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(Signature)

Department of School of Social Work

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Date April 28, 1993
ABSTRACT

Using a feminist standpoint perspective, this qualitative study began with a review of child neglect theory and child welfare policy, incorporating an analysis of the ideologies underpinning the constructs of motherhood and the family. This highlighted how children's welfare is inextricably bound to the welfare of women, and how motherwork is not valued in the ruling relations of patriarchy. Next, drawing upon Dorothy Smith’s methodology of examining the conceptual practices of the ruling apparatuses, data from eighteen case files from the 1991 child neglect caseload of one B.C. Family and Child Service office were analyzed. The case families were predominantly headed by poor, single mothers, seven of whom were identified by the ministry as Native. Themes emerging from the analysis show that mothers' behaviors, considered out of context, are used routinely as the indicators of neglect, and that mother-blaming in assessment and intervention is common. Examples of institutional racism were found, and intervention was shown to function in many situations as a policing strategy. Neither the effects of poverty, nor the violence by male family members were factored into the assessments of women's ability to care for their children. The absence of the women's voices stood out in the data. The implications for social work praxis are discussed, in terms of reframing the relevance to practice of gender, 'race', class, and other determinants of social inequality.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of this study was a learning experience which brought to light for me the full meaning of feminist social work praxis. I struggled to identify the ways in which I am racist and classist, and I laboured to understand how I have been oppressed as a woman. Taking hold of, and unravelling the ideological wrappings of capitalist patriarchy is accomplished through process. What is found in these pages reflects one point in the process.

I am thankful to the members of my thesis committee, Richard Sullivan, Glenn Drover, Mary Russell, and Marlee Kline, for their contributions to my work. I give special thanks to my advisor, Kathryn McCannell, who encouraged me and guided me and who helped me be true to myself in relation to other women.

I give thanks to my wonderful family and to my friends, who made me feel very much loved, indeed.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to

Barbara May U’Ren

a woman who fought the child welfare system for her son
so that he could maintain family relations with her and his
sister. Her love for her children, and her strength
taught me a lot about motherwork.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

To understand the nature of child neglect one looks to the child welfare literature, to the published works of practitioners who define what is and isn’t child neglect, and to the research which provides evidence to build theories of causation. As well, child neglect is put in a temporal and social context to determine its scope. Finally, in the attempt to understand how child neglect is dealt with by the professionals and authorities, an historical and contemporary account is given of social welfare policy (Chambers, 1986). This is the usual and traditional approach. All of these factors of child neglect will be addressed in this study. However, the analysis will not stop there. To explain why the analysis must go beyond the traditional approach, the work of Fiona Williams (1989) is offered as analogue.

Williams (1989) begins her discourse on social policy by explaining why the analysis of the welfare state must not stop at the analysis of the relation of welfare policies to the economic and social organization of production (that is, work). She explains:

By situating an analysis of the welfare state not only in terms of the organizing principle of Work but in terms also of the adjacent and interconnected themes of Family and Nation we can be led towards a deeper understanding of the differential impact of welfare policies. (Introduction, xiv)

From Fiona Williams’ perspective, the inclusion of these three themes in policy analysis is crucial. In a similar vein, the perspective held in this study is that to
get at a deeper understanding of the problem of child neglect and to understand
the relation of social policies to neglect, it is necessary to go beyond a
description of child neglect and the theories of causation posited by traditional
researchers and practitioners.

Child neglect cannot be singled out as a problem without also looking at
the social institution in which it exists: the family. Although there is no
consensus in theory about the development of the family, a theoretical
framework of the family is necessary if one is to situate this institution in a
social and historical context (Anderson, 1980; Laslett, 1972; Barrett and
McIntosh, 1982; Smith, 1985; Dally, 1982). And further to this, child neglect
cannot be examined without also looking at the role of women in the family:
"Since women are the primary nurturers of children in this society, the welfare
of children is inextricably bound up with the welfare of women" (Kott
Washburne, 1983, p.290). The two themes of family and motherhood are thus
seen in this thesis to be crucial to understanding the problem of child neglect.
When child neglect is analyzed utilizing traditional methodology, children’s
experiences are well documented. In this study women’s experiences will be
the focus, in particular, as mothers who are deemed neglectful by the
authorities.

How I came to the decision to include in this study an exploration of the
two themes of family and motherhood, and to focus the research on women’s
experiences, is bound up in my combined experiences as social worker,
advocate, woman, and mother. I am white, and grew up in a family that was poor but aspired to a middle-class lifestyle. I married young and had children, as did most of my friends. No one in my family or circle of friends went to university, no one had a "career", we just had jobs. In my late twenties, I discovered feminist literature and this was a turning point, an awakening for me which led to work in a women’s centre/transition house. My focus for some years was on male violence against women and "family violence", and my work in this area led me to college, then university to graduate with a degree in social work. Although the focus of my social work practice had shifted to poverty and racism, my experiences as a woman and my feminist perspective meant that I would always analyze social "issues" as they effect women. It was during my employment as a community worker in a very poor area of Vancouver, B.C., that I found myself coming to the aid of more and more women who were seeking help in getting their children back from the child welfare system. Child welfare is administered in B.C. by the Ministry of Social Services. Since at the time I was one of less than a dozen paid advocates in the city and since I was one of the few advocates who did advocacy in the area of Family and Child Services (the title of the child protection Act), these mothers had few options in getting the support and help they were after. Although the legal aid system ensured them legal representation in their custody fights, many lawyers are not versed in child protection legislation and certainly most lawyers see their role as one of legal advisor, not social worker.
It was my experience as a community worker to have women say that they didn’t think their lawyers understood their grief and how grateful they were that I seemed to "care".

As I worked with these women -- one woman in particular over a three-year period -- I became aware of the powerlessness of mothers in the face of a bureaucratic child welfare system and court system that function more to blame mothers than help families deal with the problems that bring them before the authorities in the first place. Having been employed for a short time as a social worker in the B.C. child protection system, I had a working knowledge of the bureaucracy and also the personal experience of meeting child protection workers and district supervisors (the administrators of local Family and Child Services offices) who wanted to help families, not blame mothers. I was therefore able to help myself and my clients keep our experiences with the child protection system in perspective by recalling the positive experiences I and other families had in the past with child welfare services. However much we thought the system worked against parents, we had to remember that there were individual social workers who would listen and understand the plight of mothers.

The women I worked with were all predominantly poor, single parents and many had a history of physical and/or sexual abuse as children. A few mothers were First Nations people who also had to deal with the cultural lag or ignorance in the child welfare system.
These women had difficulty coping with life in the poor lane, never mind coping with powerful government agents. Poverty was a dominant issue in advocacy. If mothers weren’t coming for advocacy in child apprehension, they were asking for advocacy in income assistance, the income they received from the other arm of the Ministry of Social Services. These women and their children had to seek charity and advocacy to get enough to eat each month. The government welfare rates, falling well below the poverty line, legislated these families to the food banks.

One of the major considerations in responding as an advocate and taking on the cases was my anger at the apparent injustice in the child protection system. It was hard to hear over and over again the emotional pain in the voices of the women coming to me for help when one or all of their children had been apprehended. I had to ask myself, if these women had placed their children at risk and so had to have them removed from the family home, why were they putting so much energy into trying to get them back? One mother I worked with spent years battling the system to get her son back. The incongruence of their emotions, words, and actions with the protective actions of child welfare authorities perplexed me. As a professional I had to keep taking a "reality check": was my anger because of reaction formation, transference and counter transference, or just simply because as a mother myself I felt outrage that apparently caring mothers had their children taken away?
I want to state clearly that I did not view these custody cases as "either/or" events: either these mothers neglected their children and ought not to challenge the child apprehensions or these mothers didn’t neglect their children and are wrongly accused. I did understand that people who neglect or abuse can at the same time fight to maintain their ties with the "victim"; that the act of fighting for access to someone may be an expression of power struggles and personal self-interest. As a worker in a transition house for five years I saw ample evidence of this in the case of men who assaulted women and then went to great lengths to get their female partners to return to the family home, only to assault them further. What perplexed me in the cases of the women I worked with was that whatever their ego needs were in relation to having control over their children, the obstacles faced by these women were much greater. These mothers were predominantly single, all living in poverty, and they lacked the practical skills and knowledge of bureaucracy that is required in mediation.

Upon ending my employment as community worker and re-entering the educational system as graduate student, I wanted to explore further the questions I had about the child welfare system. I was particularly keen to explore the concept of child neglect because the expression of it was not clear to me given my experience as a worker in the child protection system and as an advocate with the mothers: there seemed to be no general consensus on what is determined to be "child neglect".
The research undertaken in this study utilized an exploratory approach to child neglect. An initial literature search uncovered little that was useful to the purposes of this paper. Much of what is written about child neglect is "currently limited to a small area of study which is characterized as the observable phenomenon of neglect" (Swift, 1988, p. 64). One question of interest was, if knowledge about child neglect is located in observable phenomenon, then who is doing the observing and what is being said about this phenomenon? A second question being asked in this study concerns women's experiences. What is being said about child neglect from the perspectives of women?

Drawing upon the methodology of Dorothy Smith (1990) this study examines the social construction of child neglect. In Texts, Facts and Femininity, Exploring the Relations of Ruling, Smith (1990) has conjoined two lines of inquiry:

... first, into what it means to explore the social from the site of women's experience and beginning therefore with an experiencing and embodied subject, and second, into the social organization of the objectified knowledges that are essential constituents of the relations of ruling of contemporary capitalism (p. 1).

Smith is saying that in the first line of inquiry the process of understanding life events is accomplished through women's accounts of how they experience them. In her second line of inquiry, she is speaking of the ways in which life events are understood (social organization) based on knowledge gained through bureaucratic processes whereby women have their experiences stripped of the
subjective and made a separate objective category (objectified knowledges). Smith is also saying that understanding the world from this particular perspective is essential in maintaining power (relations of ruling).

In her lines of inquiry Smith (1990) names the institutions that organize, regulate, lead, and direct contemporary capitalist societies as "ruling apparatuses". These are the institutions of administration, professional authority, management, and intellectual and cultural discourses. Discourse, it is noted, is considered by Smith to be part of the ruling apparatuses, and is the point of entry in this study of child neglect. Smith (1990) explains that the relations of ruling are mediated by discourse: "The power relations which come thus into view from the standpoint of an experience situated in the everyday world are abstracted from local particular settings and relationships. These forms of communication and action are distinctively mediated by texts" (p. 2). From this it seemed reasonable to research the communications of the ruling apparatuses of the child welfare system from a local setting to learn what is being said textually about child neglect. That is, to conduct research using the written data from B.C. child protection files.

There were two objectives in this study. One was to analyze the textual mediation of child neglect, the discussion of which has been introduced above, and the other was to explore child neglect in relation to the experiences of women, as analyzed by women. This was accomplished by bringing into the
discussion writings of women that are not ordinarily factored into the analysis of child neglect.

In her writings, Smith (1985; 1990) speaks of "experiences situated in the everyday world" and in relation to women she means that which is the mundane day to day activities of women and children. To get at these experiences, Smith begins with "an experiencing and embodied subject". Strangely enough, it was not the objective of this study to begin with interviewing women. I firmly believe women must have a voice, and that to understand the experiences of women, researchers have to make it possible for women to speak for themselves. Yet, I chose not to do this. I think it stems from the frustration I experienced as an advocate with the inherent mother-blaming of the child welfare system -- I was driven to explore the ideological underpinnings that inform child welfare practice. I thought that an analysis of the relations of power would establish a foundation of understanding. And following that articulation, I could then participate in research that would give voice to women. Women, who by virtue of these very relations of power, are rarely heard. So it is in this way that I consider this particular study to be a jumping off point. And to facilitate an understanding of the ideologies underpinning the child welfare system, this study looks to the writings of women: women writing about women's experiences with the ruling apparatuses in general, and more specifically with relations of ruling in the child
welfare system. The experiences are explored from a woman-centred position, that is by using feminist theoretical frameworks.

It is argued here that to get at an understanding of women's experiences in the everyday world in relation to the ideologies informing the ruling apparatuses one can, indeed, draw upon feminist scholarship as a valid and reliable source. There is a difference between traditional ("malestream") discourse and feminist discourse. Dorothy Smith (1985) has noted that "[t]he ordinary ways of our thinking and research begin in the intellectual world, with questions arising out of debates among social scientists, intellectuals, administrators, etc. We begin ordinarily outside experience and in the discourse" (p. 4). Feminist literature is in the discourse but it is also plainly inside experience. Smith said in a talk in Vancouver that feminist intellectual life and work is not severed with women the way that traditional men's academia is:

In the past, knowledge has denied that its knowers are embodied, has denied therefore its bodily ground, has denied therefore the community -- and variety -- of its human existence, and denied therefore how knowledge is connected up with the actualities of people's living. The women's movement and women's intellectual work has refused to be bounded by the walls of academe; ... When we speak in our disciplines as women, we bring into them this connectedness with a life beyond the text (1991, p. 15).

This connectedness is a distinctive character of women's studies because women, as the recipients of gender bias in traditional disciplinary studies, have challenged the assumptions of gender and power underlying social relations and scientific theorizing.
In developing feminist analyses, women critique the methodologies created by men which are said to protect inquiries from motivation, beliefs, and desires but which "contains precisely what it rejects: the vivid traces of a reflected self image" (Keller, 1985, p. 70). Evelyn Fox Keller (1985), a mathematician and author on the subject of gender and science, explores the "culturally pervasive association between objectivity and masculinity" (p. 71). Keller argues that because of the polarization of masculine and feminine in our society, objectivity is construed as objectivism which is a masculine goal; whereas subjectivity is interpreted as subjectivism, deemed a feminine prerogative. She defines objectivity as "the pursuit of a maximally authentic, and hence maximally reliable, understanding of the world around oneself" (p. 116) and she distinguishes between a dynamic objectivity and a static objectivity:

Dynamic objectivity aims at a form of knowledge that grants to the world around us its independent integrity but does so in a way that remains cognizant of, indeed relies on, our connectivity with that world. In this, dynamic objectivity is not unlike empathy ... By contrast, I call static objectivity the pursuit of knowledge that begins with the severance of subject from object rather than aiming at the disentanglement of one from the other. (p. 117)

Dynamic objectivity in its connectedness makes use of subjective experience. How we remain connected or how we are severed with where we are located is rooted in the emotional substructure. Dorothy Smith went on to say in her talk that the "sex-body" is the basis upon which we are informed of that around us, and that this gender sub-text to academia and institutions has never been
recognized in men's university. Keller quotes Schachtel (1959) in his discussion of the modern scientist:

The scientist ... looks at the object with one or more hypotheses and with the purpose of his research in mind, and thus "uses" the object to corroborate or disprove a hypothesis, but does not encounter the object as such, in its own fullness. Also, modern natural science has as its main goal prediction, i.e. the power to manipulate objects in such a way that only those aspects of the object are deemed relevant which make it suitable for such manipulation or control ... Thus it becomes an object-in-use...(p. 120)

In her discussion, "Feminism, Science, and the Anti-Enlightenment Critiques", Sandra Harding (1990) notes that feminist epistemologies, although varied in response, struggle "on behalf of eliminating the subordination of women in all of its race, class, and cultural forms" (p. 90). Harding explains that feminist empiricists believe sexist and androcentric biases in social science research "can be eliminated by stricter adherence to the existing methodological norms of scientific inquiry" (p. 91). For feminist standpoint theorists, of which Dorothy Smith is one, "a 'line of fault' opens up between their experiences and the dominant conceptual schemes" (p. 95). Harding explains that for both of these two justificatory strategies, knowledge must be grounded in experience. Citing many studies, Harding goes on to say that what has counted as knowledge in modern, Western culture originates in and is tested against only a certain limited and distorted kind of social experience. The experiences arising from the activities assigned to women, understood through feminist theory, provide a starting point for developing potentially more complete and less distorted knowledge claims than do men's experience. (p. 95)
This study, then, arises from a feminist questioning of the traditional starting points in the study of child neglect. As well as drawing upon the works of Dorothy Smith, this study utilizes methodology from the research of Gillian Walker (1990) and Roxanna Ng (1988). Walker studied wife-battering and followed the processes of its formulation as an issue, its operation in the women’s movement, and as purview of the state. In examining the relations of ruling and the women’s movement, Walker examined "documentary, discursive, and conceptual procedures" (p. 1). This study also uses these practices in drawing out the social construction of child neglect. Roxanna Ng (1988), in her investigation of how immigrant women were organized into the labour market, developed an analysis of the social construction of immigrant women as well as an analysis of the internal transformation of an agency serving this population of women.

By putting forward feminist analyses, and feminist critiques of traditional analyses of child neglect, we will learn how it is that the traditional child welfare response system, in its "social organization of objectified knowledges", misses the crux of the issue and sets up women and children as victims.

