's behaviour offers protection for all aspects of a child's well-being (i.e., physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual). The other was that they had come to know that controlling the child's environment is supportive of nurturing the child's individuality.

In addition, however, participants claimed that mothering had taught them that too much control over either the child's behaviour or environment is not conducive to nurturing. Thus, they suggested that most importantly they had learned that controlling should be conceived as a "balancing act." Because their talk implied that there were no set rules on how to achieve the balance, I inferred that the mother/teachers believed mothers develop intuition which tells them what is appropriate and also when and how adjustments are required. Participants implied that their maternal knowledge of control is useful both in the classroom and to their understanding of their students' parents.

Many of the mother/teachers said they thought that as mothers they had experienced strong feelings of lost control when their children entered school. Moreover, they claimed to have learned that mothers are apprehensive about whether control exerted in schools will be negative with respect to nurturing their children. As mother/teachers, participants said that they thought they had an advantage in this regard because they can more easily access information on schools than other mothers. That is, they can gain some access to control because they know the school system, how to talk about it, and therefore how to talk to teachers and other school personnel. They recognize that other mothers do not have this advantage. Thus, the mother/teachers said they are empathetic toward the fears about control experienced by their students' mothers. Finally, because the term control frequently invokes the concept of "total control," participants were fearful of it being used to describe maternal knowledge.

SUMMARIZING THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, I have presented mother/teachers' talk and my discussion of the knowledge of caring, nurturing, and controlling which they claimed they have developed through experiencing these activities during motherhood. From participants' talk, I discerned that they thought of caring as an activity which included nurturing and controlling. Although I discussed them separately, I inferred that participants conceived of the activities as intertwined and inseparable.

Participants talked of caring in its sense of "caring for," or "looking after." Moreover, they conceived of caring as a response to the instinct to protect. They claimed their experiences of motherhood had taught them that caring requires tolerance, which in turn requires the carer to be flexible. The mother/teachers implied that they had learned that carers are required to adapt readily to unpredictable circumstances; to apply flexible thinking to problem solving; and to listen, observe, and receive children with a flexible mind. Their talk on the latter activity suggested that participants believed they had learned that it required them to not only be sensitive to their children's individuality, but also to think carefully about their own thinking and the social values influencing their thinking (that is, to think reflexively). Participants expressed some fears about the use of the terms "caring" and "carer" for describing maternal knowledge. They were apprehensive about "saccharin" conceptions of caring which suggest it involves only sweet kindness and gentleness rather than the firmness which they have learned is necessary for caring to include nurturing. They also feared that the term carer evokes the image of a person -- usually a woman -- who sacrifices her sense of self to the cause of caring for others.

The mother/teachers conceived of nurturing as fostering the optimal development of individuals by focussing on their unique sets of talents and characteristics. Participants expressed the belief that they had learned that the

requirement to nurture a child's social needs (i.e., to develop in ways acceptable according to cultural norms) can interfere with a mother's aims to nurture the uniqueness of the individual. Moreover, they implied that they thought a tension can arise between a mother's values and the characteristics she observes in her child. For instance, the mother's values may provoke her to have ambitions for her child which are incompatible with her child's talents and/or temperament. Participants' talk implied that to resolve these nurturing conflicts mothers learn to apply *care/ful* reflexive thinking.

Participants claimed that their experience of motherhood had taught them to conceive of controlling as an activity which has two main roles: (1) protecting the wellbeing of the whole child; and (2) facilitating a nurturing environment for the child's individuality. They claimed they had learned, however, that in either role too much control is detrimental to nurturing. They spoke, moreover, of having learned that controlling children's behaviours to meet social norms can also be in tension with nurturing. Thus, their talk implied that they conceived of controlling as a *care/ful* balancing act, wherein the required balance is forever changing. From participants' talk, I discerned that intuition assists them in their attempts to achieve this balance. Because controlling is often conceived of in terms of "total control," participants said they were fearful of the word being used to describe maternal knowledge. However, the mother/teachers said that they thought, and they explained why, their maternal knowledge of caring, nurturing, and controlling was useful to their work as teachers.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I have presented mother/teachers' talk about the nature of maternal knowledge and its usefulness to teaching work in classrooms and parent/teacher communication. In Chapter 8, I present talk about their experiences with respect to the acceptance of their maternal knowledge in schools.

Chapter 8

HEARING ABOUT PROBLEMS REGARDING THE RECEPTION AND PRESENTATION OF MATERNAL KNOWLEDGE IN SCHOOLS

In this chapter, I focus mainly on two words which seemed important within mother/teachers' descriptions of their beliefs about the suitability and reception of maternal knowledge in schools. The words are "mothering" and "assertiveness," and each is the focus of one of the two main sections into which this chapter is divided. Within the talk which offered information on "assertiveness," I heard the terms "humility" and "emotion." Because I received these two like "assertiveness" as controversial terms with regard to talk about women and/or knowledge, they also were presented to participants for group discussion. Information on them is included in the section on assertiveness. In each section, the presentation of participants' talk and my responses was composed in the same way as that in the main sections of previous chapters.

MOTHERING

I heard mothering spoken of both explicitly and implicitly during interviews. When participants spoke about the knowledge they had gained through the experience of being a mother, I received this as knowledge developed through mothering. That is, to me "mothering" represented "being a mother." I thought, moreover, that when conceived as the experience of being a mother, mothering should include the caring, nurturing, and controlling activities of motherhood, which I discussed in Chapter 7. So, my purpose in writing about participants' talk on mothering is not to distinguish knowledge gained through mothering from knowledge gained through caring, nurturing,

and controlling. Rather, my aim in this section is to discuss additional knowledge which the mother/teachers said they thought they had gained as mothers. Therefore, I present information which fits into the general category of mothering, but did not fit into the special categories of mothering which I named "caring," "nurturing," and "controlling." I asked participants to think about their conceptions of the word mothering during their group discussions. I discuss first, however, what I heard about mothering during participants' individual interviews and, afterwards, what I heard about mothering during group discussions.

Hearing Interview Talk About Mothering

Because the purpose of my study was to revalue the experience of being a mother and the knowledge gained through this experience, I was anxious to hear positive talk on both mothering and the term "mothering." Since this was not always the case, I had to persuade myself to be receptive to talk on unfavourable conceptions of "mothering." Toward the end of the section, I discuss how unfavourable conceptions of mothering present questions about the feasibility of asserting maternal knowledge in schools. The section begins, however, with a discussion of the knowledge that the mother/teachers' said they had gained through mothering and found valuable to their work as teachers. Altogether, I present information on five topics regarding the knowledge which the mother/teachers said that they thought they had acquired through the experience of being mothers: (1) the knowledge which they take to their classrooms; (2) knowledge which enables them to empathize with their students' parents; (3) knowledge of problem solving and of knowledge seeking; (4) knowledge of the status of mothers; and (5) knowledge of negative conceptions of "mothering."

Knowledge that mother/teachers take to the classroom. All participants said that they believed their mothering experience had provided them knowledge which they found useful as teachers. To represent the range of comments that I heard in this regard, I report those of Ursula, Eva, Nancy, Amy, and Thelma.

J: What feelings do you have about the usefulness of your mothering experience for your teaching?

Ursula:

The experience of being a parent for me was, um, such a huge change that I think that sent me back into the classroom with a very nice feeling of being a parent and being a parent in my classroom. That whole phrase 'in loco parentis,' [meant] that you would bring in a certain amount of love, kindness, caringness into your room ... treat these children as you'd want your own children to be treated ... in a classroom ... with a sense of when it was time to be tough, time to lay down the law, and what kind of atmosphere you wanted to create in the room, um, between the students.

Eva:

I guess having had my own children ... just in looking at the kids' teachers now, and maybe talking to other women who have children and are teachers as well ... I'm just so much more aware of, er, to me now the teacher as a person makes so much more difference, and it isn't so much the subject area that's important. When I taught before I had the children, I didn't think in terms of a warm teacher or a cool teacher. At the time, I think it was just the subject area that was of more concern to me. I didn't look at my own warmth or sincere interest in the kids in the first three years I taught. It was, um, I was more interested I think in, in the subject area and could I get it together.

Nancy:

I think it helps you to see -- I think you have an understanding of the whole child as a person. Because you're with [your children] twenty-four hours a day, you see everything. As a teacher you only see them from nine to three, and maybe only a certain age group, and you don't necessarily see a lot of interaction. I think you have a real appreciation of a, a little person that is very hard to get if you've not been a parent. I think it affects your attitude and your views of children. I think you appreciate learning styles when you have your own children, in a different way. I think that intensifies what you observe in the classroom maybe. I'm not so sure that [the teaching and mothering] are so separate, maybe being a parent makes your powers of observation much more attuned, you know, you're much more attuned to children, well, not just to children, maybe to how people learn.

Amy:

When you have children of your own, uh, even if you only have two children you become so much more aware of children in general because, you know, your children always have other children around so you get to experience so many. The thing that I have noticed is that I've gained so much information on how children relate to others because I can't draw on that very well from my own childhood. I certainly played with friends but it's very hard to remove yourself and look at those situations that happened thirty years ago, forty years ago, and

say, well this is what the problem was. But when as an adult you watch children playing then you can really observe, and that's what you gain as mother.

Thelma:

When I did go back to teaching, I again taught Grade 1, and my daughter was in Grade 1 at the time. So, I had the added outlook of a mother, and I would often discipline them like a mother as opposed to what I'd learned in school about disciplining students in a classroom. The discipline in the classroom after being a mother was much kinder, much more, um, understanding I was more patient. I'd been patient before, but I had a better, I think I had a better idea of the mistakes that people do, um because of, for different reasons: immaturity, um, short attention span, all those kinds of things. When you have all six year olds or you have all sixteen year olds, um, although they maybe in Grade 12, that doesn't necessarily mean they're all Grade 12 students, and we think they are, you see, and because of the way the curriculum is developed -- actually, I'm going to look at this, I'm going to finish my Master's and I'm going to look at curriculum. Anyway, I'm thinking about it. We tend to promote students according to grade level, and they tend to learn that way and I think as a mother, you know a seven year old or a seventeen year old isn't the same in development as another seventeen year old. I mean, you know that, you've seen it, you've experienced it.

From talk such as Ursula's I discerned that mother/teachers have a sense of how they want their own children treated in the classroom, and believe that this provides them a guide for their own treatment of students and the creation of a desirable classroom atmosphere. Eva said that as a mother of schoolchildren she has learned that this desirable atmosphere will be warm. She claimed that her observations of her children's school experiences with "warm" teachers have influenced her to change her own teaching behaviours.

Nancy said that her mothering relationship with her own children has provided her an understanding of the whole child rather than merely the child encountered between nine and three. She said that she thought that gaining such understanding affects mother/teachers' views of children and possibly intensifies what they are able to observe in the classroom. Similarly, Thelma referred to the specific appreciation of individual differences afforded by her mothering experience and said she believed this has made her more patient in the classroom. She expressed, moreover, her belief that her maternal knowledge of individual developmental differences presents her with questions regarding the restrictiveness of grade level curricula. Amy said that she

believes her mothering experience has provided her with knowledge of how children relate to one another. She suggested that this is information which cannot be drawn from one's own childhood. Nancy pointed out that the teacher who is not a mother does not "necessarily see a lot of interaction."

Knowledge which enables mother/teachers to empathize with parents. Olive, Helen, Amy, Laura, and Gwen gave the clearest descriptions of how they thought being a mother has provided them knowledge which enables them to empathize with the parents of their students. This empathy, the descriptions of which I present below, did not include mother/teachers' empathy toward "controlling" as a problem for their students' mothers, which was discussed previously in Chapter 7.

Olive:

I know that it's awful to have your [own] kids go off to school and not be happy. I always want to know if the kids [in my class] are anxious or upset about anything. I like having a close relationship with the parents. Yeah, I think it, it really does help you understand the child.

Helen:

I've made [visits to my student's homes] for two years. I have certainly found it valuable. It just gives an immediate, um, communication between the parents and myself which otherwise I found didn't happen until like two or three weeks into the term, and then it was on a different footing because I'd got to know the child. I remember what it felt like when, um, two of my children had a kindergarten teacher that did [visits], and I just remember the feeling that it left with my husband and myself that this person cared enough to say, 'Hello,' and how nice it was for [my children] because they then knew who they were going to see on the first day at school. And I think I did it as much ... to reduce their anxiety about the first day ... because I've watched my kids [other years] just tie themselves in knots because who is going to be their teacher, what's it going to be like, is she going to be okay, is she not going to be okay -- really worry about it, you know.

Amy:

Because of [my son] having some problems ... I've come to understand parents' fears. So, in my role as a teacher, I can understand now that parents might be fearful of coming in to speak to a teacher. I think being a mother helps tremendously in dealing with the parents. Parents comment to me ... that they know I have children of my own. I think there are other parents who probably feel though, that it's too bad I have children of my own because I'm probably busy with my own children and don't put in the time or the effort, maybe in the classroom.

Lauren:

I think the mother's knowledge is really enriching to a person's life. Yeah, that's the word I've been looking for 'enriching.' Being a mother makes you a more full person. It makes me more sensitive to the needs of children Uh, it also enables me to understand what parents are going through, a little more, and something that never ceases to amaze me -- to know there are differences between how children are with their parents and how they are with me. I have to be constantly remembering that, and sometimes don't, and problems come up and, um, and it's because of different expectations at home and at school. I know the mother expects one thing, and I expect something else because I'm not dealing with one or two children -- I'm dealing with twenty-five. And so I think that has to be verbalized a little more ... there maybe needs to be a little more communication between teachers and parents on a more personal level because it is a personal relationship that you develop with the children.

Gwen:

Around my own experience as a mother, I had a positive set of expectations with regard to interview time and reporting. I never had any fear of meeting parents. I enjoyed parent interviews, I saw them as a very productive time and never had any problems.

J: Would most of the parents have known that you were a mother?

Probably before the end of the interview they did (chuckling). I think what made a difference for them was the sense that I was empathetic towards them because I, too, had experienced what it was like -- I think that I probably put that across to them that I knew what it was like to sit where they were sitting, you know, and I think it was that more than anything else that, er, created the comfort level in an interview.

Helen:

I'm sure that before I had children, and I was young and single and inexperienced, I thought that for mothers, 'Oh, well, it's pretty obvious you just have to (chuckles), well, sit this child down and read with him.' Well, I mean, I'm trying that with [my son]. He's not a fluent reader by any manner of means, and do you think [he] wants to sit down and read this, I mean, there's always something else that's got to -- and it is really hard. So, you just have to have one of them and work through it and you know how hard it can be. How can you expect those other mothers to do it, I mean, if a child has a learning disability and is totally frustrated, how can we expect a mother to work with that child?

Both Olive and Helen claimed that having been a mother of a schoolchild, they knew the discomfort suffered by parents whose children are unhappy or anxious about school and their teachers. They said that they thought such knowledge prompts them to provide opportunities for close communication with their students' parents. Lauren spoke of clear parent/teacher communication as an important means of alleviating the confusion that can arise for parents and teachers because children often behave and

present themselves differently at home than at school. Lauren implied that she learned of this confusion through her own mothering experience. She said that she believes problems arise when occasionally as a teacher she forgets that the confusion can exist. Gwen claimed that knowing what it "was like to sit where [her students' parents] were sitting" enabled her as a teacher to have successful parent/teacher interviews. Helen's talk about her attempts to help her son to read provided an example of how mother/teachers as parents of schoolchildren can gain knowledge that enables them to have more realistic expectations regarding the help that parents can provide for children.

Ways of problem solving and knowledge seeking. The talk of Gwen, Eva, and Coral was representative of the other mother/teachers' talk on their problem-solving behaviours as mothers, but each of the three provided some extra information on this topic.

J: When you had questions regarding your children and their upbringing, how did you seek for answers?

Eva:

I talked to doctors. I talked to friends. I was involved, you know, probably a lot with other mums, um, I had the kids involved in *Time for Twos*, and *Time for Threes*, and you know these other sorts of little activities. So, it was probably just a lot of talking to people. Yeah, it was talking. I can remember my husband being really, and in hindsight, I think maybe this was an insecurity on his part, too, that made him feel that I shouldn't have to have the advice of everybody else to deal with this. You know, it should, I guess come from me or from him or, you know, but why did I have to go outside to get the information I needed to cope with whatever. But where else did I go? I guess I read, um, read books, too. Um, but it was hard.

Coral:

I read books, asked friends, talked things over with friends, asked Mother sometimes, or called friends who had older children and might have had experiences with their own children that could help them suggest answers. Sometimes, I tried the local health unit and I 'phoned friends who were nurses. I tended to consult several sources ... and then use my own common sense. I was teaching fulltime, but in the evenings, or on the weekends, or in the summer, I would take them ... to swimming lessons, to a pre-school activity on a Saturday morning, and so I would be in contact with other mothers. You just talk about your children and their behaviour and how [you] discipline ... you just talk about

those everyday things, and you learn from them, too. I think you learn a lot from each other just talking, and I think this is what we're just finding in schools. If children talk to each other about their experiences they learn so much more than just from the teacher. They learn just by talking to each other. I don't think I was aware of the importance of [talking in learning] until in the last few years of my teaching when the primary programme was being implemented. We're one of the lead schools, and people kept saying, 'We need time to talk -- just to get together to talk about what we're doing in the classrooms, or what they want -- what do they mean by this in the primary programme -- what do they mean by 'curriculum,' what do they mean by whatever it is --- 'play.' We need time to talk about it.' And I thought, 'Gee, we need to talk about it, to get the information across to each other.' And it just made me realize when we were talking about when the kids were younger and I talked to my friends, that's how you learn, as mothers, yes, from each other. Mm-hmm, and this is how I'm doing my classroom this year. When we have journal writing after the weekend, I say, 'Find a partner and tell them about your weekend. Talk about it.' And so they talk back and forth and ask questions, and then they have more to write about in their journals because they talked about it with someone. Because the other person asks questions, they have to explain things, and then they have more to write about.

Gwen:

Last year, I did go the supervisory skills workshop -- best thing I ever did. It was process-oriented, er, talking about ... communication skills. It was to facilitate teachers meeting collegially to discuss and enact their personal professional growth plans. So this workshop was built around how to do that, and it was good because there was a lot of talk in different small groups and we had time to sit and talk about children, and talk about how different ones of us had handled different situations, and that kind of thing. I probably liked that because that's the way most women and mums talk, you know, you get together with other mums and talk about your kids. And I'm chuckling because I see my daughter-in-law sort of rejecting this, and I think I did the same thing when I was a new mum. I didn't want to have anything to do with these coffee-groups and recipe-sharing, not understanding at first that there was much more that went on than that.

In reply to my question about how participants had sought information when trying to solve problems related to their children, most spoke of reading books, but all stressed that talk with other mothers, sometimes in groups, was their chief resource. Eva and Coral mentioned that having children involved in various activities provided opportunity to talk with other mothers. Coral claimed that mothering experience had taught her how valuable talking is to thinking and developing knowledge, and that accordingly she encourages talk between students in her classroom. Both Gwen and Coral implied that because of this mothering experience of problem solving, they prefer professional inservice events which include ample time for discussion. Eva was the only

participant who spoke of her husband's discomfort when she sought advice on mothering from others. Her comments reminded me that often during my mothering experience I heard fathers speak disparagingly or teasingly about mothers talking together in groups. Reflecting upon the earliest years of my own motherhood, I felt uncomfortable also to realize that like Gwen I could identify with her daughter-in-law's rejection of mothers' get-togethers. Listening to other talk from study participants, I found myself having to accept that in many ways being a mother means experiencing a tension regarding the status of both mothers and mothering.