If the victimization of women is ignored in traditional approaches to child neglect, the victimization of children is not, and it is emotionally charged. When someone thinks of child neglect, often an image of a waif with tattered clothes comes to mind, a child who is dirty and probably hungry. But that is not the only image. There is culpability attached to the vision, and somewhere
the mind looks for the responsible party, usually the errant mother whom we expect to cuff that vulnerable child. One may ask, why shouldn’t a neglectful mother be held responsible if she is unwilling or unable to provide care?

The very phrase, "unwilling or unable to provide care" acts as an introduction to the causation of child neglect. In discussing the role of the state in the raising of children, Nicholas Bala (1991) cites the National Council on Welfare (1979) in its analysis of child welfare:

On the face of it, of course, parental inability is the reason underlying any decision to place a child in care...what is forgotten, however, is that the term ‘unable or unwilling to provide care’ is nothing more than a convenient administrative label lumping together a wide variety of family problems, many of which stem from inadequate income, unemployment and other factors that cannot fairly be blamed on their victims. (p. 15)

Such contextual issues as poverty and unemployment are examined in this study, as well as racial issues and gender relations. The examination begins in Chapter two, which explores the definition and scope of child neglect. Following the second chapter, I take the reader through the methodology of my research. And from there I turn next to what is commonly called a literature review: chapters dealing with motherhood and the family, theories of causation of child neglect, and the child welfare policy that frames child protection here in B.C.

The discourse on feminist theory and the presentation of the history of the family and perspectives on motherhood explore how it is that we continue in a vein of mother-blaming. These chapters reveal the ideologies underpinning
our traditions and social relations. Understanding our traditions and social relations from an analysis of ideology allows us to better grasp the processes at hand in traditional responses to child neglect. As Walker (1990) notes:

...we are not ruled on a day-to-day basis by terror but by ideological procedures -- ways of thinking, understanding, and acting -- that enlists us in our own ordering. Ideological procedures...form part of the work of a ruling apparatus comprising a complex of relations ... (p. 8).

How women conceive the image of motherhood, what we understand about it, and how we live it is not a natural, biological process such as changing from a girl to a woman. It arises from ideological procedures. The set of perceptions we call motherhood is learned through the ideological procedure of socialization, the transmission of cultural values, norms, and beliefs. Inherent in any socialization procedure is a maintenance of power relations. In a discourse on power and knowledge, White and Epston (1990) cite the works of Foucault (1979). They state:

Foucault also detailed the technology that became available to recruit persons into an active role in their own subjugation. When conditions are established for persons to experience ongoing evaluation according to particular institutionalized "norms", when these conditions cannot be escaped, and when persons can be isolated in their experience of such conditions, then they will become the guardians of themselves. (p. 24)

The ideological procedures whereby women are socialized to raise their children according to the ruling ideas of the time are presented in the discussions on the family, motherhood, and child neglect.
Chapter five looks at the causation of child neglect as put forward by the ruling apparatuses and provides a feminist critique which challenges the dominant theme of mother-blaming, showing how intervention targeted at the individual level both perpetuates the myths of motherhood and the oppression of women and children.

In Chapter six, I try to show that the ideologies which guide us in our construction of family and motherhood are the same as those that inform child welfare policy. Chapter six gives an historical and materialist account of the development of current policy and a critique of the deficits of its framework.

From the vantage point of this contextual understanding of child neglect, the reader is then taken into the presentation of the eighteen case studies (Chapter seven) and the data analysis (Chapter eight). Using an adaptation of grounded theory analysis, I examine the data to determine what is being communicated about child neglect and whether the findings align with what feminist theorists are positing.

The final chapter examines the implications for social work practice that come from the analysis of the data, and gives the perspective of analysts and feminist social workers who are themselves caught in the relations of ruling.

To begin this journey of discourse and analysis, the definition and scope of child neglect will be discussed.
CHAPTER TWO

DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF CHILD NEGLECT

Definition

In an attempt to define child neglect, writers and practitioners often cite Polansky (1981). He defines neglect using descriptive behaviors of the adult responsible for the neglect. According to Polansky, child neglect has occurred if a responsible caretaker permits the child to experience avoidable present suffering and/or fails to provide essential ingredients for physical, intellectual, and emotional development (Polansky et al., 1981, cited in Sevcik, 1984, p. 4). This definition is broad and it is not clear what "essential ingredients" mean, and it characterizes the vagueness found in the literature. Garbarino and Stocking (1980) do not attempt to define child neglect in their discussion of the social context of child maltreatment. In an earlier text on neglect, Polansky, DeSaix and Sharlin (1973) say "To a large extent, neglect is in the eye of the beholder" (p. 4). Marylou Kaufman (1983), in recounting the difficulties of defining maltreatment, points out that identification of abuse and neglect is complicated by "a wide continuum of acceptable child rearing practices" (p. 16).

In a Canadian Children’s Aid Society manual on fundamentals of child protection, Falconer and Swift (1983) state that "there is no social or legal agreement on precise factors which may be said to constitute neglect" (p. 49).
shows the many differences in legal definitions of neglect. They say that most provincial law has wording that is vague, and lacks consistency because of its discretionary nature in the interpretation. What Barnhorst and Walker term the "family autonomy" approach is considered better because its language is more precise. Figure 2.1 delineates some of the differences between the two leading approaches.

In their introduction to theorizations of the etiologies of child abuse and neglect Tzeng, Jackson, and Karlson (1991) note that in the United States there is a federal government definition; it is one that speaks of "maltreatment". And then each state has its own working definitions and guidelines. These authors say that because terminology for both child abuse and neglect is complex and ambiguous "inability to agree on definitions leads to problems in cross-study analyses, in cross-state comparisons, and in the integration of empirical findings with theoretical considerations" (p. 7).

One approach to defining child neglect utilized by Giovannoni (1985) is to discuss the various sources: societal, institutional, and familial. These sources will be part of this analysis in Chapter four which deals with theories of causation of child neglect. Giovannoni focuses on the familial sources but even so a clear definition does not arise: "Lack of agreement about parental roles, including both rights and obligations, impede the establishment of clear definitions of ... neglect" (p. 199).
1. **INTERVENTIONIST APPROACH** (broad and vague language)

All Canadian statutes EXCEPT Alberta and Ontario

Representative sample: New Brunswick *Family Service Act*

In addition to such situations as physical or sexual abuse and failure to provide needed medical treatment, the definition includes the following situations:

(a) the child is without adequate care, supervision or control;
(b) the child is living in unfit or improper circumstances;
(c) the child is in the care of a person who is unable or unwilling to provide adequate care, supervision or control of the child;
(h) the child is beyond the control of the person caring for him;
(i) the child by his behaviour, condition, environment or association is likely to injure himself or others

2. **FAMILY AUTONOMY APPROACH** (precise and objective language)

ALBERTA AND ONTARIO statutes

Representative sample: Ontario Child and Family Services Act

(a) the child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by that person’s failure to care and provide for or supervise and protect the child adequately;

(b) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer physical harm inflicted or caused as described in clause (a)

(c) the child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited, by the person having charge of the child or by another person where the person having charge of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child;

..... continued
FIGURE 2.1: DEFINITION OF
CHILD IN NEED OF PROTECTION IN CANADA

2. FAMILY AUTONOMY APPROACH (precise and objective language)

Ontario Child and Family Services Act (continued)

(d) there is a substantial risk that the child will be sexually molested or sexually
exploited as described in clause (c)

(e) the child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical
harm or suffering and the child’s parent or the person having charge of the child
does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, the
treatment;

(f) the child has suffered emotional harm, demonstrated by severe
   (i) anxiety,
   (ii) depression,
   (iii) withdrawal, or
   (iv) self-destructive or aggressive behaviour

and the child’s parent or the person having charge of the child does not
provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or
treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm;

(g) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer emotional harm of the
kind described in clause (f), and the child’s parent or the person having charge
of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent
to, services or treatment to prevent the harm;

(h) the child suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if
not remedied, could seriously impair the child’s development and the child’s
parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or
is unavailable or unable to consent to, treatment to remedy or alleviate the
condition;

(i) the child has been abandoned, the child’s parent has died or is unavailable to
exercise his or her custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate
provision for the child’s care and custody...
If definitions of child neglect are ambiguous, how is neglect assessed once a child protection worker is aware of an allegation? The literature points to clinical judgment and risk assessment. But risk assessment methodologies are undergoing critical examination as more child welfare agencies adopt strategies to better predict and prevent maltreatment (Wald and Woolverton, 1990). In B.C. the child protection social workers are directed by policy to complete a risk assessment for each investigation of abuse or neglect utilizing the same guide which lists ten areas of concern. The risk assessment form is presented in Figure 2.2. There is no scale for measurement of risk and the guide relies solely on the worker’s judgment. This procedure was only brought into play this past year and may not be followed in every district office. The B.C. Ministry of Social Services, which is the government agency charged with child protection, include abandonment, absence of parent and disability of parent in their definition of neglect. The meanings of these concepts are not clear, even when they are interpreted in policy. For example, a district supervisor explained that the interpretation of the phrase, "Deprived of necessary care by reason of the Disability of Parents", is interpreted in ministry policy as:

The child’s mental illness which creates a profound and real, adverse and apparently dangerous reaction on the part of the child to her parents creates a disability on the part of the parents.
FIGURE 2.2: MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SERVICES RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION: Protective Family Services
HEADING: Investigating Complaints of Child Protection

Guidelines:

The social worker will assess all the information obtained during the course of the Investigation to complete a risk assessment. The risk assessment is based upon a thorough review of the characteristics of the reported and past abuse or neglect, the child and family involved, and the environment in which the child and family exist.

The social worker will use the risk assessment to determine whether or not the child(ren) under Investigation are safe or are likely to be harmed by abuse or neglect in the immediate future. An assessment of the severity of the current abuse and neglect incident will also be considered in the risk assessment.

The social worker will review all of the following areas to complete the risk assessment.

1. **Severity of the Abuse or Neglect**
   - Impact of the injury on the child and the severity of the injury or damage to the child

2. **The Frequency, Recency and Past History of the Abuse or Neglect**

3. **Vulnerability of the Child**
   - age, physical or mental handicaps
   - child’s behavior and interactions with parents, siblings, peers or others
   - child’s position and role in the family

4. **Impact of Parental Behavior on Child**
   - a description of the parents behaviors including:
     a) physical, mental or emotional abilities
     b) mental health
     c) substance abuse
     d) parenting skills and knowledge
     e) parent’s perception of child and his/her needs
     f) criminal record(s) involving violence
     g) cultural and religious practices

..... continued
Guidelines (continued)

5. Location and Access of the Perpetrator to the Child

6. Parental Willingness to Protect the Child
   - parent(s) willingness to cooperate, access services and participate in activities to lessen problems and reduce risk to the child

7. Parental Ability to Protect the Child
   - specific areas which limit the capacity of the parent to protect the child

8. Environmental Conditions of the Home and Family
   - situational and ongoing conditions
   - mobility and social and/or geographical isolation

9. Existence of Family and Community Support System
   - nature of parent/child relationship
   - functioning of family members and their relationship with extended family and other community support systems

10. Reliability of Information from Reporter and Collaterals
    - an evaluation of the information provided by the reporter and collaterals

The social worker will complete a written summary of the risk assessment for each child in his/her present environment.

A detailed risk assessment must be completed at least once during the Investigation. The risk assessment provides the framework to manage the factors and variables indicative of abuse and neglect each time the social worker obtains new information during the Investigation process.

Where the social worker determines that the Investigation lacks sufficient information to fully complete a risk assessment or there is specific information that is not considered in the risk assessment that appears to place the child at risk, the social worker must consult with his/her District Supervisor to complete the risk assessment for the subject child(ren) under Investigation.
The social worker is cautioned to understand that normal discord in a family doesn’t mean a disability but even this interpretation does not clarify what disability actually means.

Wald and Woolverton (1990) stress that risk assessment procedures are appropriately used in making decisions whether to intervene but not to determine whether the parent will reinjure. Further, predictions based on certain instruments are suspect if the same instrument is used in cases of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect (Wald and Woolverton, 1990). Based on these researchers’ work it would appear that the assessment tool utilized in B.C. child protection is neither valid nor reliable.

Theorists who employ an ecological approach argue that defining and assessing child neglect without taking into account the social contexts in which individuals live perpetuates the attribution of pathology to the parent (which in virtually all neglect cases is the mother). Feminist theorists argue that when neglect is examined from the site of women’s experiences, the evidence shows that it is the flawed foundations of our relationships in families which contributes to maltreatment. The arguments of the ecology and feminist theorists are discussed in Chapter five.

**Scope of Child Neglect**

The B.C. Ministry of Social Services has only quantitative data submitted by district offices with which to assess the scope of child neglect. Discussions with social workers employed in child protection reveal that workers do not
have much knowledge of ministry caseloads. They have a sense of how colleagues in proximity assess child neglect and they know about the types of interventions generally available to their particular offices. But by and large descriptive data about what is actually happening in the province regarding child neglect is not available.

The quantitative data show that in B.C. during 1990-91 there were 31,429 investigations of possible abuse or neglect. As a result of these investigations over 14,000 new or revised plans for family support were initiated (B.C. Ministry of Social Services, 1992a). For the same period, 3,103 children were apprehended. Of these, sixty-two percent (approximately 1,900 children) were apprehended for reasons of neglect; and of these, fifty-three percent of their families were headed by single parents (B.C. Ministry of Social Services, 1991).

The groups of people most at risk of child neglect are those living in poverty, particularly those living on welfare: welfare rates in B.C. can be as much as fifty percent below the poverty line (End Legislated Poverty, 1991). In his earlier work, Polansky (1973) acknowledges the impact that poverty has on families when he states "... there is no question that adjudicated child neglect is much, much more prevalent among the poor" (p. 8). Research conducted using recent B.C. Ministry of Social Services data offers further evidence that families living on welfare are overrepresented in child protection cases and that the admission rates of children into care for reasons of neglect are significantly
higher for families on welfare than for employed families (Campbell, 1991). These findings also show that children apprehended on evidence of neglect are predominantly placed in the care of the parent rather than a care resource or foster home. Campbell questioned what conditions changed sufficiently to permit children to remain at home, yet remain at risk enough to require apprehension (Campbell, 1991, p. 158).

Women bear the brunt of allegations of child neglect because they are seen to be the primary care providers for their children even when a father is present (see, for example, Swift, 1988; Polansky, DeSaix and Sharlin, 1973; Fowler and Stockford, 1979; Schur, 1983). There are about 32,000 single mothers currently on welfare in B.C. Most of them will not come before the authorities as neglectful mothers but for those who do, it is their experiences as an oppressed "minority" which will be ignored in the child protection process (Dalley, 1986; Swift, 1991). Fiona Williams (1989) is one of the few policy analysts who addresses the absence or marginalization of 'race' and gender in social policy. [Note: I follow the practice of Fiona Williams in her use of quotation marks with the word race to denote one does not mean a separate race of people, rather the conditions arising from racism and imperialism]. In relation to women, Williams states that there has been a failure to acknowledge experiences and struggles of women and a failure to account for sexism in the provision of state welfare.
First Nations families, whether or not poor, are doubly at risk of being assessed as neglectful. McKenzie and Hudson (1985) report that a 1980-81 review of data from B.C. indicated that "status Indian children were eight times as likely as non-Indian children to be in some form of substitute care" (p. 126). Over the past two decades First Nations people in Canada have been active in reclaiming their lives from the consequences of colonialism, including the move to govern their own child welfare systems (Sinclair, Phillips and Bala, 1991).

Although the mainstream child welfare system has recognized aboriginal issues and has responded positively towards First Nations involvement in reorganizing Native child welfare, institutional racism continues to characterize legislation (see, for example, Monture, 1989 and Kline, 1992).

This is not to say that 'race' can be separated from class and gender, because the experiences of First Nations women, Black women, and white women have differing antecedents, contexts, and outcomes, even though all are women. And within groups of women, whether First Nations women or white women or other women of Colour, there are vast differences that have to be acknowledged if we are to get at the realities of their experiences with child welfare. I make this point because, as a white woman, I have a propensity to commit the error of generalizing the experiences of women. I mistakenly take my experiences and the experiences of many other white (usually middle-class) women as the basis for analysis of gender relations, and in the process
completely devalue the lives of women who are not white (whether or not middle-class). How very different my analysis would be were I to be a First Nations woman or a Black woman from Nova Scotia. Marlee Kline (1989) speaks of three interrelated tendencies in contemporary white feminist scholarship:

1. the tendency to overlap racial identity when considering the impact of an issue on women;
2. the tendency to define issues in ways that more significantly address the experiences of white women; and
3. the tendency to over-simplify the sites of women's oppression

Marlee Kline notes in her critique of racism within feminist discourse, that if one considers the dominant ideology of child-care practices and not just the ideology of (white) motherhood, one becomes less specifically gender-oriented and "more concerned with the conflict between dominant and subordinate cultures" (p. 132). The literature talks about the fact that Native cultural norms in childcare differ from, and can be deemed inadequate to mainstream notions of child rearing (Sinclair, Phillips and Bala, 1991). What isn't necessarily made clear without both a 'race' and gender connection, and what Kline points out, is that not only may First Nations children be taken into care because they are raised by extended family members as opposed to their mothers, but that "the expectations of the dominant ideology regarding child care practice might also help to explain why First Nations families have generally been considered unfit for fostering or adoption (p. 133) (emphasis added).
Whether, and to what extent 'race', class, and gender relations are dealt with in cases of child neglect in B.C. will be explored in the analysis of the data. This study examined the text of eighteen case files of the Ministry of Social Services. The conceptual model of methodology used in this research and an outline of the ruling apparatuses governing child welfare are presented next.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Model

The research undertaken in this qualitative study utilized an exploratory approach to child neglect. Karen Swift (1988), in her review of the literature on child neglect, stated that child neglect is "currently limited to a small area of study which is characterized as the observable phenomenon of neglect" (p. 64). A review of the literature in this study confirmed that a tangible definition and a reliable and valid means of assessment are not conceptual practices agreed upon in the field of child protection. If, as Swift states, knowledge about child neglect is located in observable phenomenon, then a question in this study was: who is doing the observing and what is being said about this phenomenon?

The examination of child neglect as observable phenomenon in this study takes the course of an analysis of child protection file recordings located in a district office of the B.C. Ministry of Social Services. The type of analysis utilized explores the social construction of child neglect as developed in communication and action in a district office. Chapter one of this study introduced Dorothy Smith’s (1990) discourse on the ruling apparatuses such as administration, professional authority, and management. These are the institutions that organize, regulate, lead, and direct contemporary capitalist societies. Crucial to the understanding of the power relations of society is the notion of discourse as a ruling apparatus. How experiences situated in the
everyday world are abstracted and communicated is a process that maintains power relations. The strategy of analyzing the text of child protection files was chosen in the attempt to understand how child neglect is conceptualized by the authorities and how the social construction of child neglect mediates the relations of ruling.

The methodology used in this study is drawn from the traditions of content analysis and institutional ethnography and is characterized by properties of the sociological inquiries adapted from Marx's method of political economy. Content analysis is defined as the examination of a class of social artifacts such as written records and it has as a component the analysis of latent content or underlying meanings (Babbie, 1989). Shulamit Reinharz (1992) classifies the type of research carried out by Dorothy Smith as content analysis. Reinharz (1992) says that in using unobtrusive measures (written records), feminist researchers look at texts for how they mediate experience:

Contemporary feminist scholars of cultural texts are likely to see meaning as mediated, and therefore to examine both the text and the processes of its production. (p. 145)

I think that the determination of mediated texts takes content analysis a step further and, in doing so, draws upon conceptual procedures of institutional ethnography. Institutional ethnography "seeks to locate the dynamics of a local setting in the complex institutional relations organizing the local dynamics" (Ng, 1988). The dynamics spoken of are integral to textual analysis because they are part of the ruling apparatuses.
Although others have begun the deconstructive analysis of research on
the family utilizing many feminist methodologies (see, for example, Baines,
1991; Barrett and McIntosh, 1991; Swift, 1991; Gordon, 1988; McCannell and
Herringer, 1990), definitive studies in child neglect which could guide this
research design were not found. For this reason, and because this study arises
from a feminist questioning of the traditional starting points in the examination
of child neglect, I have drawn upon the works of feminist researchers that I
think are similar in approach. An example is the book, Family Violence and the
Women's Movement by Gillian Walker (1990). Walker examines the relations
of ruling and the women's movement in respect to the conceptual development
of wife-battering. Walker's study is a type of institutional ethnography and her
research incorporates an analysis of documents which illuminates how wife-
battering is a textually mediated discourse. As Kathryn McCannell (1992)
explains, "Walker's work illustrates how 'family violence' as a concept
organizes both a phenomenon and a course of action. As an ideological
construction which sets in motion a whole process of research, academic and
bureaucratic discourse, the concept of 'family violence' serves to contain the
claims made" (p. 1). When the "male violence" framework used by women's
groups and the "family violence" framework were melded, the emphasis was
put on "violence". McCannell notes that the "ultimate focus therefore became
one of assault, individual rights, and laws. This location of the issue in the
judicial system meant that a wider analysis of women's oppression in broader
structures became secondary, and the stage was set for alleviating the situation of individual women and dealing with the violence of individual men” (pp. 2-3). The reason I cite this research is that the problem of child neglect is also located in the judicial system as a result of similar conceptual procedures, with the focus in child protection on risk assessments, interventions, and interpretations of law. Child neglect is seen in the narrow context of mother-child relations and is commonly thought to be a breakdown in a mother’s ability to care for her child due to her pathology. Such contextual issues as poverty, violence by male family members, and institutional racism are made invisible within this narrow framework of child protection law and practice.

The sociological research of Dorothy Smith (1990) described in Texts, Facts, and Femininity mirrored most closely what I was attempting in my analysis of ministry child protection files. Smith (1990) says that the text "is analyzed for its characteristically textual form of participation in social relations" (p. 4). Smith’s work with this methodology encompassed the analysis of the construction of mental illness using field interviews as data; the social organization of subjectivity using as data the transcript of a meeting at a university; and a study of how femininity is a textually mediated discourse in which texts on cultural norms of femininity from various sources were analyzed. It is this last study in particular that has influenced the analysis developed in this study on child neglect. Smith (1990) states that

Textually mediated discourse is a distinctive feature of contemporary society existing as socially communicative and
interpretive practices intersecting with and structuring people's everyday worlds and contributing thereby to the organization of the social relations of the economy and of the political process.

The discussion of the literature on child neglect and the feminist theory presented in this study show how the mother is the target of intervention. The bureaucratic processes whereby women, as the focal point in child neglect, have their experiences stripped of the subjective and made "objectified knowledges" is the point of entry of analysis. In the field of child welfare, the ruling apparatus governing the bureaucratic processes is the Ministry of Social Services, a department of the provincial government. The everyday experiences of women with the ruling apparatus -- as mothers alleged to be neglectful or as mothers otherwise brought to the attention of the authorities -- takes place at the local setting of district offices. The communications of bureaucratic processes in which the experiences of women are objectified are mediated by text. In other words, the text in child protection files is a discourse about women's behaviors that fits the dominant ideology of what mothers should be and should do. It is important to note that the text found in ministry files acts as the sole source of information about a family. The text is formulated by child protection social workers and authorized by the local administrator based on conceptual procedures put forward by the ruling apparatuses.
The Ruling Apparatuses of Child Welfare

The term child welfare in B.C. is narrowly defined as child protection; it does not mean the general welfare or well being of all children. Issues of child protection fall under the authority of the Ministry of Social Services, an arm of the provincial government. The legislation which governs child welfare is the B.C. Family and Child Service Act, assented to in 1980.

District offices are the local sites of the Ministry of Social Services and it is from these offices that child protection social workers carry out their responsibilities, workers who are delegated the "power, duty and function" by the Superintendent of Family and Child Services to respond to child protection concerns.

Each district office has a "catchment area" which is geographically determined. People living in this catchment area and who are alleged to have put a child at risk of abuse or neglect (as outlined above) are investigated by a social worker from the local office. If there is evidence of abuse or neglect (deemed protection), or if the social worker decides to intervene for reason of offering support to the family (deemed non-protection), a Family Service file is opened and recordings are thereafter kept of all interaction with the family. When a child is apprehended, a Child-in-Care (CIC) file is also opened and maintained until the child is returned to the home or is adopted.
Ministry Files as the Source of Text

At the proposal stage of this research, Child-In-Care files were going to be used as the text for analysis. However, it was found that if the child is made a permanent ward of the state the CIC case file leaves the district office. The Family Service (FS) file does not; it remains at the local site as long as the child’s family stays in that catchment area, and it contains copies of what is in the CIC file. It was reasonable, therefore, to change the source of text from Chil-in-Care files to Family Service files in order to have as much of the written information about the family as possible.

Only closed Family Service files were included for study. Gathering data from closed files ensured availability of files; many open files were thought inaccessible as they were distributed among staff offices. Due to the lack of storage space in the district office, the closed files most easily accessed were found to be the most recently closed. For this reason, the sampling frame chosen was for the year 1991. There was a total of 72 Family Service files closed between January and December of 1991.

Of the 72 Family Service files in the sampling frame, 20 were identified as having child neglect as a reason for ministry involvement. The identification of neglect in each file was accomplished in two ways. First, the District Supervisor pulled files she knew had issues of neglect. Secondly, the researcher looked through each of the remaining files to pull the ones that had neglect targeted as at least one of the reasons for investigation. For the
purposes of obtaining the sample, neglect was understood to mean neglect if it was described in the files as disability of parent, neglect, absence of parent or abandonment. These terms are what the Ministry of Social Services categorizes as "neglect".

**Procedures for Data Collection**

Approval to conduct the research was obtained from the University of B.C. Committee for Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects. Permission to access Ministry of Social Services files was obtained from the Superintendent of Family and Child Services. As a matter of protocol, the Area Manager was contacted for permission to go into a district office in his area. On the manager’s evaluation of its representativeness of the urban child neglect caseload, a district office in east Vancouver was chosen as the local site. It was reported by the district supervisor to be one of the busiest offices in terms of numbers of cases investigated.

Of the 20 closed files identified as neglect cases in the calendar year 1991, only 18 were actually used in this study because two went missing, possibly during a relocation of the district office some blocks away from the original site.

The 18 Family Service files were listed, using a numbering system so as to safeguard confidentiality of file identification yet allow the researcher to reference them. The list was kept in the office of the district supervisor. The ministry uses the names of the mothers to identify families, unless there is no
mother present in the family unit. Except for one family which had only a single
father, the files in this study were organized by the ministry using the names of
mothers. For the purposes of this study, the recorded data were organized into
separate files to correspond with the Family Service files, and were designated
"F" (for female) or "M" (for male), respectively. The names of the mothers in
the files were substituted by alphabetized names for each numbered file. For
example, in files listed as F01, F02, and F03 the mothers’ names were
substituted as Anne, Betty, and Connie, respectively. Other real names were
substituted with generic titles such as "grandmother", "father", "son", "baby"
and so forth. The data collected did not in any way identify the families or the
social workers who were the communicators in the files.

The determinants for including text for analysis (which was recorded
verbatim onto foolscap) were: if the text was a review recording, an
assessment, a service plan, a running record, or an intake. If it was a duplicate,
then it was not included.

An intake is the initial file recording which is done when a protection or
non-protection call is put into the ministry. These are not always clearly
marked nor filled out completely, resulting in missing data such as whether
there is a child protection concern. The running records are file recordings
written by the case worker to keep abreast of events. A service plan is
sometimes but not always written out. A plan includes goals toward which the
mother works in her attempt to ameliorate the problem which brought the
welfare authorities to her family. An assessment is sometimes but not always written out. It includes a determination of the identified child protection concern and the ability of the mother to respond appropriately. A review recording is usually written when a file is being closed, transferred, or updated after a length of time without contact with the family. With the inclusion of these five categories of text, virtually all written records in each file became data for analysis.

Upon completion of the textual analysis, the collected data were returned to the district office to be sent to the paper shredder.

Analysis

Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory analysis was found to fit the nature of this study. As well as utilizing procedures which call for constant comparisons, its coding process takes into account the context of the phenomenon being studied. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that context can mean a set of properties that pertain to a phenomenon but that context is also: "the particular set of conditions within which the action/interaction strategies are taken to manage, handle, carry out, and respond to a specific phenomenon" (p. 101). As I argue throughout this study, the context of child neglect is critical in the analysis.

In describing the rationale for using a modification of grounded theory analysis, I am reminded that the steps in analyzing the data are related to the arrangement of the contents of this study. The layout of this study
intentionally takes the reader through a series of discourses to order and explain the context in which women experience motherhood and allegations of child neglect. The introduction gives my reasoning for examining the two themes of family and motherhood, and the validity of exploring women's experiences through the voices of feminist theorists. As well, the introduction outlines the rationale for using textual analysis as methodology. The second chapter discusses the problems encountered in defining and assessing child neglect, and the propensity of traditional approaches for excluding an analysis of gender relations in explaining child neglect. The chapters dealing with the themes of family and motherhood and the theories of causation of child neglect are to help the reader understand the arguments being put forward by feminists which challenge the traditionalist perspectives through an analysis of ideologies. The chapter outlining the development of current B.C. child welfare legislation explains the policy framework within which child protection social workers practice. In placing the research in this social and political context, I hope that the reader will develop an understanding of the feminist framing of events and also be clear about my assumptions of the relations of ruling brought to the interpretative procedures.

In following this systematic order of chapters, I chose to present the data analysis in two parts. The first, Chapter seven, presents the data found in each of the eighteen Family Service files. The second part, Chapter eight, is the analysis which brings into discussion the themes that emerged from the case
I thought that the analytical feature of a two-part presentation would give as complete an exposure as possible of the data.

The data were coded initially to begin conceptualizing the phenomenon of child neglect, a process called open coding. As described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), open coding names and categorizes the phenomena by making comparisons and asking questions. I asked such questions as, "what represents child neglect?" and "what are the conditions under which the families are living?" (i.e. context of the allegations of neglect). Are the needs of mothers considered in the process? Other questions raised during the open coding process were:

- Are there fathers present in the family unit?
- What constitutes evidence of child neglect?
- What behaviors of the mothers are deemed neglectful?
- What behaviors of the fathers are deemed neglectful?
- How do the procedures of investigation document neglect?
- What interventions are carried out?

Comparisons were made within and between case analyses to discover categories. The open coding process was done by coding sentences and paragraphs, asking the question, "What is the major idea brought out by this...paragraph?", as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 73). For instance, an entry in a file that had a number of sentences describing a social worker visit to a family home was coded and then made a memo in the subsequent coding step in categorizing the data. An example of this coding process is the coding of the social worker visits to the home of Irene. Over a period of years, social workers recorded their many visits to Irene’s home and
the visits that noted non-white people in the family home were categorized separately from the visits that did not mention non-white visitors. The categorization of memos of social worker visits having remarks denoting ‘race’ emerged as part of a theme of institutional racism once the memos from the data of all eighteen files were compared. That is, the coding process that highlighted as memos how ethno-cultural backgrounds of all clients were ignored or, if mentioned at all, disparaged were collated with the social worker visits to Irene’s home in which remarks denoting ‘race’ were made. Out of this interpretive procedure arose the theme of racism in child welfare practice. It was in just such a way of making memos and comparing across categories that the themes of mother-blaming, intervention as policing strategy, poverty as context, and violence as a feature of control of women were developed.

Another example of how themes emerge from the coding process is that of the patterns found in relation to adolescent women. In the initial open coding procedures I did not think to ask questions about the girl children of the women in this study. It wasn’t until I found myself with memos about teen mothers and the sexual violence against them and the younger girl children that I identified violence and sexual abuse as a form of control in their lives. It was the constant comparison and making memos that gave full substance to the data.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) view grounded theory analysis as a transactional system, an analysis that allows one to examine the interactive
nature of events. "The manner in which any phenomenon is expressed is through purposeful and related action/interactional sequences...embedded in sets of conditions" (p. 159). Following this analytical route, where action/interaction is seen to "lead to specifiable consequences", an examination was then made to see how women’s experiences were made objectified knowledges.

The process of textual analysis is an interpretive procedure. This study does not attempt to get at the "truth" of child neglect because when using a constructivist interpretive approach to social phenomena, which this is, there are multiple constructed "realities". A limitation of this research is that the analysis is one interpretation of text.

To begin the process of contextualizing child neglect in terms of the experiences of women, there has to be an analysis of the family and women’s role within the family. Therefore, prior to getting into the textual analysis, the next chapter will examine the ideologies underpinning motherhood and the family. Such an historical analysis makes clear how ideological notions of "good and bad" mothering and the "best interests of the child" have shaped the conceptual practices of the ruling apparatuses.
CHAPTER FOUR

PERSPECTIVES ON MOTHERHOOD AND THE FAMILY

In the western world, the word "family" denotes many variations and combinations of human interaction and relationship. But however many different ways people conjoin as a family, the connotation of "family" suggests a particular set of relations in what is commonly called the nuclear family. People talk of the "family" as if it has always existed and imply that the nuclear family as it is idealized, with mother and father and children all contentedly living under one roof, exists as a universal feature. This ideal of the family of course excludes the reality of most people's lives (Children, Enfants, Jeuness, Youth, 1991; National Council of Welfare, 1991). And although most people know this is not a description of real life, the ideal continues to be promoted in virtually all areas of our lives (Swift, 1991; Bullock, 1990).

An implication of subscribing to this static idealized view of the family is that it hides the power differentials that exist in the family hierarchy which favor male dominance (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982). It makes secret the structural organization of social relations in a capitalist society. Absent from the idealized picture of the family are the effects upon it from such factors as racism, violence against women, lack of daycare, structural dislocation, and inadequate social welfare (Swift, 1991; Dalley, 1988).