Knowledge about the status of mothers and mothering. The talk of Helen, Ruth, Amy, Doris, Ursula, Pat, and Gwen spoke to me the most strongly on what being a mother teaches mother/teachers about the status of mothers and mothering.

Helen:

I think being a parent at home, being a mother at home, if you're used to being out in the workforce -- well, it's a very, very different lifestyle, and I think that you really need that support. Working outside the home gives you that sense of self and what you're capable of doing. Being a mother of a baby is a very demanding full-time job, but it doesn't give you that same sense of value -- that what you're doing is being recognized by others. You know you're doing a valuable job, but it's not recognized in the outside world as being that valuable. I had so many friends who were not home and were either working mothers or had no children, and their topic of conversation was, 'When are you going back to work,' you know, 'why don't you put him in daycare?' They couldn't appreciate that this was what I had chosen to do as a job.

Ruth:

There's an awful lot of pressure not to be at home. For instance, in the school that I teach in right now -- there's a very high percentage of women who are at home, and we have quite a remarkable volunteer group because of that. And you hear it from them, time and time again, 'I'm just a mum.' I'd really like to think that deep down I never thought that of myself. But there was, like even from [my husband], there was always that sense of 'well, when you go back to work' kind of thing. And, I always found that almost to be saying, 'You're not doing enough,' and [I felt], 'Oh-ooooh, oh-oh! I'm not doing enough!' It does affect you because no-one could deliver the line, 'I'm a homemaker' with quite the same sense of 'I'm an architect,' or 'I'm a teacher,' or whatever. It just doesn't seem to -- even in our own eyes -- even though we work amazingly hard, it never seems esteemed to be able to say, 'Well, I'm working in the home.'

Amy:

I think some people feel very comfortable going through life saying, 'I'm a mother, and I'm a homemaker, and that's my role in life.' I never did. Even though I respect people who choose to do that, I seemed to feel that it wasn't good enough for me. We'd go to a party, say, with people that [my husband] worked with and I'd be meeting some of the wives for the first time, and somebody would ask, 'What do you do?' I know I found it very uncomfortable to say, 'I stay at home.' You get this comment back, 'Oh, you don't work!' Well, I do! (Chuckling) I work really hard every day from six 'clock in the morning! I think it really affects your self-concept. I can remember people coming to the door, for example to do census-taking or if I had to fill out a form to apply for a mortgage or something -- that little slot 'occupation' really bothered me. I would sometimes put in 'teacher' even though at the time I wasn't one. I can remember filling in 'homemaker' a couple of times, and consciously saying, 'Now this is what you are, Amy, you should be proud of it.' Yet, it didn't feel quite as good as putting, 'teacher.' People feel you don't need training [for motherhood], and the money, too, definitely is a factor. I think that in our society, we have felt so strongly that this is the mother's job, but not 'job' in a positive sense. The other thing ... it's the one occupation that it's extremely hard to quit. Any other occupation that you ever take in life -- as long as you can find something else so that you can support yourself -- you can always quit. And when you become a mother, there are days when you think, 'I don't like this job, I really would like to turn in my resignation and walk away, '(laughing) but you don't have that option.

Doris:

I couldn't stand being stuck at home, I knew that I could not stay home indefinitely. There was a very big conflict there. At the same time, I had this very strong feeling, and I still do -- well, I was very lucky that I was financially able to fulfil my needs without subtracting what I believed were my responsibilities towards my children. I managed to marry the two nicely by having the forty percent job and substituting. Before that, I enjoyed helping at whatever [the school] needed, book sales, and all that kind of stuff. I enjoyed that 'cos that's essentially part of the community, you get a feel for the school and the community and that adds another dimension to your life, you know, at a personal level, [and] visible support for children's activities at school -- a caring.

Ursula:

When I was home from work with this baby, all of a sudden I didn't know what to do with myself. I thought, 'All my friends work.' So, I used to think, 'Gee, I'm home! And nobody else is! What do I do now?' I think education creates a tremendous rise in the expectation for your life. An educated woman who ... thinks of herself as a person in the world ... and wants to have a role outside of the home ... like the head of the PTA or whatever. I see almost all of the women who don't work in my neighbourhood they're either on charity boards or they are running, um, important groups in the community. They are very active in some way outside of the home where they have a real role to play that takes them away from the home and takes them out into the world where they are running meetings, raising funds, or doing something valuable that gives them a feeling of independence, and authority, and a sense of using their skills. Being a mother is a very real role, but I think [they seek] a second real role. I think that they want to be perceived as having something else other than the family, something that reinforces their sense of themselves because I think people get lost. I found out after three years, I wasn't feeling in sort of in fighting form to go back to work

any more. There's a real erosion of, of your sense of who you are outside of your home. You really feel, um, strange going back to work. And I'd worked for years, I'd worked for many years since I was twenty. And then to go back out and work after being at home, you really feel (brief pause) a bit, um like take a deep breath and plunge in the cold water and it's going to be hard and tiring and a bit of a shock.

Pat:

Something that happens to mothers that I hadn't expected -- I see it happening to a friend of mine now -- she's got three young children at home -- I think you lose your self-confidence really fast being at home with children. I did even though I was working. I think that I didn't expect that to happen to me. But my, er, my feeling of self-worth outside of the home [made me doubt], 'Can I continue to do this? Can I do this job? They're younger, they're smarter, they're better.' When in fact they weren't! I see it happening to a friend of mine who's home with her children. I seriously doubt that she's -- she has one more full year at home with her youngest child -- but I seriously doubt when she gets ready to go back to work, she's going to be able to. The paycheque means so much to us, you know, and you're not paid for work you do in the home, it's just 'what I do.' The fact that this woman cooks three meals a day, keeps an immaculate home, does all the sewing, cans foods, takes care of three little girls plus the kids she babysits, provides a social life for her husband and herself. Yes, she provides the social life, he doesn't. And she doesn't see any of that as having worth because she's not earning a paycheque.

Gwen:

While I was going through the experience with [my son], er, particularly in elementary school, I noticed the awareness in the literature on learning disabilities, er, the notion of the mother as the expert on the child, as a possessor of expert knowledge. That was the first place that I came across that concept, and to me it was a real lifesaver. I really grabbed on to that for my own self-esteem, you know, because at that time, I was buying into the notion of, well, you're only a valuable person if you have this or that other qualification, and, not, you know, of there being any inherent value in parenting.

Helen claimed that being a mother is not recognized as valuable in the "outside world," being a mother does not give one a sense of value. She recalled believing that her friends did not approve of her choice to stay home and mother. According to Ruth, "pressure not to be at home" is a feature of our society. It prompts mothers to devalue their role, and is evident in their frequently spoken remarks, such as, "I'm just a mum." Like Ruth, I realized that "I would really like to think ... that I never thought that of myself," but had to admit upon reflection that I did. Thinking reflexively, moreover, I found myself encountering the irony that while the purpose of my study is to revalue the

experience of mothering, it also represents part of my own ongoing effort to raise myself above the stigma which I feel became attached to me when I became a mother.

Amy's talk illustrates how she considered that this stigma produced a conflict for her because it made her feel ashamed of a role which she thought she should feel proud to occupy. Amy also implied that because mothering is an extremely hard job to quit, "being a mother can feel like a trap." This feeling seemed also to be reflected in Doris' claim that she "couldn't stand being stuck at home." She also expressed her belief that such feelings present a conflict for mothers which makes it important for them to find a role in the community. Ursula proposed that taking on community roles reinforces mothers' "sense of themselves." She implied her belief that education has created for women an expectancy of opportunities for "independence and authority." Since these are unavailable in the mother role, mothers must seek them in roles outside of the home. Ursula said that she thought being a mother eroded her sense of a public self to the extent that it reduced her self-confidence when she first returned to teaching. Pat expressed the same belief. She suggested that in a society which measures value on a monetary scale, unpaid work equals valueless work, which consequently devalues unpaid mothering. Gwen reported her former understanding that a valuable occupation was one which required a recognized qualification. She implied that because mothering had no such requisite, she had not considered it to be a valuable occupation. Moreover, she had not realized that mothering could provide knowledge until she read about "the mother ... as a possessor of expert knowledge" in the literature on learning disabilities.

Negative perceptions of mothering. Thelma, Amy, and Trudy each talked about negative perceptions they had of specific aspects of mothering.

Thelma:

My children were more important to me than my career, although my career was important. I mean mothering has been Number One in a sense, whereas, now with them being 18 and 20, I'm into my career. I love teaching, I love all the things that are going on in it, and I don't want to be a mother 100 percent. I want

to put more time into developing [my career] between now and the time when I'm fifty. Now I feel that it's my time, but I can't let go. I can't get back to, I can't, um, I'm not so sure whether I've raised dependent children, unknowingly, and made me dependent on them. I'm not so sure that I haven't set up some kind of subliminal, or whatever, dependencies unknowingly.

Amy:

I think maybe we do have a picture of a father as the one who goes out to work and makes the money. The mother is just accepted -- like the word 'mother' seems to most people to just mean nurturing, you know, they say, 'It's motherhood and apple pie' ... all lumped together. If the mother is a very nurturing woman, it's kind of like of course she is -- that's what's expected. But I think as mothers, especially if you get together as a group, you often see these mothers who are so protective of their children and you hear other people making little snide comments about them. They remind me of the mother hen who got her feathers ruffled because something happened to her chicks (laughs). And I think I made a decision that I didn't ever want to appear that way.

Trudy:

Some of the people at work have jokingly said to me, 'Now stop it, you're mothering,' and, er, I've laughed. I guess it's sort of when one of the students is not feeling very well, I will take the student down to the office and not just say, 'Go to the office!' I will extend the extra. It's maybe 'cos I think that if my daughter wasn't feeling very well, it would be nice if her teacher did that little extra. I think maybe just the TLC, a little bit more. But, I really wouldn't want my child to be mollycoddled and mothered [at school], I figure that's my job. 'Cos I've known teachers that have done that, and I think that the teaching role has almost been secondary. They've -- I'm thinking especially at the, the younger levels where they have kind of mollycoddled the children ... where I've seen teachers that, well, 'You don't have to do that. That's okay, don't you worry about that now. We'll learn our tables later.' As a teacher that's not my style. It's just that, 'You've got a job to do, let's get it done.' You see, what I've seen is kind of mollycoddling rather than what I think mothering is, uh, being supportive but setting goals and giving direction.

Upon commencing the study, I had not envisioned it would require me to think about negative aspects of mothering. However, comments made by Thelma, Sharon, and Trudy pressured me to do so. I felt bound to recognize that participants were saying that they believed mothering can be overdone, and as discussed in Chapter 7, when mothering becomes "mollycoddling," it can represent the opposite of nurturing. I realized, therefore, that if mothering is commonly conceived as mollycoddling or overprotectiveness, the word could present difficulties for attempts to promote the value of maternal knowledge. Thus, I decided that mothering should be presented for group discussion.

Learning About Conceptions of Mothering from Group Discussions

The reports from all three of the discussion groups indicated that negative conceptions of the term mothering were salient in participants' minds.

- Gp1: We asked whether 'mothering' is the same thing as nurturing? We tended to see it in a negative context in some sense, you know? (Greeted by chuckling from several members of the whole group) We thought maybe that was something to do with the, uh, social definition today, you know, of 'mothering.' The whole context of the word, it seems it has this kind of extreme, um, you're overdoing the nurturing bit. (Interrupted by listeners' comments of agreement). Yeah, the current meaning is as if, is of a kind of overprotectiveness -- it's good but it's also too much, you know, the limits are being exceeded. But then again, we could see 'mothering' from another side: Does it mean, uh, 'mothering,' the idea of fullness, of the warmth and the caring, of the chocolate chip cookies there at the end of the school day for your child. That's mothering as well, so, both meanings. And we questioned, 'Do we change mothering according to the age of the child?'
- Gp2: We had 'mothering' as a verb, and the first word that came out of my mouth was 'smothering.' (Greeted by laughter from listeners). We associated 'mothering' with doing everything, um, at times with, with being perhaps overprotective, with dependency and creating dependency in your family, um, you know with even your husband. I mean, people mother their husbands or whatever (chuckles). Um, we also saw 'mothering' as having an honourable heritage, and then a, a real tradition of sort of the mother's day, sort of the whole sentimental business of mothering was really considered to be, um, we thought of postwar life in the '50's, and there was all of that sort of thing. The attitude apparently was, er, it was not sort of the modern feminist view of a woman. And that, too, has these echoes that go with it that are not always that positive, er, that ['mothering'] is something that can be made fun of so people say, 'I'm a just a mother,' 'I'm just a housewife,' and the word 'just' is always in front of it. So somehow as an identity, as a career, as a role -- 'mothering' is not quite, um, the right word, or the word of choice for description right now. I mean, it's just that 'mothering' was not a word that we, that we had, um, too many good things to say about.
- Gp3: We came up with horrible things like 'mothering' was the orchestration, it was like the postcard -- the postwar postcards were just zipping through my mind with all these images of wonderful ladies in those aprons and, you know, pulling cookies out of the oven with that big smile. (Greeted by chuckling and laughter around the table). Anyways, it was very negative for us. It was all the 'shoulds.' I am the 'good mother' because I do this, and I'm trying to produce good children because, you know, this is what we should be doing. Somebody said something about it having an honourable heritage, and societal norms, and, you know, I thought that was just profound, uh, very much so. There was one final statement that might make other people laugh whose children like my kids are younger -- because I laughed when they said this -- one of the things that we talked about was 'pushing the babies out of the nest!'

Within the group reports, I discerned three categories of negative conceptions that participants associated with mothering. In the first, mothering was conceived of as overprotection and/or overnurturing; in the second, mothering was sentimentalized and devalued; and in the third, the vulnerability of mothering to social definition was revealed. Using these categories as my guide, I sought further understanding of participants' conceptions of mothering by examining the transcripts of the small group discussion, and I present the findings in three subsections each of which addresses one of the three categories.

Mothering as overprotection or overnurturing. When the word mothering was introduced in each of the discussion groups, it was received with comments, such as, "It reminds me of a bossy little girl who organizes everybody else"; "It's kissing him goodbye in front of the school when he's in Grade 10"; "It's being overprotective"; and "I don't like the word!" In one group, participants pondered, "Is it the same as nurturing, or is it driving them [i.e., one's children] crazy?" The group members recalled children's pleas, such as, "Stop mothering me!" They said that such appeals are addressed to mothers who take care of "more physical needs than necessary ... especially when their children are older," and they decided that currently mothering connotes "overdoing the nurturing bit." In another group, participants decided that mothering is reacted to negatively in the workplace when it is conceived as, "the smothering kind of thing, doing everything for a person, running around after them and picking up socks." Participants said that they thought it healthy to be aware of and to disapprove of "doing for children what they can very well do for themselves," but they regretted that mothering is commonly thought of only in terms of this type of behaviour.

The members of one group claimed that "there are not negative connotations to 'nurturing,' but there are to 'mothering.'" They claimed that this was "sad" and "awful." Moreover, they all approved a member's suggestion that the value discrepancy exists

because "you can apply 'nurturing' to the actions of the male of the species, but you cannot really apply 'mothering.'" Seeking further explanations for the negative conceptions of mothering, the group members thought next about sentimentality.

Mothering sentimentalized and devalued. By recalling the name Mothering Sunday (i.e., the day when the church honoured and celebrated the mother's role), the mother/teachers in one group said that they thought "mothering" has an "honourable heritage," but "the word has degenerated over time." They claimed that faced with sentimental images of mothering such as that portrayed by today's version of Mothers' Day, its greetings cards, and its gifts, "modern women are feeling 'I'm not going to be pinned down to that.'" And this attitude, suggested the group members, has prompted women themselves to devalue mothering, so that a mother who is not also working outside of her home will refer to herself as "just a mother" or "just a housewife." Yet they claimed that if a mother is working outside of the home rather than mothering fulltime, "[she's] not a real mother" according to societal norms.

Mothering and societally prescribed norms. Group 3 members claimed that the imposition of societal norms presents many "shoulds" to mothers. They said that in the term mothering they could hear the "shoulds," and thus conceived of it negatively. The two group members whose children are adults spoke of mothers being required to have a goal of independence for their children and referred to preparing them to "be pushed out of the nest." Yvonne, the mother of six, however, explained that although her children -- all unmarried, so far -- live away from the family home, there are mothering "shoulds" which persist in plaguing her. She discussed how she finds herself caught between trying to assert that "it is her time now" to grow and learn in directions of her choice, and coping with her adult children's expectations regarding the "shoulds" of mothering. For instance, she noted that they still expect the family birthday parties and

holiday celebrations, which even with their assistance required her "to orchestrate this huge thing." She claimed that

I'm resisting now, but it's taking me a long time -- and the past year if you were to survey several of my children, you would find that they would say, 'She's not doing a good job of mothering.' I've had nights of crying because I've thought I'm not doing this properly -- I haven't got it together. I should be -- all those 'shoulds' and 'rights', and the whatever.

Yvonne's words prompted me to reflect upon my own experiences of trying to redirect my life and energies, as a mother of two young adults. Although I would have preferred otherwise, I found feelings of doubt and guilt similar to those Yvonne mentioned. I recalled many instances that aroused such feelings, such as having a son needing me to drive him to an important appointment that he feared he would not otherwise make on time, and my not having the time spare to help him because I had a course paper to finish. This prompted me to think that the societal norm that prescribes for "real mothers" the duty of paying fulltime attention to family and home is sufficiently strong to persist in affecting mothers' perceptions of themselves even when their children are no longer at home fulltime.

Mothering as warmth. Although negative conceptions of mothering predominated, none of the group discussions was entirely void of positive conceptions. Sometimes these were represented briefly when negative conceptions prompted participants to comment, for instance, "that is really sad," or "isn't that awful." In Group 1, a younger mother said she was surprised that negative conceptions of mothering were the first to come to mind for other group members. She stated that first and foremost, mothering represented "warmth and nurturing" to her, and that it was a term she would use to describe the teachers which she prefers for her children. She implied that having heard the other conceptions, however, she recognized their prevalence too.

Summarizing Mother/Teachers' Conceptions of Mothering

Thinking of mothering as experiencing being a mother, I heard participants' say during their interviews that they believed mothering had provided them knowledge which is helpful to their teaching work. They claimed that mothering had improved both their understanding of their students and their ability to communicate and empathize with their students' parents. The mother/teachers also claimed that through mothering they had learned that participating in ample amounts of talking in groups is valuable to knowledge seeking, decision making, and problem solving, but that the method may not be approved by either men or women. This was not the only aspect of mothering, however, which I heard participants say they believed to be afforded low status and approval. Participants claimed that simply "being a mother" is not recognized as valuable in the world outside of the home, and this prompts mothers to apologize for "just being a mum."