To understand the placement of the family within today's social, economic, and political context its development through time has to be
considered. This historical perspective is necessary particularly when an analysis of the family is approached using feminist theoretical frameworks. As Sondra Farganis (1986) points out, "In order to situate theory of feminism, one must account for the historical conditions that have led to changes in the status of women and, given their traditional involvement in childbearing and childrearing roles, the family" (p. 66). And more than this, Farganis says:

... The question of why women mother is to be answered psychologically, but the answer need not be static or without concern for the changing fortunes of women. There is ... a dialectical relationship between what women make of themselves and the specific circumstances in which this project takes place. (Farganis, 1986, p. 80)

The relevance of using an historical perspective in understanding social relations both sociologically and psychologically is explained by Deborah Anna Luepnitz (1988) in her book about psychotherapy with families. Luepnitz gives an emphasis to history in order to "challenge the sovereignty of 'common sense', which often leads us to believe that what we have is what we must have. History often exposes common sense to be simply a way of justifying the status quo, or at least of blocking further inquiry" (p. 8). Two common sense assumptions put to rest by Luepnitz are the notions that working mothers is a new phenomenon and that child day care is a novelty.

Most always, women have combined child rearing with such work as weaving, planting, and other laboring. Substitute child care has "been the norm in every social class for the past twenty centuries; it is the exclusive mother-child bond which is the anomaly" (p. 8). More recently the debate in western
industrial nations of whether children are deprived if mothers "work" has shifted, due largely to the fact that women have to have paid work in order for families to survive financially. The funding for adequate and accessible child-care is still a contentious political issue, however, because although women are needed in the work force, care for pre-school children is thought to be a private responsibility of parents (Ferguson, 1991). And this exemplifies the double-bind mothers are in because although we still hold the notion that a "good" mother is there for her children at all times, she is expected to work outside the home. Not working outside the home can bring shame and a sense of failure. Many mothers caught in the child welfare system are welfare recipients -- welfare mothers -- and by virtue of not having paid work, are subject to the biases towards someone not "contributing to society". Marlee Kline (1989) points out that when we speak of traditional expectations of mothers staying at home, we are speaking of the ideology of white motherhood:

Ideologies of Black female domesticity and motherhood...have not been constructed in the same way as white ideologies of domesticity and motherhood. Under those ideologies, white women's roles are regarded as resting in the private sphere represented by the family. (p. 130)

Kline explains that through employment or chattel position, Black women have been thought of as especially suited for work as domestics and surrogate mothers in white homes, and "[t]hus, as compared with white women, Black women may be affected in more complex and contradictory ways by the ideological expectations concerning work and motherhood" (p. 131).
Women’s roles as mothers and workers is explicated by Sharon Tiffany (1982) in *Women, Work and Motherhood*. Tiffany also says we must go back in time to understand the present and "we must enlarge our horizons to include all peoples on this planet" (p. 124). In her discussion of women’s work, Tiffany covers women’s role as "producer and reproducer" in four major types of economic settings, using one culture to exemplify each type. These are: woman’s role as forager (the !Kung San of southern Africa), as gardener (the Hagen of Papua New Guinea), as herder (the Hima of western Uganda), and as farmer (Chinese peasant society). The role of motherhood in these societies is compared to women’s role in the fifth economic setting, the industrialization of the west. Tiffany comments that motherhood has taken on a negative meaning in the western world. It is characterized by powerlessness and isolation: "women’s biological processes, including childbearing, are viewed as constraints, rather than as sources of power and autonomy" (p. 120). How this is so will be uncovered as the many layers of family configuration are revealed through time. In the following analysis, history is divided roughly into two family types: pre-modern and modern family. The descriptions are gleaned from many sources.

**Motherhood in Pre-modern Family**

Luepnitz (1988) analyzes family forms beginning with the upper-class family of the Roman Republic. During that time women held a central place in the household and appeared in public. Their work incorporated weaving and
the teaching of children. Men had the final authority in the family and power to accept or put to death each new born baby, although Luepnitz points out that Romans cared a great deal about the children they did raise. Women breast-fed their babies and had servants to help in child rearing but women were admonished not to put too much care of their children to servants. Luepnitz says that in comparing present day mother-child relationships and infancy to family experiences in the past, Roman upper-class infancy has more in common with present day infancy than with any of the intervening ten centuries.

The historical work of Aries (1962), *Centuries of Childhood*, is a widely read and thorough account of childhood from the middle ages until modern times. According to Aries' research, childhood was discovered after the middle-ages:

> The first concept of childhood -- characterized by 'coddling' -- had made its appearance in the family circle...The second, on the contrary, sprang from a source outside the family: churchmen or gentlemen of the robe...[who] were unwilling to regard children as charming toys, for they saw them as fragile creatures of God who needed to be both safeguarded and reformed...This concept in its turn passed into family life ... In the eighteenth century, we find those two elements in the family, together with a new element: concern about hygiene and physical health. (132-33)

This one view holds that in the middle ages children were not seen to be special in any way. Aries (1962) notes that until well into the seventeenth century, children went from swaddling wraps to adult type clothing, their childhood not distinguished at all from adulthood. The language of the day did not have words to describe the development of childhood to adulthood; children were
seen simply as little adults and "the infant who was too fragile as yet to take part in the life of adults simply ‘did not count’" (Aries 1962). Aries uses the following quote from the seventeenth century as an example of the attitudes of the time: "I have lost two or three children in their infancy, not without regret, but without great sorrow" (p. 39).

Although Luepnitz states that Aries was accurate in his writings, she criticizes his date of the discovery of childhood. Aries argues that the recognition of children as being different from adults and therefore requiring special attention did not arise until the middle ages. In fact, Luepnitz counters, it is more accurate to say that childhood was "rediscovered" at that time. Without the knowledge of antiquity, the impression given is that over the past four centuries the care and value of children has gradually improved. Luepnitz, citing documentation of childhood in antiquity, shows this is not so. Therefore, we cannot assume that modern day childhood is the culmination of progressive change.

In the account of the aristocratic family of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, Luepnitz explains that in the small aristocratic population women were thought to enjoy sex just as men did. Public affairs were not uncommon. The raising of children was not seen as a major occupation and babies were farmed out to wetnurses. Because of the lack of privacy and the large numbers of relatives and servants in any one household, children were exposed to sexual conduct of adults; and rather than going through
developmental stages of identifying with one or another parent, "aristocratic children grew up forming identifications not with particular adults but with the household itself, and with the family line" (p. 119).

The everyday life of the peasant family members in Europe was on the other hand quite different in that pre-industrial era. In England the vast majority were landless people, hired out to tenant farmers. The margin of their subsistence was provided by common and waste lands (Piven and Cloward, 1974). The work done by men was not separated geographically from their family life. Work that enabled the family to exist was integrated into the realm of marriage, birthing, child-rearing, eating, and other aspects of everyday living. Husbands and wives worked side by side to meet the needs of their family unit and children were given responsibilities from the time they were young, such as looking after their younger siblings, and when they were older working side by side with adults (Ehrenreich and English, 1978). Without wanting to romanticize families of old -- privation was an everyday event and the family was patriarchal, giving men ownership over the labour of their wives and children -- written descriptions do give an account of the cohesion of work and daily living for all members of a family:

The custom among ... artisans, shop keepers, smallholders and unskilled labourers was for whole families to work together. Husband, wife and children tended to form a single economic unit in which the wife played a critical part. (Dally, 1982, p.104)
Luepnitz (1988) states that authority was situated in the community and not in the conjugal unit. This meant that life took place "in the context of the entire village, not at the household level" (p. 120).

Unlike any of the other writers cited in this chapter, Luepnitz points out that it is in this particular era of history, from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, that the witch burnings took place. She was advised by friends not to include in her book the witch trials as part of the history of the family because the extent of the trials and the reasons for them are under debate by historians (the estimates of women killed range from one hundred thousand to several million. In Toulouse, Luepnitz notes, records show that 440 women were killed in one day; in Trier in 1585, two villages were left with only one female inhabitant each). She asks, "Can the institutionalized execution of women in a given historical period really be irrelevant to understanding motherhood in that same period?" (p. 123). Without the writings of Luepnitz to jog the memory, this study of the social construction of child neglect would have been written with absolutely no reference in its historical view of the family to this mass killing of women. Society's collective sense of history is selective and androcentric. Even as I analyze the ideologies prescribing motherhood and family in order to understand how women are devalued, I unwittingly devalue women myself because I ignore or forget our experiences through history.
Many of the women who were burned were old and poor, and they practised the old religion. Luepnitz cites the work of Antonia Fraser (1984) who comments that a great number of the women burned were midwives and that the end of the trials coincided with the advent of the male physicians' exclusive power in the healing profession. Luepnitz notes that in the *Malleus Maleficarum* men are thought better to accuse their wives of witchcraft than to divorce them because of the Church prohibition on divorce.

The church's extreme vilification of women is summed up in a phrase from the *Malleus Maleficarum*: women are the carnal source of all evil. In an account of history, Riane Eisler (1987) cautions the reader not to infer from this expression that the misogynistic view held by the Church was just a result of sexually frustrated men. She says it was "far more than a psychological quirk. It was a justification for male dominance ..." (p. 141).

A last comment by Luepnitz on the trials exemplifies how the exclusion of history in understanding motherhood colludes in the continued oppression of women:

The executions represent the intent on the part of some patriarchal sectors to eliminate midwives, or bad wives, or the "bad mother", from the social group. Traditional history books sustain the intent by failing even to mention these women. Textual elimination by historians, done in the name of avoiding subjects that cannot be investigated with accuracy, is what makes it easier for nonhistorians -- family therapists, for example -- to ignore the brutalization of women, past and present. (p. 124)

Aries (1962) does not mention this war against women and it is also unclear from reading his work how girl children fit into the schooling of children during
this period. All of the personal accounts of individuals’ experiences in their tutoring indicate they are male. The common usage of subsuming females under male pronouns makes it impossible to discern the actual gender of the children he is referring to in general. It may, however, be assumed that boy children were the object of concentration: "In the early nineteenth century, the internment of the child and the young man far from the world and his own family was considered one of the ideal forms of education ..." (p. 281).

**Motherhood in Modern Family**

The pre-industrial world gave way to the changes brought about at the time of industrialization. People moved from rural areas, and crafts and guilds gave way to capitalist production; wives and husbands no longer worked together under the same roof; and family life, as it was experienced under feudalism, evolved away from the community into a private sphere (Daily, 1982; Ehrenreich and English, 1978). By the middle eighteen hundreds "the old ways of thinking about things -- which posited a static, hierarchical social order presided over by the Heavenly Father -- were already losing their credibility ..." (Ehrenreich and English, 1978).

It is pointed out by Ehrenreich and English (1978) that in order for individualism and capitalism to flourish, the old patriarchal ways had to go. "In politics, in science, in philosophy, there was one dominant theme: the struggle against the old structures of patriarchal authority, represented by the king, feudal lords, the Pope, and often, the father in the family" (p.14). They
acknowledge that while the market required the defeat of the patriarchal ideology, the new organization was nonetheless "masculinist". They remind us that at the time of industrialization "the rising middle class -- the bourgeoisie -- were not yet 'the establishment’, but the rebels" (p.15). It was with this growth of a middle class in the nineteenth century that family life again shifted.

The nineteenth century marked the beginning of the idealization of family and motherhood. The Romantic period had taken hold with William Blake, Lord Byron, and Keats. Anne Bullock (1990) relates how our notions of community originate "from idealizations developed by philosophers and sociologists in the nineteenth century.." (p. 67). And Bullock explains that initially the "ideal" woman and family were bourgeois and in order to emulate the role, one had to have the resources which were available only to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois "ideal" woman and family also became the ideal of the working class over time, in part facilitated by state processes (Chunn, 1988). The "ideal" as it was to be articulated into the twentieth century became the "ideal" by which every mother is measured, even at the present time.

The arrival of the Victorian era fanned the idealization of motherhood and family. Ehrenreich and English (1978) supply a quote from Darwin which highlights the kind of attitudes prevalent at the time of the romanticization of motherhood:

Woman seems to differ from man in mental disposition, chiefly in her greater tenderness and less selfishness ... It is generally admitted that with woman the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation, are more strongly marked
than in man; but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization.

The notion of white supremacy also echoed in this sentiment was common, and British imperialism and American republican citizenship are based on the clear differentiation of white men and Blacks, Asians and "ethnics" (Mink, 1990). The same attitudes characterized the colonization of aboriginal people in Canada and provided impetus for the concept of reserves and residential schools.

Growing out of the romanticized ideal of woman was the idealization of the child. Ehrenreich and English (1978) ask, "What had happened near the turn of the century to bring the child out of the background and into the spotlight of public attention? (p. 166). They explain that in the previous century "women had, on average, seven live births in the course of their lives; a third or half would not survive to the age of five" (p.167) and that it was not uncommon to refrain from naming a child for several months so as not to waste the use of the name. Poor sanitation and nutrition claimed most of these lives. But by the turn of the century child mortality was already declining in the western world with the advancement of science, the development of social and economic infrastructures, and public awareness. As more babies survived, women began to prevent pregnancies and "from a strictly biological standpoint then, children were beginning to come into their own" (Ehrenreich and English, 1978, p. 167).
At the time that children were becoming romanticized, public attention was also being brought to the extensive ways in which children were being exploited, abused and neglected. The expanding industrial economy swept up millions of children into factories and sweat shops.

Near the turn of the century, an estimated 2,250,000 American children under fifteen were full-time laborers ... Four-year-olds worked sixteen-hour days sorting beads and rolling cigars in New York City tenements; five-year-old girls worked the night shift in southern cotton mills. (Ehrenreich & English, 1978)

To keep from starving, all members of a family went to work and performed what they had to in order to meet subsistence needs. Mothers put babies out to wet nurses or fed them pap because there was no time for them. With everyone engaged in factory labour sixteen hours a day, clearly any kind of intimacy and shared activities that maintain health and relationships in a family were impossible. Ehrenreich and English (1978) noted, "all members of the family [were] reduced alike to wage slavery, all human relations... dissolved in the cash nexus" (p. 169).

In the market at that time there were no barriers to exploiting children and women, but there was also no economic rationalization for supporting dependents. Ehrenreich and English explain that "there were no ties of economic self-interest to preserve the family...[it was] a world engorged by the Market, a world without love" (p. 169). Politicians, male labourers and their unions, and middle class women took up the call to reestablish stability of the family and that meant a move to get women and children out of the factories.
Working class men supported this shift in the labour market. They and the developing unions fought for wages that would support not only a man but his dependents, including his wife. The notion of a "family wage" persisted into the latter part of this century. But such action was not altruistic. By eliminating women from the workforce (except, of course, in service positions that replicate women's caring role in the family) men could open up positions for themselves and demand certain wages. The move was to eliminate the pool of women as cheap labour for employers to draw upon. Although the return to the home meant release from wage slavery and the ability for a woman to be with her children, it also meant that she lost whatever semblance of autonomy she had gained (Ehrenreich and English, 1978). Leupnitz (1988) comments,

Some commentators view the bifurcation of the bourgeois world according to gender as a step backward for women precisely because it made their work invisible. (No one would have asked a peasant mother whether she worked; nearly everyone has asked contemporary mothers that question.) (p. 129)

Fiona Williams (1989) describes the developing post-industrial family unit as but a part of the dominant ideology of familism taking hold: "a set of ideas which characterized the 'normal' or 'ideal' family form as one where the man was the breadwinner and his wife's main contribution to the family was through her role as mother, carer and housewife ... and who was therefore, along with her children, financially dependent upon her husband" (p. 6). This arrangement is loosely described as the gender-based division of labour, and as such, disavows the existence of lesbian mothers.
Within this set of relations was the developing repression of sexuality. Children who had in the previous century watched animals and adults copulating, were now instructed in the evils of "self-abuse". Babies were physically restrained from touching their genitals and toilet training was done in a harsh way.

The adult dominion over children and their bodies was nothing new, of course; children had always been beaten and abused. What was new was that the physical controls and punishments were being administered in the name of improving the child's personality and, even more important, in the context of an intensely personal parent-child relationship. (Luepnitz, 1988, p. 128)

What Luepnitz explains is that the bourgeois ideal, which also became the ideal of all classes, pitted "bodily pleasure against parental approval -- exchanging physical gratification for maternal love. Repression in the bourgeois family thus made it the breeding ground for the kind of neurosis that Freud was to describe" (p. 128).

As women and children took up domesticity apart from the public world, the doctors and business men and their middle class wives took up the task of educating women to be "proper" mothers. By the turn of the century Mothers Clubs, national congresses, domestic science leaders, and home health visitors had become popularized in Britain, the United States and Canada.

Mothers, especially poor mothers, became suspect in their child rearing abilities. Deborah Dwork (1987) researched the history of the infant and child welfare movement in England from 1898-1918. In War is Good for Babies and
Other Young Children, she relates how "Henry Scott Holland, Canon of St. Paul’s ... had much contact with poor mothers. He wrote, ‘Our first duty is to teach the art of motherhood’" (p. 130). Even though poverty was a factor in the health of children, Dwork notes that "couched in varying degrees of moral doctrine, the principle of pedagogy was clearly becoming the most popular remedy" to rates of morbidity and mortality of children (p.130).

Motherhood had become a responsibility that women had apparently no skills to perform. Psychologists set up laboratories, held conferences and developed theories about human behavior. G. Stanley Hall founded the new field of child study. "In Hall’s view, the truly scientific mother did not simply raise her child, she studied it, making notes which could serve as field data for the male academic experts" (Ehrenreich and English, 1978, p. 180). Where two decades previously children were just raised in a family, and where following that they had been idealized by the mothers’ movement, they were now the objects of the industrial model of rearing children. Books and government pamphlets were purposefully drafted and distributed to educate mothers.

Nationalism also played a major role. The child was thought to be the key to the future and the romanticized ideal of woman as responsible for molding the child appropriately.

With clear eyes we must see the goal of our effort and with unfaltering steps journey towards it. The goal is nothing less than the redemption of the world ... The way of the kingdom which is to come on earth, as in heaven, is placed in the hands of a child,
and that child's hands a woman holds. (From a speech at an international conference on motherhood in 1908, as cited in Ehrenreich & English, 1978, p. 171)

Deborah Dwork (1987) says that a milk depot system had been set up in England in response to the earlier problem of infant mortality due to unsanitary conditions. She notes that the declining birth rate was cause for alarm insofar as the 'future of the nation' was at stake (p.129). Veronica Strong-Boag (1982), who researched the development of the childcare movement in Canada from 1920-1940, writes of this concern: "Women’s receptivity to would-be advisors was enhanced by post-war celebration of maternalism ... National survival was depicted as dependent on women’s acceptance of their 'proper' role" (p.161).

Woman’s place in society was being firmly fixed as wife and mother but the message being given women was that they could not satisfactorily carry out their responsibilities without help from the professionals, from the men who had appropriated child rearing as their area of expertise. "External attempts to regulate the critical parent-child bond almost invariably reviewed the credentials of the average canadian mother. Eager tutors in medicine, education, and social work contrasted their superior professionalism with parental amateurism" (Strong-Boag, 1982, p.161). And although the experts did have information needed by mothers to prevent disease and death, "...At issue, too, as childcare professionals well knew, was a transfer of domestic authority. Female power
and prestige in nineteenth and twentieth-century Canada were tied to women’s role in reproduction and early socialization" (Strong-Boag, 1982, p.161).

There is no consensus in the feminist response to the development of male authorities appropriating command over the domestic world. Ann Dally (1982) does not accept the notion that early feminists cared particularly about issues of motherhood. She says they did not experience motherhood as a problem because so few of them were involved in the daily care of the children. "They fought for the franchise and for equality before the law, and on the whole did not question the division of labour. Those who were mothers had plenty of servants and did not find child-rearing particularly irksome" (p.155). As with many later feminists, it is thought by Dally that early feminists lacked a class analysis that would have allowed them to think beyond their own privileged life style. She agrees with Ehrenreich and English (1978) who conclude that the women who were caught up in the mothers’ movement, along with the child experts, "paid scant attention to the ‘lower’ classes, partly on account of the middle-class prejudice that the poor should not be bearing children in the first place..." (p.186).

On the other hand, Linda Gordon (1988), who researched family violence and its social control in Boston from 1880-1960, says that child-saving had gender as well as class and ethnic content. But, she explained, "in none of these aspects did it simply or homogeneously represent the interests of a dominant group. Rather, the anti-patriarchalism of the child-protection agencies
was the unstable product of several conflicting interests" (p. 57). These interests included upper-class Protestant Bostonians, conservative feminist reformers, and professional social workers. Nineteenth century "maternal feminism" was a movement that had put women into the public sphere. The public work that women performed (e.g. teaching, care of dependent children, establishment of health services for poor women) was an extension of the work of caring done in the home (Baines, 1991).

Ann Oakley (1986) explains that when we look at feminist responses to motherhood, we are looking at the historical relationship between feminism and motherhood, and that "what has tended to happen is that feminists have used a particular (and class-differentiated) vision of the status quo in order to define a different projected future for motherhood" (p. 128). Therefore, early feminism held a variety of positions about motherhood. Motherhood was "essentially unproblematic" in part because "it wasn’t necessary to defend

women’s right not to have children" (p. 131).

One the whole, the struggle to render women citizens overshadowed the need to understand motherhood in relation to women’s overall situation...as differentiated by class, ethnicity, and economics... (p. 131)

Missing in much of the literature is the connection of racial issues to gender and class in explanations of child rearing. Racism figured prominently at the local site and internationally as the leading world powers continued their policies of
imperialism and republicanism (Williams, 1989; Mink, 1990). The following statement expresses the power relations that were being entrenched in the first decades of this century: "The authority of state over individual, of professional over amateur, of science over tradition, of male over female, of ruling class over working class, were all involved in the redefining of motherhood in this period" (cited in Williams, 1989, p. 157). Clearly, racial issues and those of class and gender in all of their complex displays were integral to the movements afoot at the time.

To express the degree to which women were being hailed as incompetent mothers by the childcare experts, Strong-Boag (1982) uses the word "assault". Educators and child experts found poor women posed a particular problem. "If the middle-class woman could not always be counted on to follow instructions, she could at least be counted on to read the experts' books. What about the woman who did not read English, or did not read at all?" (Ehrenreich and English, 1978, p. 186). Veronica Strong-Boag (1982) addresses this very issue of class oppression:

While most parents were at liberty to reject or accept advice, many saw their authority over their children eroded. Especially vulnerable were mothers and fathers who by reason of illness, death or unemployment found themselves dependent upon the emerging welfare state. [They] found themselves subject to intervention by childcare professionals employed by the state ... The great majority of these intrusions were in the homes of the anonymous and forgotten poor (p. 173).

The established pedagogy of motherhood has had a detrimental impact on women down through the years, as evidenced in the writings of authors cited in
this discussion. And it has become an overt force shaping our beliefs and attitudes about mothering today. Yet the difference between the 1920’s and present day is that,

In the early phase ... the active leaders started with an explicitly stated ideology of motherhood and maternal duty ... Their vision of a good mother -- available and interested in her child’s education, ready to support the efforts of the school, able to take part in a local Home and School club -- has become the not so hidden referent against which all mothers continue to be measured ... differences ... based on class and race -- were increasingly glossed over. [emphasis added] (Dehli, 1990, p. 59)

Where this leaves mothers is always having to subscribe to an ideal which is beyond the possibilities, if not the inclinations of most classes of women. Steeped in the developments of the turn of the century, the ideal reflects the entrenchment of a sexual division of labour, with men in the public (work) sphere and women in the private (domestic) sphere. This is not to say that women and men are actually functioning in discrete environments. However isolated women and children have been and still are from the "public" world of business and the political arena, the lives of women and children are effected daily by the decisions of men.

Barrett and McIntosh (1982) say that there are dangers in posing the distinction between private and public as a determining difference:

The construction of ‘the family’ as a privatized zone with rigid barriers to prevent the intrusion of the social is an ideological process rather than a given of capitalist society (p. 90).

Barrett and McIntosh caution that the distinction "should be an object of analysis not a conceptual tool".
Meg Luxton (1980) moved away from the "public/private" dichotomy when she instead picked up Engels’ integrated analysis of the false separation of family labour and other labour, an analysis which has been absent in Marxism through the years. Luxton says that what has been focussed on is the "production of the means of existence" and what has been left out is the "production of human beings themselves" (p. 13). If, she says, a worker in industrial production is seen as someone who lives a twenty-four hour day and not an eight-hour-shift, "then it becomes clear that domestic labour is one of the central labour processes of industrial capitalism" (p. 14). The workers return to the household from their jobs to rest and restore energy (reproduce their labour power) so that the next day they can return to the job. Domestic labour, women’s labour, is the labour that allows for the reproduction of wage-labour power. And it is domestic labour, the work for which women are held responsible, that ensures the next generation of labourers. Luxton locates the domestic activities of women in four processes:

1. Looking after herself, her husband, and other adult members of the household
2. Childbearing and childrearing
3. Housework
4. Transformation of wages into goods and services ("making ends meet")

But Luxton is careful to note that these are not distinct processes, rather each is affected by the other. To understand domestic labour (including motherhood) one must examine "how these processes are interwoven to form the total fabric of women’s work" (p. 19).
It is important to understand the fabric of women's experiences because we have a tendency to think of domestic labour as a "labour of love" (Luxton, 1980, p. 12) and therefore outside the purview of labour standards. Doing domestic labour is often isolating, menial, frustrating, never-ending, and a twenty-four-hour job that receives no wage. And domestic labour is not separated in the way wage-labour is. A woman's workplace is her home and "time and leisure are indistinguishable" (p. 46).

The consequences of the arrangement of domestic labour on women, and the contradictions this sets up for women as wives and mothers is crucial to understanding the issue of child neglect. The analysis in this chapter has attempted to place women's role as mothers in an historical, economic, and social context. The discussion of ideologies has enabled us to see how relations of power and the values held by those in positions of power have influenced societal attitudes about mothering. But more than this the discussion has led to the point where we are to understand that all that is supposed to be private about family life is not really very private at all; and that how mothers raise children is very much "man made". That is, motherhood as we understand it in our society is not "natural" at all, it is a socially constructed ideal arising from capitalist patriarchy.

In the way that I have tried to get at the ideological underpinnings of motherhood and the family to illuminate how what mothers are supposed to be and experience are prescribed by social, political, and economic forces, Sandra
Knight (1992) has effectively deconstructed and reconstructed motherhood by examining the myths prescribing mothers' behaviors and which women are forced to live out across the generations. The myths Knight has identified contain directives by which women shall live: women "are told what to expect, think, feel and do" (p. 13). The following directives are coined by Knight as "Thou Shall" (also known as the "shoulds"):

- consider childcare and homecare to be easy, enjoyable and fulfilling;
- be satisfied with marriage and children;
- be a fountain of love and nurturing;
- be selfless;
- always love thy children and husband;
- bond immediately with thy baby;
- do all of the childcare and homemaking;
- have healthy children;
- have a husband;
- be heterosexual;
- have a husband who provides financially;
- be a full-time mother and homemaker;
- create a comfortable, clean, quiet home for thy husband;
- take care of thy husband's emotional and physical health;
- appreciate thy husband for his hard labours;
- put thy family before all other relationships;
feel guilty for not achieving these standards;
feel anger at self for not achieving these standards;
blame thyself if anything goes wrong with thy children;
be grateful for help from thy husband;
understand that thy husband does not have the training and the biology to care for children and a household;
understand that thy husband is tired after a day at his work;
understand that thy husband works and thou does not;
require the help of experts;
know it all;
perpetuate the myths of motherhood to other women including your daughters.

The following are "Thou shall not" (or the "should nots"):

complain, be unhappy or depressed;
be angry with thy child or husband;
run out of energy for others;
be concerned about self;
need virtually anything: breaks, babysitters, equal participation from partner, outside interest, or paid employment, a sense of self;
blame others for thy failures;
allow 'outside' interests to take away from thy family;
expect satisfaction for self;
speak of thy experience if it is different than the myth.
Knight says that these prescriptions are "crazymaking, limiting, and contradictory. They are a recipe for depression, suicide, child abuse, burn-out, and relationship deterioration with a prescribed root cause of self-blame" (p. 14).

From this explication of the myths and ideologies which frame motherhood, we go next to the theories of causation of child neglect. It has been a matter of course that the professionals involved in determining the best methods of child rearing have also become the experts in determining why certain mothers abuse or neglect their children. From Doctor Spock to Polansky and Garbarino, "expert" men who have assumed authority over mothers and childrearing, we have received prescriptions to live out the ideologies of motherhood. What are such experts saying about child neglect? What attributions are they making about the breakdown of the ideal? Juxtaposed with the theories of the experts are the analyses of feminists, women who are writing from the standpoint of women’s lived experiences.
CHAPTER FIVE

A CRITIQUE OF THEORIES OF CAUSATION OF CHILD NEGLECT

Any introduction to the problem of child neglect has to acknowledge the correlation of poverty and child maltreatment because the research has overwhelming evidence to support this (Martin, 1985; Gough and Boddy, 1986; Garbarino, 1982; Pelton, 1991; Campbell, 1991). In a discussion paper, Protecting Our Children, Supporting Our Families, the B.C. Ministry of Social Services confirms the relationship of poverty to child neglect:

While it is unfair and untrue to characterize single parents as neglectful parents, the stresses and strains of poverty and want do place single parents in a vulnerable position ... an increasing number of children are living in families where the family income is below any definition of poverty ... Families headed by women, aboriginal people, disabled people and recent immigrants are overrepresented among the poor. (B.C. Ministry of Social Services, 1992a, pp. 9-10)

Although it is helpful to have a government ministry acknowledge how very awful the living conditions are for so many people, the above text does not get at the everyday experiences of the women who are the single parents, for example. There are about 32,000 single parents in B.C., the majority of whom are women. One of the realities of everyday life for single parent women who have jobs outside the home as well as the responsibility of the domestic labour is that they get set up in a double bind. A double bind occurs when these women attempt to fulfill their duties of motherhood prescribed by society, while at the same time put in eight hours (or more) plus travel time everyday at a paid job. In order to survive financially, in order to meet the demands of a paid job
as well, a single parent is forced to neglect her children (McCannell, 1993), and then of course she is thought of badly by those around her.

Germain (1985) gives evidence that poverty is clearly a crucial variable. Germain cites a review of child welfare statistics in which "it is established that the vast majority of the biological families in the child welfare population live in poverty" (p. 124). But the role that poverty plays in child neglect is viewed differently in the two leading approaches in research of child neglect, the psychoanalytic theories and the ecology theory.

**Psychodynamic Theories of Causation**

Traditionally, researchers and practitioners have targeted mothers as the crucial mediating variable between poverty and neglect, and have focused their assessment and treatment of neglect around the deficiencies of the mother (see, for example, Polansky et al., 1981; Faller, 1981; Kadushin and Martin, 1981; Williams and Money, 1980).

In the published works of Polansky, DeSaix and Sharlin (1973) and Hally, Polansky and Polansky (1980) neglectful parents are said to be unlike other parents of the same status insofar as there is a psychodiagnosis of character disorders. The types of personalities observed were: The Apathetic-Futile Mother; The Impulse-Ridden Mother; The Mentally Retarded Mother; The Mother in a Reactive Depression; and the Psychotic Mother. The three most prevalent disorders are the apathy-futility syndrome, the impulse-ridden character, and infantile emotional functioning (Tzeng, Jackson and Karlson,
The reader may at this point recollect the myths outlined by Sandra Knight (1992) that I cited in the last chapter. In relation to women being attributed these psychiatric labels, Knight points out, for example, that "when one out of every five new mothers experiences post partum depression, we need to look deeply at why. We must examine the role and job description and not the woman and worker" (p. 18).

The number of research studies testing the theories of personality disorders are few. Tzeng, Jackson and Karlson (1991) acknowledge that the personalistic view, as they call the theory of personality deficit, is not able to say what causes the deficit in the first place. In their introduction to child neglect they note that although neglect accounted for over fifty percent of incident reports in the United States, child neglect "accounts for less than 10 percent of published and research reports in all professional journals". And, equally important, it is because of a lack of theory development in the area of child neglect that "no theories or models of neglect per se ... are currently being used by the service community" (p. 189). Nonetheless, these authors find it possible to state that the personalistic view "presents an excellent approach to dealing with neglectful factors" (p. 193).

Family systems theory, while placing the individual within a broader social context than just the family, still works from the premise that the family is the most important of all systems having an impact on individuals, virtually
ignoring social and economic systems (Family Impact Seminars, 1990). Barrett
and McIntosh (1982), in their discussion on The Anti-social Family, shed some
light on how family therapy models locate problems in the individual and the
family instead of in the broader socio-political context:

Conservative thought is often said to focus on the idea of
It rejects dependence, 'scrounging', collectivism, the belief that
'the world owes you a living'. Yet in practice the unit of self-
support is not the individual but the family (p. 47).

The confusion of individual and family "reflects a close association between the
two in everyday life ... In this setting of intimate interdependence [i.e. the
family], it is not surprising that the explanation of individual troubles should be
sought in the constellation of the immediate family" (Barrett and McIntosh,
1982, p. 50).