During interviews, some mother/teachers' comments implied that they sometimes conceived of mothering as overprotectiveness, or the creating of dependencies in either or both the mother and child. Because the mother/teachers spoke positively, however, about the value which the knowledge they associated with mothering has for them as teachers, I was disturbed by their negative conceptions of mothering. I would have liked to ignore them, but decided rather that they indicated "mothering" should be presented for group discussion. I hoped that positive conceptions of the word would dominate the discussions, but to my dismay this was not so. The predominant conception among participants was clearly negative. They said that they thought mothering was "not the word of choice" for applying to descriptions of maternal knowledge. This prompted me to consider that negative connotations of mothering might adversely affect the image of mothers in schools, and the reception of their maternal knowledge.

ASSERTIVENESS

While listening to the mother/teachers answering my questions about the reception of their maternal knowledge in schools, I noticed that often they spoke mostly about concerns regarding assertiveness. So, while listening for themes related to reception, I discerned instead themes related to assertiveness. The terms "assertive" and "assertiveness" caused me discomfort when I first began to hear them. If mother/teachers talked for instance about wanting to be more assertive, I received this as contrary to the maternal. I thought of it as aggressive or pushy. But since the participants were suggesting that they would like to think they could be assertive but sometimes were unsure of how they could be, I wondered what part was played in this puzzle by negative conceptions of assertiveness. Thus, I listened during interviews for talk on assertiveness and surrounding issues. Some of the talk implied to me that varying conceptions of "humility" and "emotion" might be increasing the tension that "assertiveness" seemed to present to the mother/teachers. So I decided to present these words along with "assertiveness" for group discussion. I report that discussion at the end of this section, but first I present what I learned about assertiveness, humility, and emotion, during participants' interviews.

Hearing Interview Talk About Assertiveness

During interviews, I heard mother/teachers talk about both the assertiveness of their maternal knowledge and related issues. First, however, I report information that the talk provided on why and when the mother/teachers implied they would want to assert their maternal knowledge. I divide my report on this topic into six sub-topics: (1) hearing about mother/teachers' interactions with their children's teachers; (2) hearing about maternal knowledge in comparison to professional knowledge; (3) hearing about

the reception of mother/teachers' maternal knowledge when in their teacher role; (4) hearing about keeping quiet about being a mother in school; (5) hearing about what can be asserted; and (6) hearing about the impact of emotion on mother/teachers' assertiveness.

Hearing about mother/teachers' interactions with their children's teachers. In Chapter 7, I discussed mother/teachers' claim that "knowing the system" provides them an advantage in their relationships with their children's teachers. To illustrate the claim, I reported the words of Amy, Helen, Yvonne, and Nancy. In this section, because I discuss participants' claims that when interacting with their children's teachers, being "in the system" can also be a disadvantage, I report comments on this from the same four mother/teachers. But to these, I add Trudy's comments which offered a slightly different perspective.

J: In your interactions with your children's teachers, counsellors, and so on, how do you feel the knowledge that you've gained as a mother has been received?

Helen:

You know, my child comes first, but because I am in the teaching profession I think it sometimes is very threatening for, um, a teacher to have a teacher's child in the class. And if things are not working I think it's -- that's when it's a very difficult situation. I think it puts the other teacher in a very difficult position. And so, that's when -- it's only happened I think twice that there's been anything that we've had to deal with -- but at those times I withdraw from that and [my husband] looks after it. That's the time he goes in.

Amy:

When my children were in the earlier years, I felt that I didn't want to tell [their teachers] right away that I was a teacher. Now, usually they know I'm a teacher because they've seen me in the school or, or because I'm working they find out what my occupation is. But early on, I remember making the decision to kind of keep that hidden because I remembered as a teacher, uh, sometimes feeling a little uncomfortable if I realized the parent was a teacher and wondering if they were watching me a little more closely.

Yvonne:

I found that it was sometimes difficult because living and working in the community, everybody -- most everybody -- knew I was a teacher because ours is a small district. Um, I didn't want anybody to feel that because of my teaching knowledge I was, er, coming on heavily or laying a trip on them and their, er,

expertise and their assessment of the child's situation. So, if anything, I was aware of trying to back off and be more, um, the word that comes to mind is -- kind of -- deprecating. I think that's a bit strong, but I certainly didn't come through forcefully, like, 'I as a teacher would do it this way and I don't know why you're not doing it that way,' and so on.

Nancy:

I'm not just a mother, I'm also a teacher and that makes it more difficult because I do have the power to intimidate -- really -- it's the one thing I've really found out. I mean, I don't use it, I'm not like that, but I do have that power. I, I could use it if I were that type of person.

Trudy:

I've actually had the teacher say to me, 'Well, you're in the business, too,' and that annoys me. It's like, um, I remember her saying, you know, it was a situation -- how can I explain this -- she was asking me to be, I guess (brief pause), more understanding, no, more forgiving of a situation because I'm in the system. And I didn't think I should have been more forgiving because I was in the system. If anything, I would have been less forgiving because I know the system. When I'm [contacting] the school regarding my child, I want to be thought of as a parent first rather than as a teacher.

In reply to my question about the reception of their maternal knowledge by their children's teachers, participants gave mainly indirect answers. A few spoke briefly about their maternal knowledge having been received. However, both they and the other participants spoke mostly on what they thought about the context of the interaction; it was a potentially threatening encounter between a teacher and a mother who was also a teacher. Like Helen, a couple of other mother/teachers spoke of avoiding the interaction by requesting their husbands to speak to the teacher when there was a problem in school. According to Nancy and Yvonne, the situation is difficult because it gives them "the power to intimidate" other teachers and they are aware that they "try to back off." Their comments implied that they thought professional loyalties can prevent mother/teachers "from coming through forcefully" with their children's teachers.

From the replies, I inferred that the mother/teachers thought that interactions with their children's teachers present them with a different and larger concern than whether or not their maternal knowledge is received. Many participants' talk implied their belief that during the interactions, their main concern is how to avoid or resist

being assertive about their professional knowledge. Trudy implied that she believed, moreover, that having professional knowledge can be a problem if her child's teacher perceives it as something to take advantage of. For instance, Trudy explained how one of her daughter's teachers expected her to be "more forgiving of a situation" than a parent who is not "in the system." She stated that this type of behaviour annoys her and that, if anything, having professional knowledge would make her less forgiving.

Together the talk reported in this section and in the Chapter 7 section on "controlling," implies that the mother/teachers find "being in the system" is a mixed blessing. As discussed in Chapter 7, the mother/teachers claimed that "being in the system" offers them a better opportunity than other parents to understand what their children's teachers are talking about. However, as the talk in this section shows, mother/teachers also claimed that "being in the system" presents a problem during interactions with their children's teachers. They implied that it constrains their opportunity to assert themselves as parents who have both maternal and professional teaching knowledge.

Hearing about mothering knowledge in comparison to professional knowledge.

On the value of maternal knowledge to their work as teachers, the talk of Thelma, Olive, Gwen and Lauren was typical of that contributed by other participants.

J: How would you compare the knowledge that you've gained from your mothering experience with professional knowledge, for instance, the kind that's made available through inservice teacher development.

Thelma:

I think there's a merging, You tend to -- well, teaching in a sense is, is -- you've gone through the training, right, so you've been trained to teach, and, um, mothering is, well there's absolutely no training -- not like teaching. But I think you blend both of them. As my children moved up in grades, so did my teaching. Now when I started teaching, I started teaching in elementary then I went to Grade 5 or 6 and later high school. I've moved up as my children have -- I just realized that now.

Olive:

I've always taught since [my sons] have been very young, and so, I really I can't separate the two. I mean the teaching is, as you know, it's a lifestyle, it's not a nine-to-five thing, it's a forever and always, just like being a mother. I think [my maternal and my professional knowledge] are so intertwined, um, because for both the focus is children, the focus is learning, nurturing, um, and I think I'd find it extremely difficult to say one was more important than the other. I mean, obviously for me, uh, being a mother is far more important to me and more satisfying, I think, because I have a lot more control than being a teacher. I mean, I love being a teacher and so forth, but with my own kids I really can see the results of our efforts with them. So both sets of knowledge if you like, just very much complement each other. I think the mothering might influence the teaching more because, obviously, it's a much more emotional experience, very much more subjective and, you know, your children are with you for the majority of a day, but your students are only in school with you for five hours. The parenting part is a larger proportion, too, because of the closeness that you have with your own children.

Gwen:

I don't think you can really compare them because I think that you have, um, you have that [motherhood] experience as part of you. It's something that's internalized and you bring that with you to any inservice that you go to, I mean it's always back there, you know, popping up and interacting with the stuff that you get from other workshops, so, it's it's an accrual, er, of knowledge.

Lauren:

I think it's so important to have both, to have motherhood, and the education, and the experience as a teacher. I think it's very valuable to have all of that put together, it's like a complete package. Whereas, with one or the other missing, there is something missing -- there's a hole that isn't filled. The person has difficulty being a 'well-balanced whole person.'

The opinions that maternal knowledge and professional knowledge are difficult to compare because "you blend both of them," you "can't separate the two ... they're intertwined," and they "complement each other," were typical of those expressed by all participants. Gwen said that she thought her maternal knowledge had become internalized, "always back there" and "popping up and interacting with the stuff you get from ... workshops." Like these four mother/teachers, none of the participants discredited professional knowledge even when, like Olive, they said they thought that their maternal knowledge might have the stronger influence. Like Lauren, all spoke of the importance of the complementary relationship of the two, although not in quite such graphic terms as hers. Because of these stated beliefs about maternal knowledge

being an important complement to teacher's professional knowledge, I found it disturbing to hear the mother/teachers talk about features of their teaching world which make it difficult for them to assert their maternal knowledge. Before discussing these, I report whether or not participants said they believed their maternal knowledge is received in the schools where they teach.

Hearing about the reception of mother/teachers' maternal knowledge in the schools where they teach. The only participants who said that they had experienced a positive reception for their maternal knowledge as teachers were those who worked and met with only primary teachers. Otherwise, participants claimed their maternal knowledge was ill-received, and the most detailed commentaries on this were spoken by Thelma, Helen, and Nancy.

Thelma:

J: When you returned [to teaching] how did you expect the school to receive the knowledge that you had gained from being a mother?

Well, I expected them to receive it not with open arms but with some type of, um, I don't even know if the word's respect, um, I, don't know exactly how.

J: A recognition?

Yes, recognize that I have more than just teacher knowledge. I have a, you know, an additional area that I'm bringing into teaching, as well. But it's not received that way! No! No, it's ignored. Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, it's not important -- intuitive! Too intuitive! That's a motherhood issue! So, anything that falls into those categories has to be motherhood. (Laughs) It's not scientifically valid and there's no research. So, we're dealing with men's, a man's world. I mean, at the junior secondary level, I mean, it's male driven, the ideas and the concepts and the set-up. Women like a lot of discussion, and I think sometimes men only like so much and that's it. I mean, 'let's get to the point, we want the outcome, we've got to move on.' And I think, most women like to sit and discuss things. Sometimes they can get too discussy and lose the point, but I think the idea of discussing is, is more significant for women. I think the process, the interaction of ideas and looking at options, looking at different alternatives are more important because there may not be just one right answer. So, women for the most part know, and this may go back to motherhood -- knowing that there's not one way to raise children -- I mean our mothering world is not just one way, it just doesn't operate in one way, it's a bit of a mess, you know, and a discussion is a bit of a mess sometimes because there's no right answer.

J: If you're in a staff meeting, do you find that you can bring the knowledge that you feel you've gained from motherhood into discussions?

I do, I do. I've probably developed an armoured shield. Um, how do I do it? I bring it into the staff meetings and into discussions or committee meetings, um, with some forethought, um, because I'm not always sure how it will be received. So, I think about it, I mean, I just don't blurt it out -- whatever it is that I'm, I'm bringing. I just bring it forth as non-threateningly as I can otherwise a lot of people will turn right off because they categorize statements or issues or ideas as 'motherhood issue -- not valid,' (speaking in a highly disdainful tone) like we all tend to do because of our assumptions.

J: You think they find motherhood issues threatening?

Yes, because it represents an unusual point of view or a perspective on a topic that's not how they would ordinarily look at it. So, maybe it's not so much threatening as different or disturbing. It would be like a paradigm shift in some senses, looking at a traditional problem in a different way. They don't like change. And it seems sometimes that women just approach things differently -- we've got a co-ed staff and both sides are very strong, but when women are speaking at the staff meeting or whatever, it, it's just a different way of going about an issue, and it's amazing how some of the staff members don't listen. They probably never listened to their mothers, they don't listen to their wives, why are they going to listen to a female colleague. And I'm sure some women do the same thing.

Helen:

I think initially when I went back to work, something would come up and I would think about something from my mothering experience but I wouldn't necessarily say it, and now I'm more prepared to say it. I think that I have become more verbal probably about my feelings on how both children and parents are treated -- what our job is in regard to communication. So I probably have had some impact on, uh, my views probably have been received by certain members of the staff and either dismissed or appreciated. I, yeah, appreciated by some and, and used by some. I know that it's important to value -- again -- the parents, the children, and I think that has come from my having had my own family. And some of the feelings that I have developed over the years or the thoughts and ideas, um, I'm feeling more able to express now when something comes up.

J: What is the make-up of the group in which you meet in school? Is it a primary group, or do you have primary and intermediate staff meetings together?

Our staff meetings are whole school, which is primary and intermediate together. I think most of the discussion probably where I really talk about how I'm feeling about those things ... would not be in a staff meeting but would be done in a smaller group meeting -- it's mostly with the primary people I'm working with. The experience or the knowledge that you feel you've gained through mothering, it wouldn't be valued by other members of staff, at a staff meeting. I think that even teachers who are mothers often don't want to relate to that in something like a staff meeting. It wouldn't be considered a valid thing to bring up, I think because it's teachers viewing themselves as professionals and not, um, relating to their mothering side.

Nancy:

J: For [the siblings' lateness] problem, did you and your partner talk to the other teacher about how you saw the problem as mothers?

Well, we actually get along very well, so we do say what we think. She knows, but, um, she would gripe to us, well, we all gripe to each other about things. But I think some of the things that she gripes about -- things that bother her -- I personally think they come from the fact that she isn't a parent herself. And you really, you know, can't go up to her and say, you know, you can't say that to somebody. In some ways it's not always fair to say, it's almost, I don't know quite how to put it, but it can be very insulting to say to somebody, 'Well, what do you know, you're not a parent' -- even though it may not come out in that tone of voice, but the implication may be there. It's a very sensitive sort of topic. But she would think anyway -- and I know this because she's said it -- that, um, there's no reason why a parent couldn't do it right.

Thelma said that she thought her maternal knowledge would be categorized in staff-meetings as intuitive, consequently non-scientific, and therefore dismissed. She explained, moreover, that in her secondary school the favoured discussion style could not accommodate the process required for discussing maternal knowledge. She said that she thought that some school staffs might find maternal knowledge disturbing because it requires them to "look at a traditional problem in a different way," and so most often "staff members don't listen." Helen said she believed that the group of primary teachers with whom she works do receive her maternal knowledge now, although she did not feel prepared to present it even to them when she first returned to teaching. In the whole school (primary and intermediate) staff meetings, however, Helen claimed her maternal knowledge is not received. She added that even mother/teachers there "often don't want to relate to it," and she said that she thought this is because in a whole school forum, they prefer to identify with their professional rather than their maternal role. Nancy's talk suggested that the rejection of maternal knowledge can be found in teacher-to-teacher interactions outside of events such as staff meetings and committees. In Nancy's story of the chronically late siblings, which was previously told in Chapter 7, she said that she regarded it would have been difficult for her partner and herself to use their maternal knowledge to help change the other teacher's view of the lateness. This

she claimed was because it is "not always fair" and can be insulting to non-parents to suggest that as a parent you are privileged to information that they are not. This stated belief of mother/teachers that they should hesitate to assert their knowledge rather than risk offending non-mothers is referred to again in the next section wherein other possible barriers to mother/teachers' assertiveness are discussed. Among these is the apparent advisability of not parading oneself as a mother among teachers.

Hearing about keeping quiet with respect to being a mother and having maternal knowledge. A variety of concerns in this regard were represented in the words of Amy, Olive, Pat, Yvonne, and Gwen.

Amy:

A couple of years ago when I first went back to teaching ... I was very conscious of the fact that I had been a mum for years and I really hadn't needed to try hard to look like I was a professional, but I must now. I think ... to some people motherhood is considered to be almost like a disease or a health problem because it is possibly going to affect your job consistency and your ability to come to work. You know, I notice with the women at school who have children, they come to school when they're obviously not well, and I have done it myself ... They drag themselves in because they're so afraid their child's going to get sick and they'll have to stay at home. And if you're trying to work -- especially as a full-time teacher, which is a very time consuming job, and very emotionally consuming job, as well, and you're also trying to deal with young schoolchildren at home, uh, I see people ... and I am in this role, and this year, really battling with it. I would have to say [at school] that I couldn't join a particular committee that I was interested in because it conflicted with my daughter's piano lesson and I had to be there to drop her off or pick her up -- and all these kind of activities. I find I am very conscious ... when I am in my teaching role -- particularly with people who don't have children themselves -- that I should try not to say, 'Well, I can't do that because it will conflict with my child's schedule.' I would feel quite comfortable saying to the principal, 'I can't go to that meeting because I already have a dentist appointment at that time, or ... I'm going to a workshop,' but I find it very hard to say, 'Well, I can't come to that meeting because my child has a soccer practice and I want to go and watch him.' Yet that should be as valid. But I think there's been a lot in the media saying things like people don't want to hire mothers because mothers want to take time off when their children are sick, and mother's first emotional choice is to be with their family. So, I think that we try twice as hard not to look as though we're doing that.

Olive:

I was always very conscious of the fact when I was teaching that after school I was going to contribute the same amount as a non-mothering colleague. I really made a conscious effort to get involved in committees and made sure even when

I was half-time, that I was doing my share or more because I didn't want to be perceived as sort of doing teaching just to make money. You know, I felt very strongly that I'm a professional, and I have certain responsibilities. And I wanted to be involved -- I've always wanted to be involved in what's going on. I find with colleagues that I have now, who are mothers and are working half-time or part-time that they don't contribute the same amount to committees and so forth. Maybe it's just the individuals involved here, but they seem much more aware that they are sixty percent or they are fifty percent, and they're only doing so much. But I think, if anything, for women who are mothers, it's just like going into a new field or whatever, you feel like you have to work twice as hard to not let down the side down as it were, and to prove that just because you have a family doesn't mean you're any less committed to your job.

Pat:

I hope that we've come far enough that we women can use our home knowledge in the school and have it received as not just, 'Oh, there she goes again! That woman's talking!' I hope we've got beyond that, I don't know that we have entirely, but I hope that we can talk as teacher/parents and be appreciated. Although, I was complaining last year about being overworked, I was doing all this stuff ... and I had, I had my children at home to think about, too, and I was warned by another mother/teacher not to say I have to think about the home too. Keep the home and the work separate! Don't bring them together! Don't whine about how much work you've got to do at home! That's separate! And you're being paid to do this job! So, I'm very cautious of that. I try not to talk about the fact that I wish I had a wife at home!

Amy:

I feel that as a mother, I have a lot that I have learned, and yet I also find myself being a little hesitant to say, 'Well, as a mother I feel' (stops). If I hear myself saying that, I think, 'Oh, don't say that again,' you know. So-o, on the one hand I feel that [learning] helps but on the other hand, particularly with people who don't have children, I don't want to make it sound like I'm the expert because I have got two of my own. I only have two of my own, and maybe if I had ten of my own I'd think, well, I was an expert.

Yvonne:

Well, my mind would go into overdrive thinking in my head, 'Is this the place to bring this up, should I say anything, will this be held against me?' In my case, I felt that some people thought as soon as I referred to my children -- because I have six and that is a lot and it's an impressive kind of number -- it tends to produce a reaction in people like, 'Oh, my god,' you know, 'who are you, some kind of wonder woman?' And I don't want that -- I know where the flaws and the warts are in this thing. U-um, and so I think like crazy, 'Should I mention my experience re: this child, or that happening or that situation?' I don't spontaneously talk. I keep quiet because I'm afraid of coming through again -- I don't want to be thought of as Miss Know-it-all or too powerful or, or assertive or -- I'm afraid of that, but it still comes out because I get fired up and away I go.

Gwen:

I think that we can fault ourselves [as mothers] for when we're apologetic for being what we are. Uh, some of my, I'm starting to latch onto certain women role models, which I've never had before in my life. To a large degree I think our society has broken up the structures that used to allow that to happen. So women

now are that way because they don't have strong role models who simply don't apologize for 'What I am.'

Amy and Olive implied in their talk that they thought it is not politically wise for a mother/teacher to advertise her motherhood at school. They suggested that to do so is to risk being thought of as having outside priorities which make mother/teachers unreliable employees. Amy implied her belief that to avoid this reputation, a mother/teacher should, for instance, be careful to dress like a professional rather than a mother, and keep quiet about her family commitments. Pat's talk implied that she thought it is prudent for a mother/teacher to be very cautious at school with respect to speaking of her mothering work.

In words such as those of Amy and Yvonne, I heard a humility in their reluctance to convey the impression to others, especially to non-parents, that they view themselves as experts on children. Having reared a blended family of six, Yvonne said that she thought she would feel uncomfortable about appearing to parade herself as an authority on children just because she had a large family. Gwen suggested that mothers should fault themselves for being humble rather than assertive. To account for the problem, she blamed an absence in today's society of women who model a non-apologetic attitude for being "What I am." According to other talk, which I present in the next section, mother/teachers' humility regarding their maternal knowledge (their reluctance to promote themselves as authorities on children) might be partly attributable to their beliefs about what kinds of knowledge are valid and therefore worthy of being asserted.

Hearing about what can be asserted. Several participants implied that they thought the option of being assertive is available only if the knowledge to be asserted meets certain standards. Beliefs about why their maternal knowledge, therefore, can be

difficult to assert was expressed most clearly in the words of Olive, Yvonne, Ursula, Trudy, and Nancy.

Olive:

J: You said that you believe you take your maternal knowledge to teaching. How do you feel it's received in staff meeting discussions.

Uh, you know it's interesting, my reaction when other people do that in a staff meeting is that I'm not always sure it's appropriate because your own experience is that sample of two or three or four or one child or how ever many, it's very small. And, yes, okay, so you can give your reaction as a parent to a particular issue, but I don't think that you can presume or assume that yours is the only point of view. It would just be my point of view and it would be based on a very small sample, you know, I'd be much more confident about giving my teaching experience over twelve or fifteen years with a certain age group or a certain gender or, you know, do it over a much larger period of time and much larger sample. Then I would feel, uh, more secure about offering something as being something that I felt quite definite about. But I think as a parent, you know, my children are different from your children, different problems, so many different variables, that, uh, it would just be simply put forth as one point of view. My reaction to that is that it is just too limited. I think that perhaps, um, when you put forth a point of view like that you have to, if you feel strongly about it, you have to back it up with a lot of factual evidence because I think that if you don't, uh, you have to put it in context. And when you're talking about your own children, I'm just not sure how much objectivity you have and so I don't know about the accuracy and so you, it's sort of self-report isn't it? Maybe general situations, uh, you could comment and it would be accepted. I'm not so sure that, um, it is accepted. You have to couch it in very objective terms for it to be, er, accepted.

Yvonne:

I think that would be taken as, er, doing the family thing, er, discussing the family and it has no place in a staffroom because it's not professional, it's only your experience. That doesn't make it generalizable to the school kids at that age. And I think sometimes we might present it as generalizable? I think we would. We would say that, well, what I found in my experience with my ten year old is this. But by the fact of bringing it up in a staff meeting, what we're thought to be saying is 'this is generalizable to ten year olds, this seems to be the way a ten year old might think about this,' you see. We wouldn't ... value that information enough to say, 'This is very important for you to know about the ten year old.' We'd say, 'I think there's something here to think about and in my family and so on.' And there are people who do not have children who feel quite threatened by that. They discount that kind of knowledge totally. 'How would you know what's going on with Billy or Sue in my Grade 4 classroom? It bears no relevance to your child at home.' I can almost hear, 'Who does she think she is bringing up her ten year old son?' The person leading the meeting might ask the others, 'What do you think? Have you any such experience? Does this ring true?' But it's never picked up ... [around] the staffroom table. As a piece of offered information, it sits there but not for very long because people want to get on with the business. That's the end. Nobody says, 'Let's take a look at it, let's go somewhere with this idea.'

Ursula:

Women [teachers] who are parents talk about their own children among themselves in the staffroom.

J: What about in staff meetings?

Well, that would be an anecdotal approach to discussion, and I don't think there's time. I don't think that would be necessarily appropriate. In the elementary schools it would be a different situation. Elementary schools are much smaller and meetings are quite different. I think that when we start getting anecdotal, we start talking about individual kids that we teach. We talk about the children we teach and that's about as far as it goes, as far as, personal experience is concerned. I think that's as close to home as you're allowed to get. I think that bringing up anecdotes about personal experience with your own children would be considered not especially objective, not appropriate. It's certainly valid in a general discussion, even at a departmental level or, um, just generally between colleagues in the staffroom. I think there's a kind of a tacit understanding that people who are parents have a good perspective on the kids, but there's no, there's no other recognition of it at all that I feel, at all.

Nancy:

I think there's the problem that I'm not certain of all the things -- as mothers we don't feel certain that the things that we do are right, we don't believe we have all the answers. We can't say, 'You do this and this and this.' So [speaking out] is -- that's a very difficult thing to do because I can't come across to you -- even though I know you are a parent -- I can't come across to you and say, 'I believe I have to do this and this and this, and this is right.'

Trudy:

I think that women are afraid to be assertive and say, 'This is what I have found to be the case in my situation,' and just state it as is -- not be wishywashy about it. They almost apologize. I think that women are not as assertive as I think they possibly could be. I think that you can make a non-definite statement in an assertive fashion. I think that women don't necessarily view everything as being black and white. So, you can't give a definite answer, but I think that what I'm saying is that you can be assertive within that scope and say, you know, 'I don't say that this is precise because I have many views on it,' but I think that just by using that voice, you can be assertive.

Olive displayed doubt about the assertiveness of her maternal knowledge by saying "my reaction ... is that it is just too limited," and "I would feel more secure offering something ... that I felt quite definite about." She continued by implying that she regards her maternal knowledge to lack sufficient "factual evidence and degree of objectivity" to enable her to "put forth a point of view." Similarly, to explain why she believes it difficult to assert her maternal knowledge, Yvonne pointed to its lack of

generalizability and her reluctance to give the false impression to others that she considers it generalizable. As a teacher in a large high school, Ursula expressed her belief that the time limitations on staff meetings disallow presentation of maternal knowledge because of its requirement for anecdotal report. Moreover, like Olive, she said that it would be received as insufficiently objective and therefore inappropriate. Although Ursula assumed that "it would be a different situation" in an elementary school because of smaller numbers of teaching staff, the talk of participants, who teach in elementary schools, suggested otherwise. Nancy expressed the same belief as Olive, that one cannot be assertive if one does not have something definite to say -- something that is "right." On the contrary, Trudy stated her belief that "you can make a non-definite statement in an assertive fashion," and that women should do so rather than sound apologetic for answers that are not definite. When making this statement, Trudy demonstrated the tone of voice which she was proposing as suitably assertive. Wondering whether emotion could help or impede the production of an assertive tone, I listened for talk on emotion.

Hearing about the impact of emotion on assertiveness. Olive, Helen, Ruth, and Ursula spoke about the role they thought emotion plays for mother/teachers with respect to asserting "maternal knowledge" in schools.

Helen:

J: You mentioned that you do contribute your maternal knowledge during some school staff discussions. How do you think you make it heard? What do you think you do?

I don't know if I make myself heard, but I think that what I do is I speak from a feeling place, um, I might say, 'That makes me feel uncomfortable because I really feel strongly that we need to,' um, I'm trying to think of an example. Oh, we had a discussion about parent-teacher interviews close to the end of term. I've done a three-way interview -- student led three-way interview -- for the past two years with my class. I think it's very valuable and I do it twice a year. For the past two years how we handled the reporting periods has been our [personal] choice, but last year our [administrators] said we were all to do student led interviews. So, it came up for discussion, and the consensus among the staff was that they just wanted one [interview] a year, and they wanted it in April. They didn't think there was any need to have the parents in before that, and one time

would be enough. They would send home reports at the other reporting periods and have telephone conversations if needed. I sat there thinking, 'Now how do I feel as a parent? I know how I feel as a teacher, I want to do it. But how would I feel as a parent if my first real contact with school was in April? That's ridiculous!' So, I just said, 'Well, I didn't agree with that. As a parent I wouldn't be happy with having one, one time of being invited into the school during the year -- that really wasn't enough, and there had to be some kind of an interview process whereby parents could come in [earlier] and ask questions.'

J: And did any of the other mother/teachers pick up on that?

No, it's been put on hold.

Olive:

I think it's got something to do with this whole tradition, this hierarchical tradition in schools. Yes, I know we're now into, you know, participatory kinds of decision-making situations, and so forth -- but traditionally, it was the principals and vice-principals who made most of the decisions, and they were mostly men in the beginning. And I think our input was not even asked for, and so, now when it is, you have to get used to speaking coherently in a group, and you also have to speak without betraying too much emotion because that will just reinforce the fact that, you know, oh, women are so emotional, blah-blah, blah-blah. So I think women are just a lot more wary. Or at least, I'm more wary about speaking out. I'm never hesitant to speak my mind, but when I do speak I think that I try to make sure I have a lot of arguments marshalled and facts and so forth, and no emphasis on my own personal experience in relation to my children, but, maybe, yes, teaching experience related to classes and students over the years.

Ruth:

J: You mentioned in your first interview that in a staff meeting you would bring up issues which for you are emotional. How is that received?

Well, not by all of them. It doesn't, it's not the kind of forum that allows that. It takes off quietly, like, I will have people coming to me after a meeting, and they will, say, 'Thankyou, that needed to be said.' But at the same time, the people who were along that wave-length are not the ones who are going to take the ball and run with it. It's the people who want to look at things on a very objective, unemotional level that do dominate things like staff meetings. And I do an awful lot of listening in staff meetings. I still feel very much, er, a new kid on the block, on a lot of stuff, and so I'm still assessing. I'm relatively one of the youngest members of the staff even though I'm thirty-eight -- there's a couple of people who are younger than me but not too many, but they've also been teaching on an ongoing basis for longer than I have, so I really feel, I feel like, er, very much, a junior kind of person.

Ursula:

Well, there's a time and a place for emotional topics, I think. It's not always very useful ... to use a public forum to get across certain things. I think you have to wait until people know you at a school, and you have to know the personalities and how people are likely to take things, and how they go about discussing things. We've lost about fourteen or fifteen staff every year for the last four or five years. It's a huge changeover of staff ... and a core of about thirty who are continuing in the school. That makes it quite difficult to sort of feel that you can

just wander in and just say what you want to say. Um, it's important to sort of get established, to get to know people and for them to know you and to understand where your ideas might be coming from. An emotional issue was brought up in one staff meeting. I didn't say anything ... I just burst out with it in the staffroom. I went up to the principal and I said what I thought in front of several members of staff. It wasn't in the meeting, I thought, 'I'm going to wait for the right time and place.'

Helen claimed that when her maternal knowledge forms the basis for ideas that she wants to present in staff-meetings, she speaks from a "feeling place." An example of how she might introduce a concern contained the word "feel," and her story indicated how emotional feelings which emerge from her mothering experience prompt her to act pro-actively. With regard to the incident which she reports, Helen's talk suggests that she was not convinced, however, that her maternal knowledge was accepted by her school staff. Olive claimed that women must be careful not to display any emotion for fear of stirring others' stereotypic beliefs about emotional women, and she implied that speaking of personal experiences regarding her own children might put her at risk of displaying emotions. Ruth claimed that occasionally she displays emotion in staff meetings and that others pay tribute to that outside of the meeting, but they are not the staff members who are most likely to have influence in the school. She said that she thought having been on her school staff for only a few years and being relatively young, prompts her mainly to listen and assess during staff meetings. Ursula's comment that to broach emotional topics, "you have to wait until people know you at school," suggested that she would agree with Ruth. Ursula claimed that, alternatively, opportunities to speak on such topics must be sought outside of formal meetings. Some other beliefs regarding emotion were stated during the group discussions.

Learning About Conceptions of Assertiveness from Group Discussions

In each group the terms "humility," "emotion," and "assertiveness" were discussed.

- Gp1: Well, we really didn't have much time for these. We had 'humility' meaning too humble, mothers feeling ours are not valid opinions. Next for 'emotion' we thought of reactions, very emotional -- emotional reactions and the suggestions these may be related to our biological makeup. Then 'assertiveness' -- we said that women have a hard road to, er, to go there. And that's just about all we had.
- Gp2: For 'humility' as a means of broadcasting information, um, some of us had had experiences that it was alright to use it between parent and teacher -- in the parent/teacher situation where you would say, 'you might try this' or 'I know this has worked for me,' that kind of approach. But we thought humility was definitely not alright in a staff meeting. For 'emotion,' I think Gwen's story was the best one, she said it works once only but it does have its uses. If you burst into tears once, it does work well, or if you rant and rave, or you slap the ruler on the table, it works, but once only. And 'assertiveness,' we got into a lengthy debate about the definition of 'assertiveness' and possibly, um, the negative connotations the word 'assertive woman' has (greeted by several mm-hmms around the table) from the point of view of other women and from people in general.
- Gp3: We also felt that 'humility' doesn't work in staff meetings, but for sharing experiences with parents, it really opens up a lot of doors. We felt that a lot of doors and blocks totally disappear as soon as [parents] realize that you could talk about a one-on-one experience. Um, but we also felt that it was difficult in a situation where you felt you had to have data because you couldn't say, 'From my experience as a mother,' and 'I was going through this situation with my son, this is what happened, maybe this would help clarify it for people who.' We felt that in a staff situation that the mother talk would not work -- the words would not come out. But, if we had other kinds of examples, like if we could say, 'In my five years of teaching, I've seen this, this, and this with children in my classroom,' we would share that as opposed to our own personal experiences with our own children. So, we felt that even though we felt there was value in what we had done as a mother in our experience with our own children, we'd not present that at a staff level -- which is kind of scary actually! But we also felt there was a huge humility in the fact that we all feel there is so much more to learn that we never feel that we have the answers. We felt that we were still working on a collaborative mode for decisions, so as opposed to 'this is my opinion, it's got to be this way,' it is instead, 'This is what I can contribute.'
- We felt that we suppress the 'emotional' side because it was also viewed as not something that works on a staff-meeting kind of level. For the way we feel we need to present, the catch word ... was 'objective detachment' because ... if there is an emotional edge ... it takes a lot of value out of your argument. So, the appearance has to be very objective and detached. For 'assertiveness,' we all felt it was positive to have assertiveness, but that it has a general aspect -- well, 'aggressive' came out for women -- as opposed to the positive -- in a lot of situations. But we felt that assertiveness is positive, that it involves taking risks, and sometimes is difficult in that you have to be outspoken in order to take on that assertive role, and that it's becoming more acceptable in a female than it was. But women are still knocking up against having to take that risk that people would say, 'Well, you're just being pushy' or 'you're being too aggressive.' We felt that it was something that we were working on in small ways to be slightly more assertive. I am especially guilty of this because I tend in a staff meeting, I tend to do an awful lot of listening because I have a very confrontational kind of staff. I don't fit into that mould very well, and when I do say something, it doesn't really,

um, I, I try to present it on a collaborative basis and they just sort of look at me like I'm this alien (laughs).

Many of the beliefs about assertion that were spoken in the group reports and discussions matched those that were expressed during the individual interviews. Upon listening to the audiotapes of the Group 2 and Group 3 discussions, I found no information to add to the Group 2 and Group 3 reports. Because the audiotape of the Group 1 report contained additional information, I enlarge here upon the Group 1 report only. Members of Group 1 said they thought that humility is a characteristic that mother/teachers bring to their talk in staff discussions because through maternal knowledge they know that "you can't say 'this is how something ought to be.'" That is they speak with humility and respect for others' perspectives rather than with conviction in the correctness of their own. The group members implied their belief that, nevertheless, mother/teachers' humility is a problem with regard to the promotion of their knowledge. The comment about emotion and "biological makeup" was a reference to one members' talk on a television documentary about the brain and gender differences. The speaker was a high school science teacher.

With regard to assertiveness, group members feared that assertive women become labelled as "aggressive," "bitchy," and other titles that are "not good for women." They claimed that they might not listen to such women, and that they do listen more readily to men. One member reported that when she had tried to assert something in a staff meeting without sounding aggressive, she had been accused of whining.

Summarizing Mother/Teachers' Conceptions of Assertiveness

With regard to asserting their maternal knowledge during interaction with their children's teachers, many of the mother/teachers stated their belief that professional loyalty constrains what they can say to the teachers. Their talk implied that they believed assertiveness is not an option during such interactions. All participants

expressed their belief that their maternal knowledge is an important -- some said, "essential" -- complement for their professional teaching knowledge. Yet several of their stories indicated that the mother/teachers find it difficult to make their maternal knowledge heard in schools. There were four issues which appeared to compound the problem. First, mother/teachers claimed that to avoid being thought unreliable on account of home and family commitments (e.g., sick children), they find it advisable to be low key about being a mother among teachers. Second, participants said that they are dubious about whether their maternal knowledge has the qualities of a knowledge that can be asserted. That is, they suspect it may be too limited, not generalizable, and insufficiently objective to meet the required standards. Third, participants implied that as mother/teachers they are humble about their maternal knowledge because they do not wish to suggest they have definite answers, or that they are privileged to information that is unavailable to non-parents. Finally, they expressed the belief that to successfully assert knowledge a speaker needs to convey an objective attitude and, therefore, to avoid any display of emotion. Participants said that they believed speaking their maternal knowledge risks displaying emotion, which makes it is unlikely that others would manage to hear it as knowledge. In addition, participants claimed that they are reluctant to display emotion for fear of reinforcing stereotypical beliefs about women. Some participants claimed, however, that they allow their feelings to provoke them to present their maternal knowledge in schools; they utilize their emotions pro-actively rather than re-actively.