Comley (1989) points out that family systems theory "still tends towards
the assumption that the overall social structure is essentially benign" (p. 51).
Deborah Anna Luepnitz (1988), in The Family Interpreted, gives a feminist
critique of eight family therapy perspectives. From Ackerman through Bowen
and Satir, from Minuchin to Whitaker, Luepnitz provides evidence of the trend
of family therapy to ignore or devalue "qualities for which women are
socialized" and blatant sexism (in a 1966 publication Ackerman asks the
husband if his wife "is a good piece") (p. 42). The limitations of systems
theory and the cybernetic epistemology of Bateson (a popular anthropologist
whose influence on family systems theory is evidenced in the fact that Luepnitz
found Bateson cited more often than anyone else in over fifty family therapy texts) is that although it "can provide a useful view of the interrelationships between elements of a system, it can make no comment on the nature of the system itself ..." (p. 152). Luepnitz explores Bateson’s ideas on power and gender, noting that "nowhere did he wrestle with the male-female dialectic of Western culture" (p. 153). Bateson, she explains, did not believe unilateral power to exist and family therapists, following this notion, "have tried to do without a concept of power ... [which] has led to some nefarious ideas that men who beat their wives are in a ‘complementary dance’ with them" (p. 162).

Dale and Foster (1986) accept that family therapy may be beneficial to women in understanding their relationships within their own families but they point out that "as yet family therapy has failed to address the problem of women’s collective oppression within a patriarchal/capitalist society and within the particular institution of the family which that society supports, and which in turn recreates women’s oppression" (p. 97). Systems theory speaks of the family as a natural system of checks and balances. Yet, if this metaphor as system is used, the impression one gets is that of a family over time "evolving" into a better and better organism. Yet this is a fallacy and a dangerous notion to hold because it hides the social construction of human relations and the power differentials inherent in an oppressive structure. Leupnitz warns us of this in the preceding chapter outlining the developments of family life.
There are exceptions to prevailing systems theory within the realm of family therapy practice. Much has been written by feminist therapists in relation to family therapy practice (see, for example, McCannell and Herringer, 1990; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986; Caplan and Hall-McCorquodale, 1985; and Avis, 1989). In an article providing an overview and reading guide to feminist issues in family therapy, Judith Myers Avis (1988) cites the various reasons suggested for family therapy's failure to incorporate the literature on women. As well as the dominance of family therapy by male leaders, there are the awkward questions raised by feminist critiques regarding the viability of the family and of family therapy itself. There is also the possibility that family therapists believe they are already practicing in a nonsexist, nonblaming way. Avis notes that "the fundamental factor cited by most authors as primarily responsible for the field's isolation is family therapy's commitment to and reliance upon systems theory as the single organizing framework for conceptualizing and intervening in family relationships" (p. 16). Feminist authors such as those presented in Avis' article necessarily take into account the personal and the political, including the feminization of poverty.

The failure of most psychodynamic studies to delineate environmental factors in etiology means that factors such as poverty often get lost in the practice of social work. Polansky himself says,

At first glance, the connection of poverty to neglect seems obvious ... We take for granted that without an adequate financial floor under a family the children in it will share a miserable standard of living. But this takes us into the arena of social action, and that is
beyond the scope of this book ... This book is focused almost entirely on the diagnosis and treatment of mothers, but this does not imply that other efforts are not also necessary and useful. (Polansky et al., 1973, p. 9)

How convenient to simply put these other "necessary and useful" efforts outside the purview of their work. It is apparently of no concern that they may not be addressed at all, anywhere. Yet in the context of the psychodynamic causation of neglect, Michael Rutter (1981) reexamined Bowlby's (1952) assessment of maternal deprivation and found that in relation to the interactive effect of stresses, "it is important to appreciate that there are also transactional effects whereby one stress (biological or social) actually increases the likelihood of occurrence of others. Thus, children from deprived homes were twice as likely to have recurrent admission to hospital" (Quinton and Rutter, 1976, as cited in Rutter, 1981, p. 210).

Other studies also find poverty to be a crucial variable. The results of a longitudinal study conducted in Ontario (Nelson, 1991) show that family income, not marital status [being a single parent], was associated with mothers' life strains and children's self-esteem. Children from low income families had more behavior problems than children from higher income families. These findings are supported in the recent Ontario Child Health Study which surveyed 3,000 children (Offord, 1990). Dr. Michael Boyle, one of the researchers, said that "children from families with the lowest income -- the bottom five to ten percent -- are three times as likely as wealthier children to develop problems" (Vancouver Sun, Aug. 9, 1991).
Another model of causation of child neglect is that of the social interaction model based on the model of child abuse by Gelles (1973). But this model and the one put forward by Lesnik-Oberstein, Cohen, and Koers (1982) called the Three-factor model -- made up of (1) parental aggressive feelings, (2) parental inhibition of overt aggressive acts, and (3) the focus of parental aggression on the child -- subsume child neglect under abuse. Tzeng, Jackson and Karlson (1991) cite research that shows there are differences in the nature of abuse and that of neglect. Judith Martin (1991), in her chapter in *The Dark Side of Families*, states that physical abuse differs from other dysfunction in relationships between parent and child and that in neglect cases "most published works suggest overreporting of homes in which very poor women are single heads of households" (p. 293).

**Ecology Theory of Causation**

Ecology theory, proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), has been the basis of work done by Garbarino (1982). Bronfenbrenner theorized four systems that are interrelated to the individual: the microsystem of the family; the mesosystem made up of outside places that have relationships to the family (e.g. parents' workplace); the exosystem (school and other local settings); and the macrosystem of political and economic institutions. In Garbarino's studies on neglect (and he talks of neglect in the same breath as abuse), Garbarino (1982) does not dismiss the importance of psychodynamic causation of maltreatment but adds the factor of environment: "... with full recognition that
each case of child abuse and neglect has its own special origins, we would like to suggest that abuse and neglect are not only problems of individual abusers and their victims but are also problems of the social contexts in which these individuals live" (Garbarino and Stocking, 1980, p. 2).

As explained by Irene Sevcik (1984), the ecological perspective includes the ontogenic development of the parent which gives a portrayal of the neglectful parent as someone desperate, in a struggle "made difficult both by the patterns of adaptation brought to the parenting role, and by an environment that provides more stresses than supports" (p. 28). Leroy Pelton (1981) states that poverty eliminates the "leeway for irresponsibility" that middle class parents have. Overcrowding and dilapidated households "descrease the capability of parents to maintain proper supervision or heighten the diligence of the supervision ... and are likely to increase the risk of nonintentional injury to children (Pelton, 1991). The family support movement of the United States also acknowledges social and economic forces, and attempts to enhance parent empowerment in the face of mounting difficulties (Zigler and Black, 1989; Seitz, Rosenbaum and Apfel, 1985).

Giovannoni (1985) says that an ecological approach to understanding child maltreatment "has probably gained wider credence than any other. If one examines the various studies, one finds that psychological, social, and economic factors all have been found to bear some relationship to situations of child maltreatment" (p. 209). In an overview on child abuse and neglect,
Giovannoni (1985) examines societal abuse and institutional abuse and neglect. Speaking of the United States, Giovannoni uses the gross disparities between the health of white children and children of color as an example of societal abuse. Inequality of treatment in the educational system and health care system are given as examples of institutional maltreatment. In Canada, the high suicide rates of First Nations and Metis children, once again brought to light by the recent suicides of children in Davis Inlet, exemplify the horrendous consequences of institutional abuse and neglect.

In an explication of ecosystems (ecology) theory, Allen-Meares and Lane (1987) remind the reader that since the beginnings of professional social work, there have been alternating periods in which social work practice has focussed on either the individual or the community. In my own social work training, I was taught to distinguish these as clinical practice (micro) and community development (macro), respectively. In ecosystems theory this bifurcation is illustrated as PERSON-environment (emphasis on individual) and person-ENVIRONMENT (emphasis on community). Allen-Meares and Lane point out that ecology theory aims at a balanced emphasis which looks like this: PERSON-ENVIRONMENT. The authors comment that this balance needs to be done in a particular context: "An abiding challenge facing the social work profession is to formulate a unified theory of knowledge and practice insofar as the historical context of practice significantly influences the relative emphasis placed on person and environment" (p. 515). The authors list six principles for
social work practice that they believe emphasizes both person and environment:

**Principle One:** assessment requires data be collected about multiple ecosystems (e.g. school, home, and community, including ethnic characteristics)

**Principle Two:** assessment include data from the person, significant others, and direct observation of the client in the environment

**Principle Three:** assessment gather data on all critical variables that describe a person (cognitive and affective characteristics, behavior, etc.

**Principle Four:** assessment include as many components of variables and systems as is relevant

**Principle Five:** data must be integrated into a comprehensive picture of the client’s situation

**Principle Six:** assessment must be linked to eclectic repertoire of intervention strategies; must have interventions that are both person- and environment-changing

In following the above principles, the inclusion of institutionalized inequalities (e.g. policies that discriminate against same-sex couples) could be variables that would be factored into the assessment. Yet, is there anything built into the framework or language used in this theory which would ensure connection is made between the presenting problem and an historical and materialist analysis of gender, race, and class relations? The case example that Allen-Meares and Lane use in their paper is of a boy referred to a local school by his adoptive mother who home-schooled him and thought he was a learning-disabled, hyperactive child. The assessment procedure followed the six principles outlined above, and the outcome was deemed to be satisfactory to the authors: the child wasn’t hyper or learning-disabled, but the mother was
found to be "overly anxious" and she received training in parenting skills and techniques of anxiety reduction. This example may be simply a poor choice on the part of the authors but it reads like the medical model used in many psychodynamic theories: study (pull in all the data), diagnosis (assessment finds the child isn’t hyper outside the home or learning-disabled) and treatment (if the child is okay, mother must be the problem).

Does the mother have a life beyond the children? What is the father like, might he contribute to his wife being overly anxious? He was interviewed but we know nothing of him or his values about marriage and family. Might he not have something to do with the restricted social activities allowed his children? What is the colour of the mother? Is she a woman of colour who, along with her children, has had to face racism at school and in the neighbourhood? Such questions do not arise when the very important aspect of gender relations in family dynamics is not thought to be an important variable, and when the very important realities of ‘race’ and class are obscured by individualizing the problem.

One more example of applied ecology theory will be discussed. Brian Wharf (1989) uses this framework in his discussion of a study he carried out on First Nations control of child welfare. He states, "The distinguishing characteristic of the ecological perspective is its insistence on a holistic understanding of individuals in their social context and on tracing the connections between individuals and the environmental forces which affect
them" (p. 37). Wharf was referring to the overrepresentation of Native children in foster care and the extensive poverty on reserves. In order to understand what the "environmental forces" were, the consequences (excessive apprehension of children and poverty) had to be connected to a larger world picture of power relations and values. First Nations people had to develop an analysis from the site of their experiences because the dominant white perspective saw nothing wrong with the institution of residential schools and the enforced unemployment, poverty and racism underpinning the reserve system.

Wharf takes the actions of First Nations people and places it on an ecology framework, remarking how their actions fit the theory and practice. He goes on to say that ecology theory argues that there is no point to blaming the victim when individuals have little control over their environment, and "Thus a helping strategy for an ecological practitioner is to focus on identifying and building strengths rather than on the deficits of individuals ... The ecological perspective encourages individuals to take charge of their situation" (p. 38). This sounds very much like the family systems jargon that may help the individual to understand immediate relations but not see the oppression of certain people as a group.

Ecology theory may theoretically encompass the potential for structural change but in practice the targeted intervention remains at the individual level. This is because the balance that ecology theory attempts to provide, the
PERSON-ENVIRONMENT balance, lacks a PERSONAL-POLITICAL perspective (McCannell, 1993). That is, ecology theory does not contain the historical materialist analysis that would situate any presenting problem within the broader contextual meaning of class, race and gender relations. Examples of ecology theory in practice rarely talk about linking to social movements (McCannell, 1993).

Feminist Theories of Causation

In a comprehensive literature review on child neglect, Karen Swift (1988) uses critical theory to critique traditional approaches. The publication, Knowledge About Neglect: A Critical Review of the Literature, is a working paper from the faculty of social work at the University of Toronto. Critical theory is posed by Swift in relation to logical positivism, the methodology which is utilized in much of the positivist social science research. In critical theory, Swift says, the subjective and objective worlds are always seen in relation to one another. This is axiomatic to qualitative research, the basis of most feminist research. Swift examines traditional theorists such as Polansky (1981) and Garbarino (1982), critiquing their research and practice processes which conceptualize neglect as an "objective social category" (p. 36). She says their procedures "strip away the context in which behavior occurs and the subjective responses of individuals to the [bureaucratic] processes in which their lives are enmeshed" (p. 54). Swift looks at factors of neglect, research on identification of neglect, studies of decision-making processes, policy research
and effects and treatments of neglect -- all by posing the traditional, then the

critical thought analyses. From this she reasons,

... knowledge about neglect is currently limited to a small area of study which is characterized as the observable phenomenon of neglect. The current knowledge base presents neglect as a wide-spread phenomenon in our society, characterized by the failure of parents to provide for the needs of their children. Neglecting parents are actually mothers; they are poor; frequently single and have more than the average number of children. Often they are "socially isolated". Dealing with neglect involves "rehabilitation" of the mother and restoration of the family to adequate functioning. These, in the briefest possible form, are the "facts" of neglect. (Swift, 1988, p. 64)

In the literature search presented in this thesis the findings are similar. While ecology theorists are much more likely to be critical of, and include socio-economic forces in their approach to child neglect; and while they address issues such as institutional racism, they still accept the fundamental social structures and social relations as they exist (see above discussion on Ecology theory). What this amounts to, and what Swift in essence is saying, is that at best there can be incremental changes to the system response.

Feminist theorists, and they are not a homogeneous group, use a framework to analyze child neglect that is woman-centred, positing a critique of patriarchy which challenges the very foundation of our social, cultural, political and economic order. Although some feminists rightfully criticize others who do not have a sound class and 'race' analysis (see, for example, hooks, 1984; Williams, 1989; Lorde, 1984), feminist theorizing builds a critique of patriarchy upon which the connections of 'race' and class can be integrated. This is
because the feminist epistemologies that have emerged, like postmodern theories, "have sought to develop new paradigms of social criticism which do not rely on traditional philosophical underpinnings" (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990, p. 19). By being woman-centred and therefore presenting a non-traditional view of social relations, feminist theory moves towards a deeper understanding of social relations overall, and the connection of gender, class, and 'race' (hooks, 1984).

There are, loosely, three streams of feminist theory: liberal feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism. Liberal feminism accepts the current social, economic and political systems. Liberal feminists locate women's oppression in the inequality of women in these systems and therefore seek "equal opportunity" for women within them. Radical feminism locates women's oppression in the sex/gender system, positing that the liberation of both women and men rests on the transformation of that entire system. Socialist feminism demands that gender issues be examined in their connectedness to class because this perspective holds that women's oppression is tied to capitalist patriarchy and must be analyzed in relation to the political economy (Jaggar and Rothenberg Struhl, 1978). Within these streams there may be an identification by lesbian separatists and women of Colour, although whether or how these multiple locations can accommodate identity politics is a matter of debate.

Dorothy Smith (1985) argues that to take a radical feminist perspective, one in which gender is solely looked at in relation to the dominance of men and
the oppression of women, "is to inhibit analysis and understanding of the
gender-saturated character of social relations by sectioning off those involving
women ... gender relations are an integral constituent of the social organization
of class" (pp. 2-3).

On the other hand, the writings of radical feminist Catharine MacKinnon
(1989) shed light on how sexuality as a social sphere of male power gives rise
to stereotype images of women which permeate every facet of life:

... the feminine stereotype exposed "woman" as a social
construction. Contemporary industrial society's version of her is
docile soft, passive, nurturant, vulnerable, weak, narcissistic,
childlike, incompetent, masochistic, and domestic, made for
childcare, home care, and husband care ... Women who resist or
fail ... are considered less female, lesser women (p. 109).

Rosaline Delmar (1986) talks about this fragmentation of contemporary feminism
as a "sclerosis of the movement, segments of which have become separated
from and hardened against each other" (p. 9). The propensity of white
feminists over the past decades to maintain a racist (and often classist)
perspective, that is, to speak about their experiences as if they were the
experiences of all women, has been a major factor in alienating women within
and outside the feminist movement. Audre Lorde identifies herself as a Black
lesbian feminist socialist mother of two. In speaking about women responding
to racism, Lorde (1984) says, "Women responding to racism means women
responding to anger; the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial
distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal,
and co-optation" (p. 124).
The position held in this thesis is that an analysis of child neglect utilizing an integration of feminist perspectives gives the site of women’s experience in the everyday world. I strive for an "integrative feminist" approach (McCannell, 1993) so that I will include rather than exclude any woman’s experience. The exploration of child neglect from a site outside women’s experience, on the other hand, is the norm in the mainstream world of social policy development.