SUMMARIZING THE CHAPTER

In this study, mothering and assertiveness were two words that became important to my thinking about the reception of mother/teachers' maternal knowledge in schools. Mothering was a word that I had taken to the study, and to me it meant

"being a mother." I had not thought of mothering as a troublesome term. Thus, I experienced difficulty in both hearing and accepting that negative conceptions of the term were prominent in participants' thoughts. In contrast, assertiveness was a term which participants' interview talk revealed to me as having importance to the study, but when participants first spoke of wanting to be assertive, I felt uncomfortable. I had to overcome these feelings, however, in order to rethink and accept the term's importance to the study, to listen for relevant information, and become able to think about it differently.

Participants stated positive beliefs about the value of maternal knowledge for their teaching, and they said that they perceived it as a valuable complement to their professional knowledge. They feared that because of negative conceptions of mothering, however, the term is likely to produce a derogatory image of mother/teachers and interfere with the reception of their maternal knowledge in schools. The mother/teachers stated that for several reasons they find it difficult to be assertive about maternal knowledge in schools. Among the reasons, they claimed that knowledge can be asserted only if it meets certain criteria which they said they believed maternal knowledge does not meet, and that mothers need to avoid advertising themselves as mothers in schools. Assertiveness also appeared to be constrained by some mother/teachers' practice of humility. They said that they believed they should avoid not only suggesting that they have knowledge that is unavailable to non-mothers, but also imposing upon others a knowledge which contains no definite answers. Finally, participants expressed their beliefs about the advisability of women avoiding emotional displays if they wish to be heard. They claimed, therefore, that they would be wary about presenting maternal knowledge because it might stir their emotions.

Participants' comments indicated that among mothers, mother/teachers have a unique relationship with their children's teachers. This they claimed is because they are "in the system," "know the system," and "can talk to the system." The mother/teachers

said, however, that this is both an advantage and a disadvantage. They said they considered themselves to be disadvantaged because professional loyalty can place constraints upon interactions with their children's teachers. Their talk implied that the mother/teachers' salient concern in this respect was that they felt restrained from asserting their professional teaching knowledge. So although talk on participants' interactions with their children's teachers included other useful information, it included little on how they believed their maternal knowledge was received by their children's teachers. This suggested to me that for investigating this question further, a study of mothers who are not teachers would be required.

Participants claimed that their maternal knowledge is not well received in the schools where they teach, especially at the staff meeting level. As discussed above, mother/teachers spoke of beliefs which produce difficulty for them in being assertive in staff meetings. Some participants stated that mothers need to be braver about asserting their maternal knowledge. They expressed the belief that this would require mothers to accept that more forms of knowledge can be asserted than they currently believe. However, with the exception of small group meetings of primary teachers (a large majority of whom participants believed to be mothers), participants claimed that the conduct of staff meetings is not conducive to presentation, promotion, or discussion of maternal knowledge. They stated the belief that the tenor of staff meetings is "let's get to the point," "we want the outcome," "we've got to move on." They claimed that this eliminates opportunities for talk, for "a process" that allows "interaction of ideas, looking at options, looking at alternatives." According to the mother/teachers, this talk process is "important because there may not be just one right answer." Repeatedly participants claimed that mothering experience had taught them the importance of talk, and that opportunities for talk are essential to the promotion, presentation, and discussion of maternal knowledge.

Chapter 9

IT WAS REALLY ONLY CHIT-CHAT. ONLY?

In the immediately preceding four chapters, I have presented a conversation in which I participated with sixteen mother/teachers. The conversation began during individual interviews, proceeded onward through group discussions, and did not end. Rather, it continued while I read and interacted with both the interview and group discussion transcripts, intrigued by not only the individual voices but also the choruses and refrains which together they formed. Sometimes the choruses and refrains challenged my thinking, forced me to think differently, or presented me with further questions. They have not faded away. They remain in my thoughts, generating further questions, and urging me to listen for more. Yet the value of the talk was often doubted by its speakers. Standing out in my mind as representative of the dubiousness is one participant's comment that her interview talk was "really only chit-chat."

I found it distressing that the mother/teachers spoke in disparaging terms about their talk while to me it presented a rich source of information. Yet, when it became time to write this final chapter, "it was only chit-chat" began to play an unsettling tune in my head. Nervously, I doubted that my study's "chit-chat" could blend with the rhythm of summary, conclusions, and implications, which I conceived of as the mandatory arrangement for the final chapter. I attempted to achieve conformity but failed. I worried, "I have no conclusions, no answers, no definite recommendations." Then I remembered that to a mother/teacher this should not be cause for concern, it should be expected and accepted.

So, I resolved to chit-chat my way through to the end of the chapter, to continue the conversation by talking to myself about the study. First, I will recall what prompted me to conduct the study and how I experienced its post-modern methodology. Second, I

shall discuss what I believe the conversation offered in reply to my research questions. Third, I shall report what the conversation told me about the four theses which had guided the study. Simultaneously, I shall consider what meaning the information has with respect to the practice of and research into educational administration, to teachers and students, and to the status of women employed as educators in schools.

THE CONVERSATION: INITIATING IT AND EXPERIENCING IT

Where did it all begin? Simply. The study began from one mother/teacher's reflections. Mine. What made me indulge in these reflections? I was puzzled. Why was I puzzled? I had been observing teachers consulting with one another about their teaching; and although I had observed positive outcomes in women teachers' classrooms following the consultation, I judged some of the women's conferences to be empty and their claims about the value of the consultation to be frivolous. Yet my original purpose in observing the conferences and lessons was to discover what forms of interaction and talk were perceived by teachers to be of greatest assistance to the continuing development of their teaching expertise. So, although I was observing that changes which women desired were occurring in their classrooms, I felt uncomfortable about the conference interactions the women seemed to like. Why? Was something about women missing or perhaps faultily represented in the framework that informed my thinking? I began reflecting upon my own experiences as a woman teacher both before and after becoming a mother. I tried to recall my classroom work, my talks with other teachers, and staff meetings in which I participated. And I stumbled upon an enigma.

In my reflections on the portion of my career following its interruption for mothering, I perceived a difficulty in making myself heard. Indeed, I heard my voice begin to doubt itself and to go into retreat, particularly in staff meetings. I began to suspect that upon returning to teaching, I had felt that my experience as a mother had

provided me some extra knowledge to take back to teaching. What kind of knowledge was I thinking about? Did I find it useful as a teacher? Was it this knowledge that I had felt unable to make heard? What are other mothers' claims and experiences in this respect?

Turning to the Research Literature

To find answers, I searched through the literature on women teachers, on the relationship between mothers and teachers, and on mothers. Since my questions were gender-related, I also searched for explanations among feminist theories and eventually found some assistance within post-modern feminist theory.

Teachers and mothers. I found the literature on women teachers who are mothers to be scant. Moreover, this literature displayed little interest in the question of whether or not being a mother is a good preparation for teaching. I found no reports of investigations into mother/teachers' beliefs about the knowledge they gain as mothers, how useful they find it as teachers, or what reception it is afforded in schools. I did encounter literature, however, which persuaded me that I should investigate mother/teachers' experiences of the reception of their maternal knowledge in schools from their perspectives not only as teachers but also as mothers.

Within research literature on the relationship between mothers and teachers, I found very few reports on mothers' perspectives. The literature (e.g., Lightfoot, 1977; Griffith and Smith, 1987; and Smith, 1987) revealed, however, that mothers are faced with a contradictory situation with respect to their children's education: while educators take for granted that a mother's role requires her to complement the educative work of schools, they also assume that the mother's focus on the particularistic impedes her understanding of the universalistic focus of the school. That is, while assuming that

mothers should support the work of schools, educators do not conceive that mothers' experiences render them capable of understanding the work.

I wondered about the assumptions attached to the particularistic/universalistic notion. What assumptions support it? Do the assumptions neglect to consider that learning may occur through experiencing motherhood? Do mothers believe that such learning occurs? If so what is that learning? To find answers, I sought out literature on mothers' perspectives on their lives, and found it to be surprisingly sparse and only recent.

From some of the literature (e.g. Swigart, 1991), I learned that cultural scripts can influence the way mothers identify themselves and the nature of their lives. I read about how "good mother" and "bad mother" myths have a silencing effect upon mothers; how mothers become reluctant to reveal their difficulties for fear of being labelled "bad mothers." From this information, I inferred that to seek information from mother/teachers about mothers' knowledge, I would need to employ research methods of lowest possible silencing potential.

Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking* (1989), provided me insight into both the knowledge and tension underlying mothers' thinking. Guided by Ruddick's explanations, I conceived of a tension involving two areas of mothers' knowledge which I named "maternal knowledge" and "authoritative knowledge." I speculated that a phenomenon named and described by Ruddick as "inauthentic maternal thinking" might result when a mother's authoritative knowledge devalues her maternal knowledge and, thereby, dismisses or defeats her "authentic maternal thinking" (Ruddick, 1989). I conceived of maternal knowledge as that gained through the experience of mothering, and authoritative knowledge as that acquired through both formal education and socialization.

The problem that concerned me was the non-authoritative status of maternal knowledge in public institutions. I suspected that it was maternal knowledge that I had

been not only unable to make heard as a teacher myself, but also unable to hear when listening to the women teachers' conferences. I wondered if there was a theory to explain why maternal knowledge might be inaudible. Thinking that all women, mothers or not, become identified with the mothering role (Weedon, 1987; St.Claire, 1989; Skevington and Baker, 1989), I considered the problems I was addressing to be gender related and, thus, sought for explanations within feminist theories. Of these, I eventually found post-modern feminist theory to be the most helpful.

Adopting a post-modern feminist theoretical framework. My understanding of post-modern feminist theory was developed mainly from the work of Sawicki (1991) and Weedon (1987). I found the theory helpful because it posits that both our minds and our conscious and unconscious thoughts are constituted by discourses. The discourses are generated by social institutions such as law, sociology, psychology, medicine, and education. According to post-modern theory, because we assume that valid knowledge is generated within such institutions, we accept that the messages conveyed by their discourses are truthful and authoritative. Thus, since these societally approved discourses constitute the contents of our minds, they influence how we construct understandings of both ourselves and our worlds. I learned that because this aspect of post-modern theory can be perceived to discount agency, post-modern feminism needs to stress Foucault's concept of the discursive field.

According to Foucault, a discursive field consists of several competing discourses. His post-structural theory posits not only that our subjectivities are constituted by competing discourses, but also that all social institutions are influenced by competing discourses through being situated within discursive fields. Thus, mothering can be described as an institution situated within a discursive field comprised of various discourses such as those of psychology, medicine, sociology, and biology. Moreover, the theory makes it possible to propose that various discourses compete in

shaping both the subjectivities of mothers and our conceptions of "mothering." Because it posits both that competing discourses can contradict one another and that agency is made possible by apprehending the contradictions, the concept of discursive field can assist the feminist project of speaking from women's experiences. According to Foucault, however, the apprehension may be impeded because discourses carry varying amounts of power and some are sufficiently powerful to suppress particular forms of knowledge. Foucault claims that one such "subjugated knowledge" is that of the housewife (Sawicki, 1991). To enable a resurrection of "subjugated knowledges," Foucault recommends vigilance with respect to the power of other discourses. According to post-modern theory, one way to enact vigilance is to think reflexively about how our conceptions of words and terms influence our thinking. I chose a post-modern methodology for my study because it provided me a way to think about my thinking (Flax, 1989).

Experiencing Post-modern Methodology

Because the study was prompted by my speculation that mother/teachers have authoritative knowledge which can devalue their maternal knowledge, I recognized that my own thinking could be subject to the same problem. Thus, I believed the study required me to think *care/fully* about my thoughts while planning and conducting the study and analysing the data. In this regard, I found that keeping a journal was a useful feature of my research design. It enabled me to apprehend occasions which in retrospect I think of as "jarring moments" in my study; moments to which I needed to apply the reflexive thinking recommended in both post-modern and feminist theory (Harding, 1987; Lather, 1991). In this section, I attempt to explain, first, how I experienced "jarring moments" during the study and, second, what the experience has continued to mean to me.

Thinking about my thinking: encountering surprise and uncertainty. I realize retrospectively that when planning to make reflexive thinking my habit for the study, I was not quite sure how the thinking would arise. Now, I do know. "Jarring moments" became my signal to think reflexively. I soon became aware of their importance and tried to note them. I would not claim, however, that I seized every occasion which challenged me to think reflexively. Because each produced discomfort and necessitated an initially disconcerting thinking experience, I suspect that I unwittingly ignored some jarring moments.

As an example of a jarring moment which I did not ignore, I recall pondering irritably how I could claim credibility for maternal knowledge when participants began to insist that it was founded on instinct. Their insistence jarred. Rather than dismissing my irritation, however, I received it as a signal to think reflexively. It was difficult having to admit that my own store of authoritative knowledge about instinct in relation to knowledge was invalidating what the mother/teachers were trying to tell me about their maternal knowledge. Informed by the post-modern theoretical framework of my study, I had already consciously posited that epistemological theory may not allow the identification of maternal knowledge as valid knowledge. So, my reluctance to hear participants' references to instinct became testimony to the power that authoritative discourses on knowledge had within my thinking. This realization persuaded me to sensitize myself to "jarring moments" and provided me a valuable personal experience.

Experiencing post-modern research and personal change. With post-modern theory informing the conduct of my study, I was obliged to think reflexively. I experienced reflexive thinking as a process of identifying and accepting the falseness of some of my previously uncritically examined assumptions. I developed the recognition that allowing unexamined assumptions to influence my interpretations could be impositional with respect to all or to individual study participants. Thus, I grew to

appreciate the moral value of reflexivity, and I now strive to make it a habit within my thinking. I would not make the grand claim, however, that I have learned -- or that it is possible to learn -- to recognize unfailingly when reflexive thinking is required. Rather, with respect to studying people, I believe the study has shown me how to move in the direction of adequate interpretation without assuming that I can ever achieve it. It has taught me, moreover, that to think reflexively requires an acceptance that both emotion and intuition can play a useful role in thinking.

Various emotions prompted me initially to apprehend the "jarring moments" of my study. Included among them were irritability, anxiety, fear, and anger. I felt that I developed an intuitive sensitivity to my emotions. The intuition seemed also to incur a sense of what tension in my thinking underlay my emotional response. I believe that intuition prompted me to accept the feelings, to examine them, and, thus, to transform their reactivity into proactivity. According to the mother/teachers' descriptive terms, to have denied or dismissed my emotional reactions would have amounted to road-blocking my intuition. I think that experiencing the usefulness of reflexive thinking in a post-modern study has improved my responsiveness to my own intuitions. I have become more alert to my intuitive feelings of unease with respect to social issues. Thus, I am more apt now to investigate what assumptions influence both others' and my own thoughts on issues and to examine the thoughts reflexively. I feel encouraged, moreover, to persuade others to join me in such thinking. While conducting the study, my appreciation for the contribution which intuition makes to thinking and knowing was increased, however, not only through my experience of reflexivity, but also by information gained from my conversation with the sixteen mother/teachers. I discuss the information within the next main section.

THE CONVERSATION: ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I began the study with five main research questions in mind:

1. What is the form and substance of the knowledge that they acquire through experiencing motherhood?
2. What value do mothers regard this knowledge to have for schools?
3. How does the knowledge compare with professional teaching knowledge; i.e., that which is gained from teacher education and teacher development events?
4. What reception do school personnel afford mothers' knowledge when it enters schools?

AND because I was interested in what mother teachers would say they believed with respect to the four subjects addressed by these questions, I also questioned

5. How do mother/teachers' descriptions of their beliefs compare to the theoretical understandings which prompted my questions?

With respect to my first two main research questions, the conversation informed me about the knowledge that the mother/teachers believed they had gained as mothers, and the usefulness they regarded it to have for their work as teachers. With respect to the third question, participants claimed that they find maternal knowledge is a useful complement for professional knowledge so the answer became an additional answer to the second question, and is included within that answer in this chapter. With respect to the fourth question, I learned of mother/teachers' claims that maternal knowledge does not find a place in school decision-making forums, partly because it is not well-received, but mainly because mother/teachers are reluctant for various reasons to assert the knowledge. In this section of the chapter, I present the answers to these four questions in three subsections. I consider that answers to the fifth question are contained in the first part of each subsection within a later section of this chapter which addresses how

the conversation informed the four theses. In addition to the five main questions, the conversation inspired me to ask two more.

First, I heard some entirely unanticipated information which invited further questioning. When designing my questions prior to the conversation, my thoughts on mother/teachers' maternal knowledge were restricted to that gained through experiencing the responsibility and work of raising their own children. However, during early first interviews while receiving demographic information, I began to hear participants describing volunteer and part-time occupations which they had pursued during motherhood while not employed as teachers. The mother/teachers spoke of knowledge these occupations had provided them, and they referred to its usefulness in their work as teachers. So, I developed further open questions to find if other participants had similar experiences.

Second, through reflexive thinking, I noted a tension with respect to key words which the mother/teachers used to explain maternal knowledge, its usefulness to teaching, and issues regarding its recognition in schools. I realized that the words could be diversely conceived and expressed, but might be most readily interpreted in ways which could harm attempts to describe maternal knowledge and to promote its value. So, I decided that I should investigate whether the mother/teachers held various conceptions of the words and, if so, what they would wish each to represent in a description of maternal knowledge.

In this section, I discuss first the knowledge which mother/teachers claimed to have gained in their temporary occupations. Second, I employ three subsections to discuss information which the conversation offered with respect to the first four original main research questions. Finally, I discuss concepts which the mother/teachers associated with the eleven key words from their descriptions of maternal knowledge.

Temporary Occupations: An Unanticipated Source of Maternal Knowledge

I learned that most of the mother/teachers had taken at least one break of eighteen months or more for childraising. Most participants who had taken breaks longer than regular maternity leave had done so after the birth of their second child. I was surprised that the decision to take the longer break seemed unrelated to the mother's age. Three of the four younger mothers in the group had taken several years off for childraising purposes; two had taken breaks of at least seven years. I had assumed younger mothers would be reluctant to take extended childraising breaks and, thus, found that I was mistaken. Reporting on a study of women teachers' career patterns in England, Grant (1989) noted that 65% of women teachers still take breaks of between eighteen months and seven years, or more even, for childraising. Littlewood (1989) reported also that a large percentage of mother/teachers still leave teaching following childbirth, particularly after the birth of their second child.

The conversation informed me that following either childraising breaks from teaching or home relocations to accommodate their husbands' career moves, several study participants did not obtain teaching positions immediately. They took other employment temporarily. I heard, moreover, that during most of the mother/teachers' childraising breaks they had involved themselves in part-time paid or volunteer work. In each situation, the work performed was oriented toward education. Some was performed in schools and included voluntary help in kindergarten, Grade 1, and library. Other work was performed outside of public schools and included starting up preschools, working in parent participation preschools, and assisting with various forms of adult education either as paid or volunteer instructors.

The mother/teachers said that they thought these temporary work experiences had provided them knowledge which they might never have otherwise acquired. They claimed to have gained knowledge of others' family situations, difficulties, and conflicts. They implied that they had learned there are not only commonalities among families,

but also unique sets of problems through which each family navigates. They had noted that many families faced problems quite different from their own. Mothers who had worked as adult educators claimed to have gained a new perspective on parents. The experience had persuaded them it is unfair to both students and parents when schools rely upon parents having sufficient ability and pleasure in reading, or other school subjects, to assist their children. Participants who had volunteered in schools said they believed the work had given them additional knowledge of teaching, especially since they were able to view the lesson from the perspective of student, parent, or teacher. Hearing about these temporary occupations as a source of mother/teachers' knowledge, I gained an impression of unfairness.

In Chapter 2, I noted that according to Littlewood (1989) and Grant (1989), mother/teachers' career interruptions for childraising affect the constancy of their career ambitions and occur at times crucial to promotion prospects. These researchers suggest, along with Acker (1989), Oram (1989), and Young (1992) that to improve women teachers' prospects for career advancement and/or entry into school administration, our conceptions of "career" in education need to be broadened beyond the traditional male model. My conversation with the mother/teachers persuaded me not only to agree with the four researchers' suggestions, but also to propose that to improve school employment opportunities for mother/teachers will require us to think beyond the traditional male pattern of achieving career qualification.

Upon returning permanently to teaching, only one of the sixteen mother/teachers in the study received any credit for her temporary, non-school related work as an educator. Since none of the other mother/teachers' temporary work had been credited toward their teaching qualifications, it appeared that school district administrative bodies may tend to ignore or to be unaware of the knowledge that this work provides mother/teachers. If accorded recognition, it seems plausible that credit could be calculated for the knowledge gained through mother/teachers' temporary

work experiences by employing traditional practices, such as, counting years of experience. However, it is more difficult to imagine how the traditional practices could accommodate the granting of credit for knowledge which mother/teachers gain through their experiences of raising their own children. In the next subsection, I discuss the mother/teachers' claims about their maternal knowledge.

Mother/teachers' Claims About the Nature of Maternal Knowledge

The mother/teachers said that they believed their experiences of motherhood had afforded them new and valuable knowledge. They did not claim, however, always to have unfalteringly applied the knowledge as mothers. Rather, some claimed that they now regret previous hesitation in this regard. Several participants said that they thought the benefit of their maternal knowledge was less readily available to their firstborn than their other children. Some participants said they believed that they applied their maternal knowledge more as teachers than as mothers.

Two of the mother/teachers had read *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky et al. 1986), and one of these two had also read *In a Different Voice* (Gilligan, 1982). No other participants displayed familiarity with feminist thought on women's knowledge or thinking. The contents of their descriptions with respect to maternal knowledge, however, bore similarities to various descriptions found in the works of Gilligan (1982), Belenky et al. (1986), Noddings (1986), and Ruddick (1989). Features that seemed salient to me as I listened to participants' talk about maternal knowledge were their claims about its being rooted in instinct, intuition, and sensitivity; their respect for the individuality of persons and families, and their associated perception that "fair" should not be thought of as "same"; their knowledge that caring is respecting, protecting, and nurturing a persons' individual qualities; their knowledge that reflexive thinking is essential to caring; and their understanding that controlling, as an act of caring, represents a delicate balancing act aided by intuition.

The roots of maternal knowledge. The mother/teachers' talk about their instinct to protect implied that they regard it to be the main root of maternal knowledge. They claimed that the wellbeing of the whole child becomes the focus of this protective instinct. They implied, that if heeded, the protective instinct requires a mother to develop and use intuition. The development of intuition, according to participants' descriptions, is supported by sensitivity that is activated by the instinct to protect. They spoke of the child's individuality as the focus of the mother's sensitivity. They implied that they believed that through sensitivity, a mother can learn the vital importance of respecting, protecting, and cultivating children's individual characteristics.

Maternal knowledge of individuality and fairness. The mother/teachers described individuality in terms of talent, personality, idiosyncracies, spirit, and intellects. They explained that while raising their own children, they have been strongly impressed by the uniqueness of each child's set of characteristics and talents. Participants claimed that motherhood had not only affirmed their professional knowledge of developmental sequences, but had also taught them that developmental patterns and timing are subject to individual variation. They said that they believed this knowledge was enhanced by their opportunity as mothers to observe child development longitudinally. This advantage they associated especially with children's emotional development, the observation of which they claimed is not available to the teacher.

Through their maternal knowledge of individuality, the mother/teachers claimed that they had learned that "fair" should not be thought of as "same." For instance, guided by this knowledge of fairness, they claimed that they would endeavour to assure that each child receives what s/he requires when s/he requires it. They doubted the fairness of insisting that all children in a particular group should receive the same

treatment at the same time. They spoke of being dubious that offering "equal" educational opportunities to children provides them all a fair chance for future success.

Knowing "reflexive" thinking as an activity of caring. From the mother/teachers' descriptions of the knowledge that they said they had developed through caring, nurturing, and controlling as mothers, I discerned that the activity of caring could be thought of as inclusive of nurturing and controlling. Participants claimed to have learned that the activity of caring necessitates the development of flexibility and adaptability. They implied that they believed experiencing motherhood had taught them that unpredictability should be recognized as a salient feature of both people and the environments wherein caring is enacted. The mother/teachers' talk suggested that consequently they had learned that flexible thinking is a required skill in problem solving and decision-making activities of people who hold positions of responsibility for caring. This flexibility as described by the mother/teachers included the ability to think both reflectively and reflexively.¹ The mother/teachers implied that they had learned the necessity of reflective and reflexive thinking through the experience of having their own thoughts and understandings challenged by their children's ideas. They said that they had learned the importance of respecting their children's thinking and the possibility of its difference from their own. Recognizing that to enact this respect, mothers are faced with the difficult task of examining and possibly re-thinking both their own and society's values, the mother/teachers wondered how well mothers persist in this respect.

1 To distinguish between these I think of reflective thinking as a process of searching my mind for alternative conceptual frameworks with which to analyze a situation or problem. In contrast, I think of reflexive thinking as a process of not only bringing to consciousness the conceptual frameworks that influence my thinking, but also examining them critically by recollecting their origins and considering whether the frameworks or concepts have become carriers of power (i.e., whether or not they have potential to be oppressive of others or myself). Thus, the exercise of reflexivity contributes morality to thinking about thinking.

The mother/teachers said they thought that because a child's characteristics and special qualities may conflict with what the mother values, she learns that nurturing requires her to be able to think reflexively about her values. Nurturing, according to participants' descriptions, is fostering the development of a child's unique set of characteristics and special qualities. However, in a discussion of how discrepancies between a child's special characteristics and socially valued characteristics can produce tension with respect to nurturing, the mother/teachers' talk implied that they believed nurturing experience had taught them that the associated task of controlling children's development becomes a delicate balancing act.

Knowing control is a balancing act. Ruddick (1989) identifies two main classes of mothering activity, one being the "fostering of growth" and the other being "training." Ruddick's descriptions of fostering growth included the activity which I heard mother/teachers talk of as nurturing. "Training" according to Ruddick is the maternal activity of preparing children to become acceptable and useful members of their society; i.e., training them to fit into their cultural environment. In the conversation, the mother/teachers implied that they believed motherhood had taught them the importance of striving for balance between the requirements of social training and of nurturing individuality. From the conversation, I inferred that intuition, sensitivity, and reflexivity were the tools that mother/teachers had learned to apply not only for judging the appropriateness of the balance, but also for recognizing when it required adjustment. The mother/teachers claimed that they became fearful of losing the ability both to monitor and to influence this balance when their children entered school. The knowledge of this fear was among the positive attributes that mother/teachers claimed their maternal knowledge has with respect to their work as schoolteachers.

The Usefulness of Maternal Knowledge to Mother/Teachers' Work as Teachers

The mother/teachers said they believed their maternal knowledge was advantageous in their work as teachers. They expressed this opinion with respect to the knowledge that motherhood had provided them both indirectly through their temporary occupations and directly through experiencing the responsibilities of raising their children. They claimed the knowledge enhanced both their understanding of students and their relationships with parents. They said that they regarded their maternal knowledge to be an essential complement for their professional knowledge.

Maternal knowledge and understanding students. Participants claimed that their maternal knowledge of children's emotional development enabled them to appreciate the depth of their students' emotions. They said they believed that mothering experience had heightened their awareness, for instance, of how readily adults speak inappropriately to children without realizing the damage they cause. Thus, they claimed to have developed a strong appreciation of the importance of teachers being alert to such dangers and so to avoid damaging children's spirits.

According to the mother/teachers, their maternal knowledge influenced them to have greater respect for students' individual differences than they had before experiencing parenthood. As mothers of schoolchildren, participants claimed to have observed their own children have greater success with teachers who respected and nurtured children's individuality. One participant carefully explained how her respect for students' individuality was influenced by her knowledge that the relationship between herself and her children incurred appreciation for their individuality. She said she believed that often she increased her respect for a student by recalling that behind the child there was a mother, and by empathizing with the fact that the mother probably appreciated and wanted to protect her child's individuality. All participants claimed that

as mothers they had developed an increased respect for individuality which had improved their patience and tolerance as teachers.

Participants said they thought that prior to motherhood they enacted individualization rather like categorizing children and making consequent assumptions about what to expect from them. They claimed that their maternal knowledge influences them to disparage such an approach. Through having recognized differences among their own children's developmental patterns, the mother/teachers claimed to have learned both the difficulty and the error of attempting to either fit or mould children to pre-selected patterns. However, participants were anxious to convey that applying this knowledge does not result in a weak pedagogy which offers comforting excuses to children if they fail or avoid tasks. Rather they claimed the knowledge improves pedagogy by persuading the mother/teacher to investigate patiently how each child should be challenged and to find what form of accompanying support will be beneficial. Moreover, some said they believed their maternal knowledge of individuality informs them that they should encourage students to respect one another and to nurture the development of one another's individual special characteristics.

Participants claimed their maternal knowledge also included knowing the frustration felt by a parent whose child's individuality, special talent, or special need is not being nurtured in school. They said that they know the pain that develops when a parent is uninformed about how the school can assist, and/or experiences difficulty in accessing the information. Thus, as mothers, participants claimed they had learned the importance of good parent/school communication.

Maternal knowledge and relating to parents. The mother/teachers claimed that being parents of schoolchildren themselves provided them a valuable knowledge base for relating to parents of their students. They said they believed it helped them to perceive better what the parents might be going through and that parents realized and

appreciated this. Because they know the difficulty of running a home and looking after a family, participants claimed they can appreciate other parents' difficulties even though they may be different from their own. Through both knowing these difficulties and understanding parents' anxieties regarding the nurture of their children, participants said they thought they had become less harsh toward parents than they had been before experiencing motherhood.

The mother/teachers implied that mothering experience had taught them the importance of thinking reflexively with respect to parents, for instance, to examine critically their own assumptions regarding the ease with which individual parents and families can operate in ways supportive of the school's work. They claimed to know from experience that helping one's own child to read, for example, can be difficult even when appropriate time and resources are available; more difficult, in fact, than teaching someone else's child in school. The mother/teachers said they believed their maternal knowledge enables them to empathize with students' mothers, for instance, through knowing how miserable it can feel to observe their one's child go off to school unhappily. With regard to parent/teacher conferences, because they know the feeling of being in the parent's seat, participants said they understand the importance of suiting conferences to parents' requirements. The mother/teachers claimed that their own experiences of interacting with their children's teachers has enabled them to appreciate that other mothers have a lesser opportunity than themselves to access control with respect to their children's schooling. This, participants said, was because they appreciated that as mothers who are also teachers, they have the advantage of knowing the school system and how to talk about it with their children's teachers.

Reception of mother/teachers' maternal knowledge by their children's teachers.

The mother/teachers talked more about difficulties they had in speaking their professional knowledge rather than in making their maternal knowledge heard during

interactions with their children's teachers. So, I gained minimal information with respect to the latter. All of the participants mentioned that "knowing the system" as teachers enabled them to understand what went on in their children's schools and schooling and to communicate with school personnel. Recognizing, therefore, that other mothers were disadvantaged by not having the same knowledge prompted some mother/teachers to fault schools for mystifying the system and thereby erecting obstacles to communication with parents. Some suggested that schools should help parents to understand the system and speak to it by investigating what parents believe they need to know.

Despite claiming that their familiarity with schools was helpful to communicating with their children's teachers, participants also claimed having a disadvantage. The mother/teachers said they believed that by having professional knowledge which could be used to intimidate, they posed a potential threat to their children's teachers. Many said that they thought professional loyalties restrained them from "coming through forcefully" when problems arose with respect to their children's schooling. Some participants said they had found that professional knowledge can be a problem if it causes them to be expected by their children's teachers to be understanding and forgiving always. Thus, the conversation informed me that, in their mother role, reception and proclamation problems experienced by study participants were unique to mother/teachers and, presumably, not typical of those which other mothers might experience.

Maternal knowledge as a complement to professional teaching knowledge. No participant spoke negatively about professional knowledge, but most expressed the belief that their maternal knowledge had a strong influence over how they thought about and applied the professional knowledge. Maternal knowledge is "always back there ... popping up and interacting with the stuff you get from ... workshops," claimed

one mother/teacher. Consequently, participants claimed that inservice events that provide ample time for discussion are usually the most meaningful and useful to them. Some also spoke of appreciating speakers who through using anecdotes or by introducing a variety of perspectives provoke listeners to think or talk over their own experiences and to listen thoughtfully to those of others.

The mother/teachers expressed the opinion that they found it difficult to compare the usefulness of their professional knowledge and their maternal knowledge because they found that the two became "intertwined" and were "complementary." One participant graphically claimed, "It's like a complete package with one or the other missing ... there's a hole that isn't filled." This suggested to me that if the empty hole represented the absence of maternal knowledge then, according to mother/teachers' descriptions of maternal knowledge, professional knowledge would be deprived of the scrutiny that maternal knowledge can supply. Yet, my conversation with the mother/teachers informed me that the hole often was empty during formal discussions and decision-making forums which the mother/teachers experienced in schools.

The Reception and Proclamation of Mother/Teachers' Maternal Knowledge in Schools

The conversation made it evident that my fourth research question was too narrowly conceived. The mother/teachers' talk revealed that not only did they find it difficult to influence others to hear maternal knowledge in schools, but also to convince themselves to proclaim it. I learned, therefore, that in their teacher role, the mother/teachers experienced problems with respect to not only the reception but also the proclamation of their maternal knowledge in schools.

Reception difficulties. Generally, the mother/teachers said they believed their maternal knowledge was neither heard nor received in staff meetings, committee meetings, or other decision making forums in their schools. Exceptions were described

by participants who were Kindergarten or primary grade teachers. They claimed that in small group discussions with primary grade peers -- many of whom were coincidentally mother/teachers -- their maternal knowledge was heard. Even in the elementary schools where this acceptance in small groups was experienced, the mother/teachers said that they thought their maternal knowledge was dismissed in larger staff meetings.

The mother/teachers claimed that when they had attempted to present maternal knowledge either in elementary or secondary schools, it had been dismissed as "too intuitive" and "not research-based." If a receptive chairperson had put the presented maternal knowledge "on the table," the mother/teachers said that nobody had picked it up. Some participants claimed that they had seen disapproving looks on staff members' faces; looks which said, "Oh! No! Not that mother going on again about her work (or her kids)."

Some participants said they thought their maternal knowledge was not received because it disturbs some staff members by requesting them to examine traditional perspectives and think about or seek for new ones. Because they know through mothering experience that there are alternative but never correct solutions to problems involving people, the mother/teachers said that they believed that to search for an adequate solution, they require time to talk over varying perspectives. They said that they thought maternal knowledge is unwelcome in school decision-making forums because it does not facilitate "getting straight to the point," which they claimed most school staffs prefer and consider efficient. Several said they believed that mother/teachers themselves do not relate to maternal knowledge during staff meetings and on committees, choosing to identify with their professional rather than their maternal role. This claim received support in mother/teachers' talk on their difficulties in proclaiming maternal knowledge, which included some explanations of why mother/teachers often find it prudent in school to dissociate themselves from their maternal role.

Proclamation difficulties. Participants said that during childraising breaks they became acutely aware that society devalues mothering. They talked of experiencing pressures not to be at home and hearing surprise and dismay in their friends' opinions about giving motherhood priority over career. Moreover, they recalled their own apologetic self-introductions such as, "I'm just a mum." Consequently, several believed that they re-entered teaching with diminished self-esteem, which deterred them from drawing attention to their mothering experience, and thereby their motherhood, when among teaching colleagues.

One mother/teacher mentioned that upon returning to teaching, she avoided displaying her motherhood to colleagues by consciously dressing like a professional. Other participants spoke of several reasons why they thought it prudent for mother/teachers to suppress evidence of their mother role. For instance, they claimed that because "mothering" presents negative images such as "mollycoddling," to speak on mothering can be inferred by colleagues to be an attempt to promote beliefs and teaching behaviours which "smother" students' development. Many participants said they believed that if mother/teachers call attention to their mothering work, they risk perpetuating their colleagues' impressions that mother/teachers' loyalties and priorities lie outside of school. According to participants' talk, references to their motherhood are liable to arouse their colleagues' assumptions that mother/teachers are a blight on school staffs because they cannot spare time for extracurricular activities, and they have above average rates of absence from work since they must attend to their childrens' sicknesses.

In three different ways, humility seemed to undergird mother/teachers' reasons for not proclaiming their maternal knowledge in schools. First, regardless of how many children they had, many participants said they were fearful of conveying to colleagues the impression that they viewed themselves as experts on children. Some were wary,

moreover, of appearing to claim an intellectual advantage over colleagues who were not parents. Second, participants said they believed that they chose not to refer to their own children in school because they are fearful of seeming boastful about either their children or their parenting abilities. Some claimed that, alternatively, if a mother/teacher speaks of experiences involving her own children which enable her to identify with and empathize with the behaviours of a parent being subjected to staff criticism, then she risks being perceived as a "bad mother." Third, some participants spoke of being reluctant to proclaim their maternal knowledge because they could not be "definite" about it. Alternatively, others said that proclaiming maternal knowledge would suggest that they perceived of it as generalizable, which they did not. Deciding that their maternal knowledge was not generalizable because it had been developed merely through experiences encountered with their own few children, many of the mother/teachers considered it not worthy of presentation in school decision making forums.

Participants claimed that for two reasons they find the nature and tone of decision-making forums make it difficult for them to proclaim their maternal knowledge. First, they said that they thought the traditional ways of conducting staff meetings make inserting maternal knowledge difficult because it requires talking time that is not made available. They claimed that the drive in staff meetings for efficient communication and decision-making, accompanied by the tradition of assuming this is best facilitated through adversarial discussion styles, means that maternal knowledge has little chance of being absorbed even if it is injected into the discussion. Second, participants claimed that in staff meetings, a display of emotion devalues any accompanying knowledge claim. They said that consequently they believed it difficult to proclaim maternal knowledge because in doing so they might display the feelings which undergird it. The conversation informed me also that both the proclamation and

reception of maternal knowledge are made difficult by at least eleven words used for its description.