Fiona Williams (1989) gives a compelling account in her book, Social Policy: A Critical Introduction, of the failure of policy analysts to incorporate gender and ‘race’ as central issues in social welfare. She states that there has been:

1. failure to acknowledge experiences and struggles of women and Black people over welfare provision
2. failure to account for racism and sexism in the provision of state welfare
3. failure to give recognition to work which does attempt to analyze the relationship between women and Black people in the provision of state welfare
4. failure to work out a progressive welfare strategy which incorporates the needs and demands which emerge from such strategies and analyses (Williams, 1989, Introduction xi)

"...that is why", continues Williams, "it is not enough merely to defend, or propose a strategy based upon the post-war welfare state with its predominantly white, male forms of full employment, universalism and egalitarianism" (p. xvi).
Mary Russell (1984) states that feminist theory is an essential framework for understanding women’s behavior and "a necessary foundation for the development of a comprehensive and effective counseling approach to women ... Feminist theory presents a view of womanhood that is contradictory to the prevailing perspective, and it therefore sees social and institutional changes as urgent necessities" (p. 12). In making change, or recreating relations, there must be equality in terms of gender. This principle is posed by Dominelli and McLeod (1989), and they go on to say,

In keeping with this, a feminist stance endorses egalitarianism across all social dimensions. Therefore, feminists are also against other social divisions which reflect dominance and subordinate such as race, class, heterosexism, ageism, and 'ablebodiedism'. (p. 2)

In looking at child neglect through feminist lens, Karen Swift (1991) presents two themes she sees as central to the issue. The first is the gender-based division of labour which accords the care of children in the home environment to women. It gets at the causation of child neglect, and will be discussed here. The second theme is the historical relationship between the family and the state whereby the state is accorded the power to legislate child protection guidelines and enforcements to ensure minimum standards of care (Swift, 1991). This theme of state and family relations will be addressed in Chapter six.

The division of labour is an ideological concept that has become entrenched in our society (see Chapter four for a discussion). The division which accords the care of children to their mothers is so pervasive, so "natural"
that when professionals and others speak of neglectful "parents" what is actually meant is neglectful "mothers". Even when husband/father is present, mother is the focus of investigation and treatment (Polansky, DeSaix and Sharlin, 1973). Paula Caplan (1989), in Don't Blame Mother, speaks of a press release that cited researchers having produced a profile of abusive "parents" when they only studied one hundred mothers. Fowler and Stockford (1979), in a review of reported abuse cases in England state:

There is an underlying assumption in much of the literature ... that the person who is responsible for the child's injuries, even if she has not actually inflicted them, is the child's mother. This assumption is often disguised by apparently neutral references to ... 'the family' but careful reading will usually reveal ... that the person who is responsible, and in particular the one for whom therapeutic techniques are designed, is female (p. 299) [emphasis added].

In their examination of recent trends in child abuse policy and practice in Britain, Parton and Parton (1989) reiterate what was found by Fowler and Stockford. Parton and Parton (1989) note that issues related to gender, race, social class and age are not addressed seriously in child protection. The impact of gender relations and oppression, they say, are ignored and this is most obvious in the area of child sexual abuse:

Here the main (male) stream literature focuses on the so-called pathological family/male abuser, failing to recognise the links between men's general sexual violence and sexuality, men's domination of women and children with child sexual abuse. Furthermore, the responsibility for protecting children from men's sexual violence is primarily viewed as the responsibility of the mother rather than that of the man. (p. 42)
Parton and Parton acknowledge that mothers do have a crucial role in protecting children from certain men’s sexuality and they note that many do so despite the fact that it places them in physical and economic jeopardy. And they note also that what the literature fails to acknowledge is that women are primarily responsible for children. The "parents" or "families" in the literature are really denoting "mothers". The assumption is that mothers and mothers alone are responsible for their children and for their children’s outcomes, regardless of their poverty or their own physical or emotional abuse. Parton and Parton cite the Carlile Report (London Borough of Greenwich, 1987) as an example of how the system makes women culpable:

... in its judgement of Pauline Carlile’s role in Kimberley’s, her daughter’s, death, [the Carlile Report] attaches as much blame to the mother for failing to protect Kimberley as to Nigel Hall. (He was sentenced to life imprisonment for Kimberley’s murder). Mrs. Carlile was, however, also held responsible for his violence as she was viewed as being "fatally attracted to violent cohabitees". This not only perpetuates the pernicious myth that battered women enjoy being hit but minimises the issue of men’s violence, a major precipitating context of child abuse (Starke and Flitcraft, 1985). (Parton and Parton, 1989, p. 43)

That blaming mother is connected to the division of labour is made clearer by Ann Dally (1982) in her book, Inventing Motherhood, The Consequences of an Ideal. The following is from her discussion on the implications of the setting apart of children from the modern world of work:

What is not usually stressed, discussed or even realized is that the separation of children from the working world has meant the segregation of their mothers ... What a child ‘needs’, or what society ‘needs’ for its children, are laid down and mothers are expected both to comply and to be fulfilled in so doing (p. 106)
Gillian Pascall (1986), speaks about the implications of the division of labour for mother and child: "Woman as carer, man as provider, children's emotional needs met by the one, economic needs met by the other: the image has near symmetry. Child poverty owes something to the failures of this image in reality ... the segregation of emotional and economic support between two persons makes a fragile context for children" (p. 221).

Helen Levine and Alma Estable (1981) remind us of the "romantic pedestal of motherhood" and how it is used to mask a double standard. "Hiding behind the mystique of motherlove and family, society forces women to accept a less than human life contract. Although exploitation and alienation on the job is generally considered a serious social issue, the alienation and exploitation of mothers is in general ignored, denied or linked with individual pathology" (p. 49). Barrett and McIntosh (1982) reiterate this point and explain that the isolation of the private family and lack of outside support in which motherhood becomes a burden is "also a major means by which women become trapped in the home" (p. 62).

The dangers that lurk behind the mystique of motherlove, the consequences of alienation and exploitation, are dealt with by Sandra Knight (1992) in her examination of post partum depression experienced by women living in Vancouver, B.C. Knight says that theories of causation range from biophysical to psychodynamic to psychosocial, yet because "we cannot separate our physical self from our emotional self from our social self", an
integrated approach is essential (p. 18). Knight found that deprivation of mothers is central to the experience of depression in mothers (p. 19).

Ann Dally (1982) also has explored in depth the tenuous ideal of motherlove. She points out that it is only recently that the majority of women have had to bring up children by themselves:

Their husbands are away at work all day and hardly see the children except weekends. They have no domestic help. There is little or no community life or life on the street. They are likely to have little or no everyday contact with their own families. Coming from small families themselves they have probably had little ... experience in caring for them ... Mothers have no respite (p. 9).

It wasn’t until after the second world war that middle and upper class women -- "and even women further down the social scale" -- began the continuous care of their children. For millions of women, having nannies and other "help" contributed to the propagation of the idealization of motherhood. Dally explains that children brought up by nannies tend to idealize their mothers. "They see her from afar and think how wonderful it would be if they could be looked after by her" (p. 101). But when women were actually in the thick of caring for children virtually around the clock (and even women in two-parent families are "single" parents when the other parent does not equally share the labour of home and children), a dilemma was faced: "she had discovered that rearing children was not easy at all ... The only thing for many mothers to do ... was to idealize it still further or else have a nervous breakdown" (p. 102).

"Nervous breakdown" is a phrase not often used these days. Instead psychologists and doctors label behavior once described as "nervous" as
reactive depression, anxiety, psychosis, or apathy-futility syndrome and so forth (For an example of such labelling, see Hally, Polansky and Polansky, 1980). From the literature, the causal attribution that emerges in relation to women’s ability, or lack of ability, to sustain the burden of motherhood is individual pathology. This has been named within the psychodynamic causations of child neglect and has been found in the literature to take two forms: a deficiency of maternalism or a personality disorder such as depression.

Deficiency of maternalism will at this point be addressed in a brief discussion of the psychological theories of male and female development in relation to motherhood and family. It is not the purpose of this thesis to examine psychosocial development thoroughly but the concept of "good mother" and "bad mother" is inherent to the psychodynamic causations of child neglect. In For Her Own Good, Ehrenreich and English (1978) examine motherhood as pathology and document how mothers have come to be scrutinized for deficiencies:

The emphasis on pathology reinforced the child-raising experts’ heroic image of themselves as public health crusaders … In the period of scientific motherhood the challenge to child-raising experts had been to inform the maternal intellect. Now the challenge was to probe the maternal subconscious, searching for the neuroses which could infect a generation of children with the germs of mental illness (p. 204).

A well-known study in child development is that of Bowlby (1952) on maternal deprivation. His conclusions influenced child-rearing experts for decades. Ehrenreich and English (1978) see his work as humanitarian, after all he was
researching the needs of war orphans. But as these authors point out, Bowlby "leaped beyond his data base to the child in the home. His conclusions imply that the dire consequences of maternal deprivation can occur wherever there was less than singlehanded, full-time provision of maternal attention" (p. 207). Although this is not a prevalent belief today with so many mothers in the workforce, variations on this theme still guide attitudes about women as good mothers or bad mothers. What is not stressed when people talk of deprivation is the deprivation of mothers.

Kathryn McCannell and Barbara Herringer (1990) reclaim women's reality by looking at maternal deprivation quite differently than did Bowlby (1952) or Rutter (1981). "From a feminist perspective, maternal deprivation can be used to describe the feelings of loss and grief a new mother may experience as she gives up some old roles to assume this demanding new one, or it may reflect her own hunger for nurturance" (p. 58).

Edwin Schur (1983), in discussing deviation and women, finds that "norms relating to motherhood further uphold and strengthen the maternity ideal" and that "conceptions of the 'unfit' mother also reflect the dominant cultural tendency always to place the female in the wrong. The labeling of males as 'unfit fathers' is no more common than the designation of them as 'unwed fathers'" (p. 88). Gillian Dalley (1988) argues along these same lines when she distinguishes between "caring for" (the tasks of tending to another person) and "caring about" (feelings for another person). Dalley points out that
it is in motherhood where these two processes are seen to be integrated and natural and indissolubly linked. Mothers who go against the norm and separate these two functions are considered deviant.

In building theory of women's labour, Hilary Rose (1986) refers to the three kinds of caring distinguished by Kari Waerness:

- the mutual caring reciprocally exchanged between equals
- enforced caring extracted, above all, from the woman
- caring for dependents (who by age or disability need help to care for themselves)

Rose asks the question, "Under what conditions do women freely care and under what conditions is caring extracted from them?" (p. 169). Rose then explains that caring is a form of labour and like other labour, "exists predominantly in its alienated form". Labour in unalienated form must be understood to be located within the alienated. That is why "work can on one occasion offer great satisfaction and on another be the site of tremendously hostile and painful feelings, in which the cared for person confronts the carer as a hostile object" (p. 169). It is in this way that Rich (1979) notes ambivalence to be the hallmark of motherhood: there is both anger and tenderness.

When child neglect is not understood to be the consequence of a weave of extracted labour that contains within it moments of labour in unalienated form, mothers are considered pathologic. Their children in all likelihood will be apprehended. Authorities may argue that apprehension is the least detrimental alternative if the child is assessed at risk but the impact of such separation on
mothers and their children is nonetheless traumatic (see Steinhauer, 1991, for a review of literature of foster care and sequelae in children separated from their mothers).

There is little available information on the needs of mothers with children in care (Egan and Marshall, 1990). The literature on parents who have had their children apprehended originates in England where a national organization called Family Rights Group oversees a network of self-help groups catering to parents and relatives who have children in care (Tunnard, 1989).

The notion that parents have unmet needs related to the emotional distress of having their children apprehended is confirmed in a study on group work with similar parents in England (Gibbs and Thorpe, 1975). Parents who have their children in state care view themselves as failures and feel overwhelmed by feelings of loss, anger, guilt, frustration, and isolation; it is a shameful experience (Tunnard, 1989; Jenkins, 1981). In fact, the loss experienced by parents over the apprehension of their child can be "completely paralyzing".

The debilitating effects on mothers (and fathers) as a result of their children going into care is addressed by Steinhauer (1991). He suggests that in the instances where a child wishes to be with the mother but where it would place the child at risk because of the mother’s inability to care for the child, that the parenting be shared with the foster mother. Both he and Wilkinson (1986) discuss the problems with the current foster care system where rivalry
exists with social workers, foster parents and biological parents that often interferes with this ideal. Steinhauer cites evidence from experimental studies which shows that children who have on-going contact with their biological parents do best in long-term foster care.

The barriers to shared parenting discussed above are situated in the historical and social ideology of motherhood; what women should be and shouldn’t be. Paula Caplan (1989) raises the issue of the darker side of women that is feared and portrayed in fairy tales. The thought of mothers abusing their children “comes as a surprise to people who think of mothers in idealized terms as the ‘Angel in the House’. But it fits the darker, cultural stereotype about mothers: that they are ‘Wicked Witches’, unable or unwilling to control their unlimited rages” (Caplan, 1989, p. 49).

As Sondra Farganis quotes, "psychologists have demonstrated unequivocally that the very fact of being mothered by a woman generates in men conflicts over masculinity, a psychology of male dominance, and a need to be superior to women" (Chodorow, 1978, as cited in Farganis, 1986, p. 98). Farganis suggests that this is what Dinnerstein (1976) means when she says we "fear the will of women, the fear of becoming once again ... as helpless as one was when one was an infant ..." (Farganis, 1986, p. 100).

If being likened to a wicked witch is one branch of being a bad mother, the other branch is to fit the profile of a passive, depressed wretch: the apathy-futility syndrome. Barrett and McIntosh (1982) lead up to the discussion of
"depression" in women by examining the day to day life of a mother/housewife. "The daily regime in the prison is not the drama of violence of rape, it is long hours of working banged up in a solitary cell ... all in isolation ... [but] it is not the character of the household tasks themselves that is oppressive, but the solitary, continuing and unrelieved nature of the multiplicity of household responsibilities" (p. 58). They hold that statistics find more women than men are treated for depressive and neurotic mental illnesses. It is not that housework per se leads to depression. Brown and Harris (1978) explain in Social Origins of Depression their findings that although there is a common notion that middle-and upper-class women have more depression: "systematic epidemiological research gives no support ... lower-class groups have a higher rate of depression" (pp. 150-151). Further, they emphasized that "there was no class difference in risk of developing depression among women without children" (p. 153) [their emphasis]. The researchers said that "... risk of depression (that is, incidence of onset cases) is related to class only among women with children" (p. 168).

In their discussion of depression in women, Hanmer and Statham (1988) warn that "To locate the problem of mothering solely in the social isolation of mothers, or in the separation of mothers from their children, neatly sidesteps a closer look at the complex interpenetration of the strands that make up the institution of motherhood as a whole. The problems become personalized" (p. 53). Personalizing problems maintains the attitude of blaming the victim and
assuming no fault in the family structure itself or the ruling relations that maintain gender hegemony. Above all, the idealization of motherhood is kept exempt from study. That is why an understanding of the labour conditions under which women live is so important (for an analysis of domestic labour, see Chapter four). Ann Oakley (1980) echoes this sentiment in her discourse on motherhood. In the context of examining pathology in mothers, she says that

... the hormonal interpretation is attractive because it suggests that normal mothers are basically suspended in their state of normality by nature; that is, most of the time they’re happy because their hormones engender natural maternal feelings, but if they’re not happy it’s because their hormones have let them down. This ‘unreliable machine’ model ... makes sure that mothers’ attitudes and reactions are not seen as influenced by the social and economic conditions in which motherhood occurs (p. 89).

Kott Washburne (1983) uses a feminist framework to look at child abuse and neglect and says that

feminists have recognized that women are on occasion violent toward men and understand that violence as the result of societal and interpersonal pressures on women. Women’s violence toward children needs to be recognized and discussed in the same context. Women’s abuse of children stems directly from their own oppression in society and within the family. Women are expected to be the major caretakers of children, yet have few supports for that task ... (p. 291).

Deborah Anna Leupnitz (1988), a feminist therapist, makes the same connection. In addressing the dominance of husbands over wives, she cites a case in which a battered wife who also battered one of her children had to have her abusive husband’s consent for her to have a tubal ligation. That the abusive father who abandoned his wife and six children could still have the
power to decide what the woman could do with her body was lost on two therapists whose case this was. Luepnitz says,

Because their view is blind to social history... they fail to see the link between this woman’s inability to preside over her own physical functions and the criminal attacks on the child’s body. The difference between the two acts is that the first is sanctioned by law and the second is not. The link between them is that both acts are part of a long tradition of socially defining women and children as property of husbands and fathers (p. 73).

Dominelli and McLeod (1989) talk about how sometimes women are perpetrators of violence. Women’s violence to children, if analyzed within feminist framing,

amounts to women, yet again, being under the constraints of sustaining and reproducing patriarchal relations as part of the process of socialising children. Given the way in which the legitimation of authority through the use of physical force runs throughout our society it is not surprising that women employ such an approach as a ‘normal’ part of the way in which they bring up children. (p. 99)

In taking into consideration the working conditions of women -- raising children, keeping house, responsibility for the family members’ emotional state, often working at wage-labour jobs -- it begs the question, who nurtures the nurturer? (McCannell, 1986). How are we indoctrinated into perpetuating such lives?