The Eleven Words

The eleven words which prompted my second additional research question were either spoken directly by mother/teachers and/or named themes within their talk on maternal knowledge. As mentioned above, because reflexive thinking revealed to me that the words could readily represent concepts ill-suited to promoting maternal knowledge, I decided to investigate whether participants held varying conceptions of the words. I wished to learn, particularly, whether they held any conceptions that would devalue maternal knowledge. Moreover, I wanted to know what concepts they would want the words to represent in their descriptions of maternal knowledge. In this section, I present participants' negative and positive conceptions of the eleven words: instinct, intuition, sensitivity, individuality, caring, nurturing, controlling, mothering, assertiveness, humility, and emotion.

Instinct, intuition, sensitivity, and individuality. Like participants in the study, I recognize that it is difficult to distinguish conceptually between some of the words. In some cases, I feel unsure that it is appropriate to attempt distinctions; for instance, between instinct and intuition. However, I continue to find this necessary for purposes of thinking and discussion.

In their preferred conception of instinct, the mother/teachers said that they thought of their instinct to protect as the catalyst for the development of maternal knowledge. They claimed that their protective instinct prompts action and thought on an unconscious level. However, they feared, as I had upon first hearing mention of instinct, that popular associations of instinct with nature and animals means that knowledge rooted in instinct is considered primitive and unsophisticated. The

mother/teachers said that they also believed that mentioning instinct in connection with motherhood can unfortunately revive notions that mothering comes naturally, and does not incur learning and the development of knowledge.

To distinguish between intuition and instinct, participants claimed that intuition prompts action and thought on a more conscious level than instinct, which is the more "basic" of the two. They said they believed that instinct was an innate possession, but that intuition had to be developed. They claimed that it is possible but difficult to ignore the promptings of instinct, whereas intuition can be easily "roadblocked" by either oneself or others. Participants claimed to value intuition and to regret occasions which they can look back upon and see that they dismissed their intuitive promptings in error. The mother/teachers feared conceptions of intuition as "women's intuition," (that is, as a mysterious possession of women). They said that they preferred to believe that men are conditioned to deny intuition, while the "masculine" side of women -- the side socialized for work in the public world -- denies her intuition similarly.

Participants claimed that because of a mother's closeness to and opportunity to observe her children's emotional development, she learns to sense their feelings and needs. She can store this sense of the feelings and draw upon it as a source of intuitive thought. Thus, the mother/teachers conceived positively of sensitivity as a catalyst for pro-activity rather than as emotional reaction. They feared, however, that sensitivity is more usually conceived of as re-active, especially when associated with women; that is, a sensitive woman easily bursts into tears -- she is over-sensitive.

According to participants descriptions, a mother's sensitivity is particularly attentive to the protection of her child's individuality. The mother/teachers said that they conceived of individuality as the individual difference that exists between persons because each possesses a unique set of characteristics and talents. They claimed a clear understanding that it is important to appreciate and to foster individuality is an important feature of maternal knowledge. The mother/teachers were fearful that some

conceptions of "individuality" might misrepresent rather than disparage maternal knowledge. They said they would not want sensitivity toward individuality to be conceived of as being able to identify and classify a child and then respond to him/her as a member of a specific category. According to the conversation, the act of classifying children employs a conception of individuality which differs from that held within maternal knowledge of caring, nurturing, and controlling.

Caring, nurturing, and controlling. Participants claimed that the activities of caring, nurturing, and controlling were intertwined, and so found the terms difficult to separate conceptually. They said that they thought of caring as a commitment to respecting, protecting, and nurturing a person toward whom one has responsibility within a relationship. They spoke of protection and nurture being extended via caring to every facet of the person's being, from the physical through to the spiritual. They claimed that respect is extended to the uniqueness of both the quality and the way the facets combine to constitute the person's individuality. The mother/teachers said they believed they had learned that by entailing respect for individuality, caring requires the development of adaptability and flexibility of mind; a propensity to think reflectively and reflexively. The mother/teachers feared, however, that the terms "carer" and "caring" can produce a damaging image of maternal knowledge. Because "caring" often presents a "saccharin" image of sweet gentleness, it can misrepresent the caring which mothers know must incur firmness which is supportive of children's safety and developmental needs. Participants also feared conceptions of caring as self-sacrifice; i.e., sacrifice of one's own individuality in the interests of nurturing others.

The mother/teachers said that they conceived of nurturing as fostering growth of the whole child, which necessitates respect for and sensitivity to the child's individual characteristics. They claimed that nurturing involves both nourishing individuality and protecting it from repression. Participants said that because they believed that currently

this is the popularly held conception of nurturing, they were confident that it would convey an appropriate and beneficial sense in descriptions of maternal knowledge. However, they had no such confidence with respect to "controlling."

Participants feared that when used in reference to mothers' behaviours, the term controlling is often thought to represent total control. Whereas, through their experience of the form of controlling that is required in association with nurturing their children, the mother/teachers said they knew that it is a complex and delicate balancing act. When the mother/teachers spoke of their difficulties in presenting or making this or any other maternal knowledge heard, the key words in their conversation were mothering, assertiveness, emotion, and humility.

Mothering, assertiveness, emotion, and humility. Participants claimed that concepts that are commonly associated with these four words present difficulties with respect to the proclamation and reception of maternal knowledge. Information on assertiveness represented a theme within the conversation, and it included talk on mothering, emotion, and humility. Although the conversation indicated that participants would prefer to conceive of mothering as providing both support and challenge, they said they believed that more usually they equated it with words such as "smothering" or "mollycoddling." Of all the eleven words, mothering drew the most negative reactions from participants during the group discussion. They decided it was not "the word of choice, right now." They said that they strongly favoured the term nurturing. I pondered whether this choice might be influenced by nurturing being an acceptable descriptor with respect to men's activities. For instance, I imagined it would be permissible to speak of a football coach nurturing a fullback's talents, but certainly not mothering or caring for him. Since mothering provokes negative images, the mother/teachers claimed that it contributes strongly to the disparagement of any knowledge claimed to be developed through mothering experience.

The mother/teachers said they thought that assertiveness can be thought of positively as taking the risk of speaking out. They claimed to be perturbed by their own conception that to be outspoken or assertive as a woman is to risk being perceived as "too aggressive" or "just being pushy." According to the conversation, however, the assertion of maternal knowledge is constrained by mother/teachers' conception of assertiveness as appropriate only with respect to certain forms of knowledge. Participants claimed they were dubious about the appropriateness of asserting maternal knowledge because it is limited to personal experience, and is neither sufficiently objective nor generalizable. That is, they said they believed that knowledge must meet these standards to justify its assertiveness, and that the standards cannot be met by maternal knowledge. The mother/teachers claimed that humility with respect to their maternal knowledge places further constraints upon asserting it.

Because a growing understanding that there is never "just one right answer" accompanies the development of maternal knowledge, one mother/teacher claimed that mothers become "humble experts." That is, mother/teachers are humble about their maternal knowledge because they are reluctant to give the appearance of suggesting that they have definite answers. In this sense humility was viewed positively. However, participants also feared their more usual conceptions of humility as a habit of presenting maternal knowledge apologetically, rather than of stating it firmly and being unafraid to explain how it has been acquired in a specific context.

Participants claimed that successful assertion of one's knowledge requires an objective and unemotional attitude. Thus, to be heard, women must take care to hide emotion. Because asserting maternal knowledge risks showing emotion, it also risks reinforcing stereotypical beliefs about women's emotional reactions. These stated negative beliefs about emotion in relation to knowledge were in tension with the positive role which mother/teachers associated with emotion. They claimed that their

feelings provoked them to present their maternal knowledge in their schools, and thus they conceived of emotion as pro-active rather than re-active.

Summary

The mother/teachers claimed their maternal knowledge was an important complement to their professional teaching knowledge. According to their descriptions, maternal knowledge prompts respect for people's individual differences and includes a recognition of the importance of protecting and nurturing individuality. In association with this, the mother/teachers said they know, contrary to common assumptions, that the result of equal treatment is not necessarily fairness and can even be unfairness. The conversation informed me that a wealth of maternal knowledge is also acquired by mother/teachers through their frequent contacts with other mothers and families, and in temporary work performed in various educational settings during their career interruptions. Because the development of maternal knowledge is accompanied by a growing perception that knowledge is composed mainly of uncertainties, the mother/teachers said that they consider that a search for adequate knowledge requires the support of ample talk.

To describe maternal knowledge, the mother/teachers employed words such as "instinct" and "sensitivity" which can be diversely conceived and expressed. They recognized that the words can be readily interpreted, even by mother/teachers themselves, in ways which hamper the presentation and reception of maternal knowledge as authoritative². The mother/teachers reported difficulties with respect to both presentation and reception of their maternal knowledge during decision-making forums in the schools where they teach. They identified several impediments to

² The tensions which became evident with respect to these words suggested to me that to investigate more fully how they contribute to the devaluation of maternal knowledge I should conduct a Foucauldian genealogical analysis of the usage of each. However, since this project would be beyond the capacity of the study, I decided it should be reserved for the future.

presentation. These included mother/teachers' beliefs about what constitutes valid knowledge, a reluctance to identify themselves as mothers when in their professional role, and the non-availability in staff-meetings of the amounts of time required for talk when applying maternal knowledge to decision-making or problem-solving.

But what importance did I think these answers had with respect to schools? What meaning might they have with respect to the administration of schools? What did they have to say to researchers who study educational administration? What meaning did the information have with respect to our understandings of women's teaching careers? How could the answers inform studies of women in educational organizations, including those which focus on women as administrators? What did the answers mean for mothers of schoolchildren? To address these questions, I returned to the four theses which had provided the conceptual framework for the study. I asked myself how the answers to my research questions could inform the four theses.

THE CONVERSATION: INFORMING THE FOUR THESES

The theses contained propositions regarding a tension between two areas of mothers' knowledge which I named "maternal knowledge" and "authoritative knowledge." In this section, I discuss what the conversation told me about the four theses and how they might inform not only the practice of and research into educational administration, but also studies of women in educational organizations. In Chapter 1, I presented the four theses. In Chapters 2 and 3, I explained with the aid of references how the theses were informed by two sets of literature: one being on mothers and teachers, and the other on post-modern feminism.³ In this chapter, my talk on how the

³ Because I consider the theses to be representative of the literature which informed them, I have chosen not to encumber the text in this section by inserting references unless they either seem essential or apply to sources not previously mentioned.

conversation informed the theses is presented in four subsections, each of which contains and addresses one of the four theses.

Informing the First Thesis

In the first thesis, I speculated that "maternal knowledge has the potential to offer a valuable moral and critical perspective on the authoritative knowledges accepted and applied in public social institutions, including schools." The conversation implied that maternal knowledge can enable mother/teachers to think both morally and critically about authoritative knowledge which they encounter in schools. The thinking is directed toward not only promoting respect for individual differences among students and families, but also safeguarding the well-being and nurture of students' individual potentials. From experiencing the activity of nurturing, the mother/teachers claimed they had developed the knowledge that the popular conception of "fair" as "same" is too narrow and can produce unfair practices. In this and other ways, the morality implicit in the mother/teachers' descriptions of their knowledge matched that previously associated with women's experiences of responsibility and connectedness in relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky et al. 1986). It represented an ethic of caring (Noddings, 1986).

The conversation indicated, moreover, that through experiencing the activities of caring, which included nurturing and controlling, the mother/teachers had learned that carers need to be able to examine their own thinking and values reflexively. This knowledge of the value and appropriate application of reflexive thinking appeared to enhance the potential of maternal knowledge to offer both a critical and moral perspective. Since the conversation suggests that maternal knowledge does have the potential to offer a particular morally critical perspective, then what might this information mean for schools and their administration? And what could it mean for research in education?

What does this mean for the practice of educational administration? The conversation indicated that mother/teachers believe that to inform their work as teachers, ideally they use their maternal knowledge to complement their professional knowledge (i.e., authoritative knowledge on education). To consider the value that maternal knowledge could have if included as a complement to the authoritative knowledge applied to decision-making in schools, I discuss how excluding maternal knowledge could affect one issue in education and has affected another. The first concerns the interpretation of a policy contained in the British Columbia Year 2000 document, and the second concerns the making of policy on gender equity in teacher employment.

While urging educators to interpret cautiously British Columbia's Year 2000 document on initiatives for schools, Harker (1992) suggests that it contains conflicting conceptions of individuality. According to Harker's discussion, he perceives the document to present a conception of individuality which matches that contained in maternal knowledge. Citing the Year 2000 mission statement, Harker reports that " 'the central aim ... is to enable learners in the school system to be the best they can be both as individuals and as contributing members of society and the economy' " (1992:4). Cautioning that the conception is suppressed throughout the document, Harker states, "the development of this individuality is constantly subordinated to the need to maintain social stability and economic prosperity" (1992:4). He reports that from the stated purpose of the methods planned for assessing student performance, it can be inferred that the aim is to categorize students with respect to future vocational and education choices. To resist this "subtext," Harker advises educators to take a post-modern approach to reading the Year 2000 text (1992:10). He claims that when post-modern analysis is applied, "the Year 2000 reveals a highly repressive document, one that runs counter to the very notions of individuality and empowerment it espouses" (1992:8). My

conversation with mother/teachers implies that such anxiety about interpretation and implementation of Year 2000 initiatives would be unnecessary if it were customary to heed maternal knowledge within the field of education. However, since the conversation indicates that the knowledge is subjugated in educational circles, surfacing it in the document -- as Harker suggests -- would require a post-modern reading. For me, Harker's article supplied an example of how moral frames for interpreting educational policy could be strengthened by including maternal knowledge. The moral frameworks which guide the making of policy could also be strengthened. The conversation informed me, however, that maternal knowledge has so far been excluded from the moral frameworks applied to policymaking on employment equity for women teachers.

A mismatch was evident between many of the mother/teachers' current career positions and their experiences in education. Moreover, the policy responsible for the mismatch was apparently uninformed by fairness as it is conceived through maternal knowledge. That is, the mother/teachers had been subjected to employment policies which accepted fair as same and, therefore, omitted to consider how mother/teachers' career patterns differ in comparison both to one another and to traditional patterns. Both the pattern and content of many participants' teaching careers indicate that not only equity policy and the state of employment equity for women teachers, but also the constitution of the conceptions of gender equity currently applied to employment in education, require examining.

Currently, teacher employment policies allow mother/teachers (i.e., a high percentage of women teachers) equal opportunity to acquire teaching assignments for which they possess the same qualifications as others. However, qualification is measured on a scale which is formed in the image of uninterrupted teaching careers and of unhampered professional development opportunities which are more typical in men's rather than women teachers' lives. The experience or knowledge acquired by

mother/teachers which is relevant to education but foreign to the "male" teacher career pattern does not count as qualification. Concerns about employment inequity for women teachers have prompted several researchers to speak of the need to re-think the conceptions of "career" in order to accommodate the interrupted pattern of women teachers' careers (Acker, 1989; Grant, 1989; Littlewood, 1989; and Oram, 1989).

What does this mean for research on educational administration? Guided by my conversation with mother/teachers, I would agree with Acker, Grant, Littlewood, and Oram that the planning of employment equity policies which are fair to women teachers requires policymakers to expand their thinking beyond the traditional conception of "career" for teachers. The conversation implied, moreover, that when thinking about employment equity for school personnel, we need to recognize that "being equally qualified" may not necessarily mean "possessing the same qualifications." To learn about the variety of possible qualifications, the conversation suggested to me that we need to investigate further what experiences mother/teachers' (and other teachers') have outside of school and would claim to be valuable qualification for their work as teachers. Moreover, the conversation implied to me that there is a need to investigate whether employment equity policies for teachers are being implemented in ways which accept broader than traditional notions of career and qualification and if so, how, and if not, why not.

The conversation also persuaded me of the need to conduct further investigation into both the use and neglect of maternal knowledge in schools. To what extent do mother/teachers use or attempt to use maternal knowledge to complement professional teaching knowledge when engaged in peer conferences, in collegial conferences, in small group meetings, and in large group meetings? What appear to be the effects if the knowledge is heard by others? What appear to be the effects if it is not heard? I would propose that observations would be required for such investigation and that the theses

developed and informed in this study could provide a conceptual framework to assist interpretation.

Nona Lyons' (1990) suggests that the alternate morality that women develop in connection with caring and maintaining relationships would be useful in administration. Recalling Mary Follett's ideas, Lyons suggests that in order for them to learn how to build the viable relationships which Follett claimed are required for good management and leadership, administrators and other professionals should be taught the alternate morality. But why, when there are so many women teachers, wouldn't the value of this morality already be known with respect to the administration of schools? Why wouldn't mother/teachers' maternal knowledge be thus honoured? It seems important to have an answer if we wish to introduce or teach this knowledge in schools. I think the conversation provided information on the next three theses which might help in this regard.

Informing the Second Thesis

In my second thesis, I speculated that "maternal knowledge may be powerless to enact its potential because it cannot be identified as knowledge according to the terms of currently accepted epistemologies, and it lacks, therefore, the warrant required to authorize its use in public institutions." The mother/teachers' descriptions of maternal knowledge indicated that not only was it unlikely to be accepted as worthy of being heard, but also that it is not heeded partly because words used to describe the knowledge can cause it to be perceived as unworthy.

As already noted, instinct, intuition, and sensitivity were key words in participants' descriptions of the roots of their maternal knowledge. Being suggestive of the primitive, irrational, and subjective, the words can present images that are alien to our beliefs about valid -- or authoritative -- knowledge. Thus, maternal knowledge could be seen as having a dubious set of roots. Key words for describing activities

fundamental to the development of maternal knowledge were caring, nurturing, controlling, and mothering. As reported above, these words also have the potential to present images which discourage any payment of attention to maternal knowledge.

Even when conceived in ways which the mother/teachers favoured for describing maternal knowledge, the words represented activities associated with connectedness between mother and child. Thus, they accentuated that maternal knowledge is developed in a mode of connection rather than in a state of separation. The words therefore portrayed maternal knowledge as deficient in standards of objectivity often deemed essential and assumed possible for the attainment of valid knowledge claims. Thus, the conversation informed me that maternal knowledge may be rendered powerless to enact its potential by the language required for its description and proclamation.

What does this mean for the practice of educational administration? Since even the language which describes it is apparently likely to deny authority to maternal knowledge in schools, the moral perspective of mother/teachers and the information on children and families which they possess is probably left out of most decision-making forums in schools. Jane Roland Martin (1992) criticizes schools for providing students a store of knowledge which fails to include knowledge required for and developed through the work of caring and nurturing. My conversation with mother/teachers warns that school-decision making forums which exclude maternal knowledge of caring and nurturing are denied not only a useful complementary perspective on professional knowledge, but also an understanding of the role which intuition and reflexive thinking have in caring and moral decision-making within relationships. According to the value which the conversation shows maternal knowledge has for those entrusted with responsibility for children's lives, it should be included not only in decision-making, but also in both pre-service and inservice teacher education. That is, teachers should be

encouraged to develop their intuition, to understand its role, to heed their own and others' intuitive knowledge, and to value and utilize not only reflective thinking but also reflexive thinking.

The conversation warned me that not only mother/teachers' maternal knowledge of child-raising, but also their understanding of parents, parenting, families, and family life -- particularly their respect for individual difference in these spheres -- is not heard in schools. That is, it warned that schools exclude knowledge which could inform administrators' understandings and policymaking with respect to parent/teacher relations and communication. The conversation casts doubt on how well school administrators are able to hear parents' voices. Do the voices which are heard express the concerns of the majority of parents? Or, are they only the voices which speak in terms and tones which are perceived as authoritative in schools? On the basis of the conversation, I infer that the answers to these questions are negative and, moreover, that school staffs and administrators should follow the advice of Minnich (1990) and adopt a broader conception of authoritative knowledge. The conversation indicates this would require that educators learn to perceive a wider range of voices and terms as authoritative. It would require them to accept that knowledge which is personal and particular is worth listening to and that when it is ignored, differences between people become neglected and commonalities among them can only be assumed.

What does this mean for research on educational administration? The talk which further informed my second thesis also implied that the perception of maternal knowledge as non-authoritative would contribute to problems in parent-teacher and parent-school communication. Because the words used to describe maternal knowledge give it a non-authoritative image, they may also deafen teachers and administrators to the authority in maternal knowledge when spoken by students' mothers. Moreover, the words can interfere with mothers' own confidence in the authority of the knowledge.

In talk about interactions with their children's teachers, participants focussed upon difficulties in asserting their professional knowledge and spoke little about the reception of their maternal knowledge. I had to realize, however, that the relationship between mothers and teachers is different for mother/teachers than it is for other mothers. On the basis of some of the mother/teachers' comments, nevertheless, I inferred the need for future study to investigate non-teaching mothers' beliefs about the nature of their maternal knowledge and their experiences of its reception in schools. In order both to learn of generalities and to note and respect differences, I propose that such a study should include mothers from a variety of backgrounds and occupations. Moreover, I suggest such further study could gainfully employ post-modern methodology and the conceptual framework contained in the theses developed for this study.

Informing the Third Thesis

In my third thesis, I speculated that "as a result of the non-authoritative status accorded maternal knowledge, any attempts by women to use it within public institutions are constrained not only by others' but also by their own authoritative knowledge." As I mentioned when presenting answers to the research questions, authoritative discourses on the validity of knowledge claims influenced the mother/teachers' perceptions of the authoritativeness of their maternal knowledge. The conversation indicated that participants tended to discount the assertibility of their maternal knowledge because of its subjective nature. They did not want to appear to be claiming generalizability for their maternal knowledge. These opinions were spoken the most strongly by participants whose pursuit of academic study had reached the level of a masters' programme or degree. I had anticipated problems with respect to the power of epistemological discourse when forming my theses, but the conversation revealed that

mother/teachers find that assertion of their maternal knowledge in schools is subject to several other constraints.

The mother/teachers claimed that maternal knowledge influences them to think in terms of uncertainties and possibilities rather than in terms of available truths. When knowledge is presented to them, they said they believe it necessary to seek for and examine its possibilities by talking. Thus, the mother/teachers said they feel uncomfortable about presenting maternal knowledge in forums which offer little or no opportunity for careful examination and discussion. Because they find insufficient time available for talk in most school decision-making forums, the mother/teachers claimed that presenting maternal knowledge therein is unfruitful and unpopular.

The conversation told me that authoritative, common-sense discourses on mothering also affected mother/teachers' beliefs about asserting their maternal knowledge in schools. Participants said they thought that speaking maternal knowledge advertises their motherhood, which places them at risk of being perceived as professionally deficient. That is, they claimed that references to motherhood can remind other teachers of assumptions that mother/teachers are unreliable colleagues. For instance, participants claimed that other teachers assume that mother/teachers are absent frequently because of their children's illnesses, and they are rarely able to spare time for their schools' extracurricular activities or staff committees. Some said they thought that identifying openly with motherhood can damage mother/teachers' professional⁴ image. They said that they believed this influenced mother/teachers to disassociate themselves from maternal knowledge when they hear it spoken by other mother/teachers in schools.

4 The mother/teachers use of the term professional matched the definitions that Schmuck (1987) heard from teachers. That is, they described a professional as having had special training in order to contribute a special service to others and as possessing sufficient intrinsic interest in the work so that s/he is prepared to put in extra time without pay.

Cultural scripts on etiquette for mothers also contributed to the mother/teachers' reluctance to assert maternal knowledge at school. For instance, they said they believed it inappropriate to insult their childless colleagues by implying that mothering offers a knowledge advantage. They feared also to appear boastful about their children or their families.

What does this mean for the practice of educational administration? According to the conversation, it is not understood in schools that mother/teachers gain knowledge from their mothering experience. Apparently, for maternal knowledge to benefit schools, it needs to be heeded. Thus, its mode of presentation and its worthiness of being heeded need to be understood, which suggests that traditionally held conceptions of authority will need to be broadened to include a compassionate form (Jones, 1993). To accommodate the knowledge, administrators should heed mother/teachers' talk of impediments to presenting maternal knowledge. For instance, staff meetings structured to address efficiently several topics in limited time would need to be supplemented by meetings which allow free time for talk. Any notions that for mothers teaching is casual work would need to be discouraged (Oram, 1989). This would help to release mother/teachers from the struggles to appear professional which deter them from presenting maternal knowledge. Finally, to accommodate maternal knowledge, school cultures would need to exclude etiquette which influences mother/teachers to feel apologetic toward or to humble themselves before colleagues who have not experienced motherhood. The preferable culture will encourage school staffs to become more flexible in their thinking about mother/teachers' contributions to the school and offer recognition to these. To understand the importance of such a culture, administrators will need to appreciate that mother/teachers are as likely as any others to dismiss the value of their own and other mother/teachers' maternal knowledge.

What does this mean for research on educational administration? Upon hearing that mother/teachers believe their maternal knowledge is valuable to their work in teaching but feel required to hide their maternal selves in order to be perceived as professionals, I wondered what this tension might mean for women administrators. How is it experienced by mother/administrators? Do they experience the same tension as mother/teachers? If so, how do they resolve it? How does it affect their attitude toward staff members who are mother/teachers? How do they receive mother/teachers' talk on maternal knowledge? Do they discourage any talk on mothering lest it should present reminders of their own roles as mothers? What reception do male administrators give to maternal knowledge? How do men and women administrators compare in this respect?

While this list of questions kept growing in my mind, I recognized that the conversation had suggested to me the need for a study of women administrators. This might take the form of a study of mother/administrators and their beliefs about the usefulness of maternal knowledge in the administration of schools. I propose that such a project should employ the conceptual framework built for this study from the concepts of authoritative knowledge and maternal knowledge and the tension between them.

The conversation also suggested to me the need to study decision-making forums in schools. It pointed to the need to investigate to what extent the forums make it possible for maternal knowledge to be presented and to observe how interactions either do or do not allow for the reception and/or proclamation of maternal knowledge. And there would be a need to ask questions such as, "Which teachers hear the knowledge? Which teachers dismiss it?" I would propose that to be consistent with maternal knowledge, such a study would be of greater value if a variety of schools were included. That is the schools studied would vary, for instance, in size, age groups served, type of location, and gender of principal. And, it would be useful to ask, for instance, "What is

the nature of schools in which maternal knowledge is heard/not heard? What is the administrative style of schools in which maternal knowledge is heard/not heard? "

Informing the Fourth Thesis

In my fourth thesis, I speculated that "if women's authoritative knowledge serves to devalue their maternal knowledge, a resulting conflict may cause many women to feel uncomfortable and thereby to appear incompetent when presenting or dealing with either form of knowledge within public institutions." As indicated by the features of the conversation which informed the third thesis, mother/teachers experienced a tension between their authoritative knowledge and their maternal knowledge that caused them to feel uncomfortable about presenting maternal knowledge in school decision-making forums. However, the conversation also informed me that a significant cause of mother/teachers' discomfort on these occasions is the unavailability of time to talk. The mother/teachers spoke of feeling uncomfortable about presenting maternal knowledge in school decision-making forums which do not allow much time for talk. They spoke of feeling equally uncomfortable when required to accept knowledge purporting to be truth without being afforded time to talk about it and examine it through the lens of their maternal knowledge. As a result of this discomfort, many of the mother/teachers in the study said that they thought they speak minimally, if at all, in school decision making forums such as staff meetings. Some said they believed that their discomfort also deterred them from joining committees. They claimed that not being on committees gave them a further disadvantage in staff meetings which tended to focus on committee reports.

What does this mean for the practice of educational administration? I found it intriguing that mother/teachers have apparently not influenced the amount of time which staff meetings make available for talk. How can this be, I wondered, considering

that women form the majority on school staffs and many of them are probably mothers. I realized how post-modern theory could offer an explanation by referring to the power of discourses on what constitutes efficient behaviour in decision-making forums. Post-modern theory would suggest that the power is sufficient to influence women teachers to accept the behaviour as correct and to doubt the value of their own preferred but different behaviours. This suggests that to assist the voicing of maternal knowledge in schools, administrators need to examine reflexively their beliefs regarding the nature of talk which generates and supports decision-making.

I found that the conversation offered support for my speculations, which I discussed in Chapter 3, about women's behaviours in mixed group discussions. It indicated that maternal knowledge can influence women to find such discussions inappropriate and unaccommodating. The mother/teachers claimed that their maternal knowledge of uncertainty and difference prompts them to speak in ways intended to elicit information on others' experiences, and to encourage group members to think and talk critically about what influences their thoughts. This implied to me that their attempts to present maternal knowledge are accompanied by behaviours which are proactive with respect to provoking others to talk, and since mother/teachers find that mixed discussion sessions in schools do not accommodate this, they tend to retreat. Thus, it appears that mother/teachers' mixed discussion behaviours are not indicative of women's assumed passivity and acceptance of a supportive role as suggested by sociolinguistic analyses such as those of French and French (1984), still they might easily be perceived as such. This implied that school administrators should be wary of adopting such assumptions. Rather, they need to understand what the behaviours are more likely to signify. That is, administrators need to know that holding to the assumptions will contribute to the exclusion of the voices and the potential critical perspective of maternal knowledge. The assumptions could produce mistaken perceptions of mother/teachers as weak and reluctant contributors rather than

potentially valuable contributors to school decision making forums. Moreover, such perceptions may influence opinions on the suitability of mother/teachers for administrative positions in schools.

What does this mean for research on educational administration? While observing mother/teachers' behaviours in school decision-making forums, do we acquire perceptions of them as weak or reluctant decision makers? Do such perceptions influence groups who select administrators? Do they influence administrators' selection of teachers whom they choose to encourage to enter administration or whom they are prepared to mentor? This study suggests the need for research that could address such questions.

Since the conversation suggests that mother/teachers do feel uncomfortable in decision-making forums because of the tension between their maternal knowledge and their authoritative knowledge, do they also feel uncertain about their own potential as administrators? Do they feel that they would experience discomfort if assigned the responsibility of making decisions in schools, since according to their experiences in decision making forums, the decision-making style is in tension with their own? Does this make them feel unsuited to administrative positions? Does it make administrative positions seem distasteful to mother/teachers?

In a study of women instructors in a large urban community college, Jean Cockell (1993) found that their aspirations with respect to leadership positions fell into three categories. Cockell interviewed women who either were currently occupying or had previously held college administrative positions. She found that the women believed they had a connected way of knowing which differed from the way of knowing traditionally employed in college administration. Women in the first category felt determined to utilize their connected way of knowing in their administrative work, and they were confident that consequently they would be able to make a difference in the

organization. Women in the second category did not believe they could utilize their connected way of knowing as administrators, and they accepted the suitability of ways of knowing more traditionally applied in administration. Women in the third category felt that they could not utilize their connected way of knowing as administrators. They felt uncomfortable about using traditional knowledge only and decided that they would prefer to occupy instructional rather than administrative positions. Cockell reported that contrary to what literature on women educators had suggested to her, none of the women in her study appeared to lack the confidence to envision themselves as administrators. Rather, those who preferred to be instructors rather than administrators felt uncomfortable about the prospect of being restricted to traditional administrative thought. In light of Cockell's findings, the mother/teachers' talk about their discomfort in school decision-making forums suggests to me a need to investigate whether or not mother/teachers view administration as a foreign knowledge territory from which they wish to remain distant.

Summary

The conversation indicated that maternal knowledge, if accepted as authoritative,⁵ could enhance the moral frameworks used both for the interpretation of policy and for the making of policy in education. If applied to employment equity policy, maternal knowledge of fairness could correct a mismatch which the conversation revealed between many mother/teachers' experiences in education and the current status of their careers. To assure that maternal knowledge is both heard and received in schools, administrators would need to adopt a broadened conception not only of what constitutes authoritative knowledge, but also of the sound and style of an authoritative voice. To encourage mother/teachers to present maternal knowledge and others to

⁵ Here, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, whenever I speak of the term authoritative in relation to maternal knowledge, I mean it to suggest "worthy of being heard and heeded rather than being ignored or belittled."

hear it, administrators would need to adjust the culture of their schools. School staff members would need to become more flexible in their thinking about the contributions which mother/teachers can and do make to schools. Mother/teachers' maternal knowledge and contributions to the school would need to be recognized openly. Currently streamlined staff-meetings would need to be supplemented by others which allow more time for talk and more freedom for voices.

With respect to research into both educational administration and women in educational organizations, the conversation implied that an understanding of problems associated with the tension between maternal knowledge and authoritative knowledge would provide a valuable framework for the study of several topics. These included mothers' perspectives on parent/teacher communication, women's behaviours as administrators, women teachers' perceptions of administration as a career prospect, and others' perceptions of mother/teachers' potential with respect to careers in administration. The conversation also implied there is a need for studies of school decision-making forums, and that the conceptual framework could assist such studies. It implied that the studies should investigate, for instance, whether or not maternal knowledge is presented and received, and to what extent maternal knowledge is used to enhance the moral frameworks applied in policy making, policy interpretation, and problem solving.

CHIT-CHATting ONWARDS

If the conversation was chit-chat, then I hope that I have shown in this chapter that chit-chat is too informative to qualify as "only chit-chat." Thinking about "chit-chat" reminds me how my study has impressed me with the usefulness of post-modern thinking for women. I have found it liberating to have learned that the way I apprehend a phenomenon is constituted for me by discourses, and that words are not transparent.

When, as "only chit-chat" did, a phrase or word perturbs me, I no longer discard it, I grab it, play around with it, think through what it says about me as woman/teacher/student/mother/daughter/wife. I question why it says what it does. I imagine or explore its origins, think of similar words and words of similar sound. I decide what it will mean for me, here, to-day. But to do this takes time and, I think, intuition to sense that reflexive thinking is due.

So, I have now spoken of my pleasure in having gained a new way to think about language and life, and I have talked about the meaning I believe my study has for the administration of schools and to research in education. But perhaps most of all, I hope that mothers might gain something from my study and that it will have meaning for them. I hope it shows us that we need to resist the authoritative discourses that define and judge our maternal knowledge for us and discourage us from speaking it. I hope that my study will help any of us who have not done so previously to shed our muteness. I hope the study will encourage us to hear knowledge in voices that proffer uncertainties rather than state certainties, that employ inquiring tones, and which evoke rather than rebut the talk of others. Finally, I hope it will encourage us to feel free to talk -- to chit-chat while we explore ideas, not expecting to find any definite answers, but never fearing this means we know nothing. During the group discussion session, one mother/teacher made the others laugh by reporting that to resist her son's disparaging comments about her determination to achieve "A's" in graduate study, she told him, "I don't have to be a dummy just because I'm somebody's mummy!" I hope the time is not far ahead when just because s/he's a mummy, we'll know s/he's no dummy!

But, I cannot end by only pinning my hopes to a better future for mothers. As a mother/teacher/educational researcher, students are my priority concern, and my hopes for maternal knowledge are hopes for students. Are students receiving all that they should be in schools if a knowledge which is rooted in an instinct to protect, preserve, and nurture everything special about their individualities is excluded from

decision-making forums which affect their schooling? Are other knowledges of benefit to students also excluded similarly? Maternal knowledge is an experiential knowledge gained through the practice of mothering. Foucault lists mothers' knowledge as a subjugated knowledge along with other experiential knowledges (Sawicki, 1991). So, because part of his post-modern project is an insurrection of subjugated knowledges, I shall chit-chat onwards about my hopes in this regard, and I shall speak of hoping that my chit-chat and my study might have some meaning for any who are interested in finding an "authoritative" voice for a knowledge which they believe for the good of students should have one, but currently does not.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONTACT
AND
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



DATE

Department of Administrative,
Adult and Higher Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: (604) 822-6349

Fax: (604) 822-6501

Dear Participant,

Thankyou for volunteering to participate in my study entitled "Mothers' Knowledge and Their Experiences of Its Reception in Schools."

The purpose of the study is threefold: (1) to add to the currently scant amount of information on mothers' perspectives on the experience of motherhood and the knowledge they believe that experience provides them; (2) to gain understanding of how women teachers who are simultaneously mothers of schoolchildren value their maternal knowledge in the performance of each of these two roles; and (3) to learn what reception of their "maternal knowledge" is experienced in schools by mother/teachers in each of their roles, and what consequences they believe the reception has for all who are involved in schools.

Each participant in the study will be interviewed twice individually. The planned length for each interview is one and a half hours. The first set of interviews will begin in the spring of 1992. For each participant, the time lapse between first and second interviews will be approximately five weeks. Each interview will be tape recorded. Immediately following an interview, I shall transcribe the audiotape. The transcription will be promptly delivered to the participant who will be invited to review it, to highlight any topics upon which she would like to add comment, and to append the extra information before returning the transcription to me.

When both interviews have been held with all participants, a group discussion session will be held between all participants. This group session is expected to take place late in the summer of 1992. The session will be of three hours in length and will include both small and whole group discussions, all of which will be audiotaped. To enable participants to become acquainted, the group discussion session will be immediately preceded by a lunch which I will host in my home.

Three volunteers will be called for from among participants to review and to discuss with me my preliminary analysis of data when that has been performed.

Data collected during the study will remain strictly confidential and will be read only by myself. Data will be preserved beyond the time of completion of the study but for purposes of my own possible future analyses only. Under no circumstances, will access to the data ever be permitted to anyone other than myself. To assure anonymity, neither your name nor any names of schools, etc. to which you may refer will be used in the study.

If you have any questions regarding the study please do not hesitate to contact either myself at my home telephone, 222-2797, or my research supervisor, Dr. Ian Housego at UBC, 822-5356. Should you decide to withdraw from the study at any time, your option to do so will be fully respected. It is anticipated that participation in the study will require approximately twelve hours of your time over a period of about five months.

Please indicate your consent to participate in the study by completing the form below and by returning it to me.

Thankyou for your interest in participating in the study.

Yours sincerely,

Janet P. Tyler
 Doctoral Student, U.B.C.

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, _____, consent to participate in the study entitled "Mothers' Knowledge and Their Experiences of Its Reception in Schools."

Signature of participant _____.

Date _____.

I have received a copy of this document for my own records.

Signature _____.