Research conducted recently in Canada by feminist Marge Rietsma-Street (1991) explores the unmet needs of women, and examines the power relations of our society which ensures that women will assume motherhood for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer. The study done by Rietsma-Street centres on
how women as girls learn to care, and how they are policed to care into adulthood. Her research finds that girls learn three lessons of caring:

1. women, whether young or old, are the major providers of the love and labour that is caring;

2. young women are expected to restrict caring for themselves to personal appearance and demeanour; and

3. boyfriends become the special objects of caring. (Reitsma-Street, 1991, p. 121)

Major costs are incurred for this caring: first, girls seriously restrict the development of their own interests and independence; secondly, a girl learns to take care of her physical appearance, to look nice and be nice but at the cost of learning about the needs of her body: sexual assault, unwanted pregnancy, inadequate birth control, abortions; and the third cost girls pay is the risk of poverty and dependence (p. 121-122).

In asking why girls continue to pay the costs of economic and physical vulnerability, Reitsma-Smith raises the notion of policing: "girls are more than encouraged and socialized to learn their lessons of caring and to pay the attendant costs; rather, they are policed to learn their lessons" (p. 123).

In *Women’s Caring* Baines, Evans and Neysmith (1991) edit a book with topics ranging from the historical relations of caring, through the life cycle of caring, to caring and disadvantage. The works of Karen Swift and Marge Reitsma-Street are from this book. What is raised by authors such as Swift and Reitsma-Street is the usefulness of an analysis of caring from the site of women’s everyday experiences. However obvious it is that there would be a
difference in understanding an event depending on whether you are a participant in that event or merely an observer, men have insisted upon naming, defining, and explaining events in women's lives from the male perspective. It is only with feminist discourse that the obvious is stated.

In seeking a more precise definition of power, Deborah Anna Luepnitz (1988) suggests we might call it "the ability to categorize or define things...or, as Nietzsche said, it is the power to name things" (p. 162). What feminist theory and critique accomplish is to name women's experiences as they live the experiences, from their perspective.

What comes to light in this examination of the theories of causation of child neglect, is that discourse of theory very much reflects ideology. Specifically, this chapter has shown that psychodynamic theory places the etiology of neglect in the pathology of the mother. I also point out how ecology theory, in its attempts to contextualize child neglect, often falls short of an understanding of gender, 'race', and class relations. This is because its focus is on PERSON/ENVIRONMENT which does not necessarily take into account the relations of ruling. Feminist theories specifically get at the relations of ruling through a framework which looks at the historical, social, and political context of child neglect. The study will now turn to the examination of social welfare policy that places child neglect within a legal framework. Although, as Betty Carter (1989) points out, the profession of social work guides child welfare in Canada, it is "also influenced greatly by the medical and legal professions" and
"the nature of its mandated service ties it closely to the state and dominant ideology" (p. 79).
CHAPTER SIX

CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Karen Swift (1991) determines that two themes are central to understanding child neglect. The first theme, the gender-based division of societal labour which accords the care of children in the home to women, has been discussed in Chapters four and five. The second theme put forward by Swift, and which is discussed in this chapter, is the historical relationship between the family and the state. In essence, as a result of that historical relationship, the state, as *parens patriae* (parent of the nation), is accorded the power to legislate child protection guidelines and enforcements to ensure minimum standards of care (Swift, 1991).

To understand how the state came to hold power over the family, the B.C. child protection legislation has to be placed in an historical and social context. This begins with an historical account of state response to poverty because, as has been evidenced in preceding chapters, the problem of child neglect is also correlated with issues of poverty. The historical perspective serves to (1) reflect the attitudes held towards the poor which have influenced social welfare policy, and (2) shows how societal response to child neglect is closely connected to societal response to poverty.
Historical Perspective of Child Neglect

The transition from feudalism to capitalism caused many upsets to the populations of Europe. The development of capitalism, as noted by Piven and Cloward (1974), has been marked by periods of cataclysmic change in the market, the main sources being depression and rapid modernization. Depressions mean that the regulatory structure of the market simply collapses ... By contrast, during periods of modernization ... portions of the laboring population may be rendered obsolete ... Moreover, mass unemployment that persists ... diminishes the capacity of other institutions to bind and constrain people (p. 26-27).

Piven and Cloward note that western relief systems originated with these upheavals beginning in the sixteenth century. The origins of charity rested with churches in their two-prong approach to poverty: having compassion for those in need while holding that poverty was divine punishment for moral failings. As thousands of starving people at different times rose in protest, the state had to intervene to control insurrection. State relief and public attitude was not compassionate. As Ben Carniol (1987) states,

It was as if needy people had committed a crime. English law in 1531, certainly, was blunt about what would happen to the unemployed. A person considered to be one of society’s ill-begotten group of ‘idle poor, ruffelers, sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars’ was ‘to be tied to the end of a cart naked and to be beaten ... At the same time that brutality was inflicted on jobless men women were persecuted for being suspected of witchcraft. The accusation was focused mainly on spinsters and widows ... who might try to achieve a degree of personal independence (p. 18).
From that period into the nineteenth century, the poor relief system became a major institution in English life. In Canada, governments imported the traditions of France and England:

While Quebec’s government left it to the Catholic church to provide assistance and education to the poor, the colonial administration in the Maritimes saw to the construction of a workhouse in 1759... (Carniol, 1987, p. 19)

Jails were filled with the homeless and the poor and paupers in parts of English Canada were boarded out to those who charged the municipality the least (Carniol, 1987).

In Canada, towards the turn of the century, a conjunction of conditions gave rise to the social reform movement. Thousands of children had been sent to Canada from the United Kingdom and placed as apprentices or work hands. Many of the placements did not work out and the children drifted to urban centres, their homelessness a visible problem (Swift, 1991). The processes of industrialization, as noted above by Piven and Cloward (1974), produced abysmal living situations for many Canadians. Integration of immigrants, unemployment, infant mortality, poor sanitation and alcohol compounded problems (Baines, 1991).

First Nations people took a heavy toll as industrialization, and resource development swept the country. "Police forces were also used against the institutions of indigenous people -- who were portrayed as savages lacking in culture and possessing no worthy structures of their own in the first place" (Carniol, 1987, p. 26).
On the prairies, white settlers, Metis and Indians petitioned Ottawa for resolution to fears about the lands acts. Maria Campbell (1973), in her eloquent portrayal of "Halfbreed" ancestors, notes that "they were squatters with no title to the land they lived on. They wanted assurance from Ottawa of their right to keep the land before the incoming white settlers encroached on them by using homestead laws" (p. 10). The Red River Rebellion of 1869 was about land and white settler prejudice. The Riel Rebellion began with the Duck Lake "victory for the Halfbreeds" but ended with a violent government retaliation, as described by Maria Campbell (1973): "Within a month eight thousand troops, five hundred NWMP and white volunteers from throughout the Territories, plus a Gatling gun, arrived to stop Riel, Dumont and one hundred and fifty Halfbreeds" (p.11).

Ben Carniol offered this example of the intervention by governments and suppression of First Nations structures:

The Iroquois (as they were known by the French) ... or the Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse, as they called themselves) have a formalized constitution ... It provides for a democratic system in which each extended family selects a senior female ... and male leader ... A code of laws generally expressed in positive admonitions rather than negative prohibitions, governs both official and civil behavior ... The Canadian government suppressed the Haudenosaunee government by jailing its leaders and refusing to give it official recognition. (House of Commons Special Committee on Indian Self-Government, 1985, cited in Carniol, 1974, p. 26)

When the Euro-descent people in power accorded indigenous groups an existence of apartheid, they abrogated the rights of indigenous women. Prior to
the colonists’ projection of a subordinate role for women, Iroquois women held a position of power. Judith Brown (1975) notes:

Iroquois matrons were able to make available or withhold food for meetings of the Council and for war parties, for the observance of religious festivals and for the daily meals of the household. These economic realities were institutionalized in the matrons’ power to nominate Council Elders and to influence Council decisions. They had a voice in the conduct of war and the establishment of treaties. They elected "keepers of the faith" and served in that capacity. (pp. 250-251)

In the western most region, the first consolidated Indian Act that applied to B.C. was in 1876. Prior to B.C.’s entry into Confederation in 1871, the colonial governments of B.C. and Vancouver Island had passed various laws concerning Indians. Decimating diseases brought in by Europeans brought suffering and death to thousands of indigenous people. "Of the 6,693 Haidas alive in 1840, only about 600 were left by the turn of the century" (Clague, Dill, Seebaran and Wharf, 1984). The Potlatch law of 1884 prohibited First Nations people from gathering in numbers and living their traditions (Wyatt, 1982). The prohibition remained in effect to 1952. In response to social welfare, B.C. had taken little action by the late eighteen hundreds. The Municipalities Act made it law to provide for the poor and destitute, and the YMCA, among other charitable organizations, began their services. As Clague et al., (1984) explain, "The function of the government was to protect property, facilitate the investment flow through grants of timber and mining rights, endow the railways, and restrict and control unions as much as possible" (p. 4).
It was noted earlier that the conjunction of social and economic conditions gave rise to the social reform movement. Swift (1991) explains that the social reform movement was instrumental in promoting legislation. The doctrine of *parens patriae*, meaning parent of the nation, was codified in English law and later became part of the American and Canadian legal structures as social reformers pressured governments to respond to need.

Women played a key role in the social reform movement. The developments of the movement are first touched upon in this study in the chapter dealing with motherhood and the family, and it has been noted that middle and upper class women were the agents of doctors and professionals in the education of poor women on how to mother. That wave of public maternal caring is referred to as maternal feminism by Carol Baines (1991) and she notes that although it was a narrow and conservative view of women’s caring role, it did allow women to enter public life, albeit subordinate to male philanthropists and clergy. The affluence and leisure time of these women spurred the establishment of women’s organizations and clubs:

It was not surprising that these women, well schooled in the importance of Christian stewardship, responded to the troubles of their working-class sisters. An urban and economic transformation, a demand for a response to the problems facing an industrial society, and a changing conception of what women were able to do all contributed to the shaping of new institutions and laid the groundwork for the welfare state (Baines, 1991, pp. 40-41).

In B.C., charitable and church organizations called for an Act which would regulate remedial child protection and deal with juvenile delinquency. In 1901,
the B.C. Infants Act, based on the common law concept of parens patriae, was passed. "The Infants Act provided for the legal transfer of guardianship of orphaned or neglected children to the state. The Children's Aid Society was to provide for their care" (Clague et al., 1984, p. 6).

The Infants Act of 1901 allowed the courts to commit children to care for: begging in streets; sleeping outdoors and in barns, etc.; associating with drunkards and thieves; being orphaned or deserted; being found guilty of petty crimes; and being abused to the point where life was at risk. (Callahan and Wharf, 1982)

It must be noted that at this time women could not vote. Women, with the exception of First Nations women that is, were declared legally "persons" under the terms of the British North America Act in the fall of 1929. Federally, this meant the vote, yet at the provincial level it took another twenty years for all provinces to recognize enfranchisement for women. First Nations women and men, however, were excluded in this process of recognition of personhood. It wasn't until the sixties that such recognition was made. This meant that for decades, all women saw legislation put into place that affected themselves and their children and they were unable to have a voice in matters.

It is also noted by Clague et al., (1984) that the prevailing thought at the time was that poor people were entirely responsible for their conditions and when children had to be taken into care it was not due to any failing on the part of the social order. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "social reformers and moralists, concerned to establish new standards of public
decorum and personal discipline in canadian society, made a public issue of the manner in which some families brought up their children ... [and they] defined the state of delinquency elastically -- sometimes by acts, often by attitudes, and most commonly by tendencies" (Houston, 1982, p. 132). It is noted that phrases from statements of 1902-03 sound very much like statements from contemporary policy:

The Children's Aid Society stands first and last for the rights of children. It is authorized to investigate all cases of neglect, destitution and cruelty, to ameliorate and better their home surroundings when practical...only when every effort in the home fails is the matter brought to the courts for adjudication. (1902-03 quotation from the Children's Aid Society, in Clague et al., 1984, p. 7)

In the United States, child welfare agencies also attributed family violence to individual and moral failings. Linda Gordon (1990) bases the following statements on her analysis of theories of social control, a concept originating with E. A. Ross at the turn of the century:

These [agencies] blamed the problem of family violence on the depravity, immorality, and drunkenness of individuals, which they often traced to the innate inferiority of the immigrants, who constituted the great bulk of their targets. By the early twentieth century, the [agencies] took on a more ambitious task, hoping not merely to cure family pathology but also to reform family life and child raising. Describing the change slightly differently, in the nineteenth century, child protection agents saw themselves as paralegal, punishing specific offenses, protecting children from specific dangers; in the early twentieth century, they tried to supervise and direct the family lives of those considered deviant (p. 179).

The legislation enacted in response to the social reform movement "articulated the principle of the state's right to evaluate the suitability of a child's
environment and allow for the removal of a child from that environment if it is deemed to be in the child’s interests" (Swift, 1991, p. 237). What is crucial to the understanding of child protection law is that the powers invested in the state to protect children were influenced by the charitable and moralistic social reform ideology, and the legislation was enacted at a time when women were without the vote. Without a say in who was elected to enact legislation, women were clearly made subordinate to men’s judgment (McCannell, 1993). This is not to say that even if women had the vote, all women would have the vote (First Nations men and women were not allowed to vote federally until 1960), nor would it guarantee women’s voices would be heard. The point being made is that men, white men, made decisions that concerned all women.

At the same time that social policy was being developed around issues of child protection, acts of legislation were being introduced in response to capitalism’s processes: union demands for a family wage and compensation for such things as accidents and unemployment (Mink, 1990; Nelson, 1990). Paralleling the division of labour between home and workplace, the public policies being implemented from the turn of the century onwards diverged into basically two streams. "Benefits devised for mostly male wage workers were strongly linked to welfare capitalism and scientific management, while those devised for a select group of mothers were linked to the poor law tradition" (Nelson, 1990, p. 124). Although Barbara Nelson is writing about conditions in the United States, the conditions in Canada are not so different because its
public welfare policies are rooted in Britain's welfare state, a country that
spawned the Poor Law and with historically strong labour legislation.

For example, Fiona Williams (1989) notes that the British Poor Law of
1834 created a system based on "less eligibility" so that no one receiving relief
would be better off than someone working; and the element of deterrence was
instituted in legislation insofar as acceptance of relief would be a shaming
experience.

The division of labour into public and private spheres which leave women
and children dependent upon a man's wage have set women and children up to
be hardest hit with the poor law ideology that still prevails today. Williams says
that decades ago, "All widows with only one child were required to take paid
work and not relief ... Deserted and separated wives were treated with
particular suspicion and not considered eligible for relief until after a year of
separation or desertion ... [in the] attempts by the ... authorities to shift a
woman's financial dependence back on to her ... husband or another liable
relative" (p. 154). But such attitudes are not only historical. In the latter half
of the 1980s, the B.C. Ministry of Social Services implemented legislation
calling for enforced maintanance by errant husbands for mothers on income
assistance and the requirement that all single mothers whose babies had
reached the age of six months, find jobs. Failure to abide by this legislation
meant that a mother and her children were denied benefits.
In summary, the key elements instrumental in laying the foundation for present day family welfare policy are: the introduction of relief to the poor steeped in moralistic fervor; the advent of the social reform movement influenced by christian stewardship and familism; and the notion of *parens patriae*. These have combined to entrench state intervention in the family. And as this study has documented, not without burdening mothers and children. Williams (1989) comments that "Policies around motherhood ... illustrate the nature of a collectivism which urged state intervention whilst holding onto individualist explanations for social problems" (p. 157).

**B.C. Child Welfare Legislation**

The Infants Act of 1901 remained unchanged until 1968 when amendments made to the Act required all persons to report suspected maltreatment of a child. New amendments also distinguished categories of temporary and permanent wardship. This was designed to encourage plans for family reunification or long term foster care for permanent wards. In 1973, under a New Democratic Party government, a Royal Commission was struck to examine shortcomings in the Act. Unfortunately, it was shelved when the government changed hands in 1976. In 1979, a White Paper was produced to provoke discussion pending change to the legislation. Over 1200 submissions were received. The government Opposition argued that it was not evident that the government heeded these submissions when they produced the final draft
which was put forward for debate as Bill 45 (B.C. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1980).

The B.C. Association of Social Workers, in noting what they liked about the legislation, listed as positives: the extension of protection to children under 19 years; that unmanageability would no longer be an offence; and the inclusion of time limits for setting commencement of judicial proceedings (BCASW, 1980). However, both BCASW and the Social Planning and Review Council of B.C. criticized the Act for not laying out the basic rights of children and for not legislating government responsibility to develop and provide services which would support and strengthen families. The Act appeared more concerned with remedial rather than preventive actions. SPARC also pointed out that the Family and Child Service Act does not require the child to be consulted and that this detracts from a child's integrity. Additionally, they noted that the legislation was absent of definition of structure, responsibilities, and accountability between superintendent and delegates (SPARC, 1980).

The response to Bill 45 by the Opposition began with the challenge that the proposed legislation was nothing more than an amendment to the Protection of Children Act because it lacked principles supporting the integrity of children and the family. MLA Rosemary Brown pointed out that except for the title of the Act, the word "family" is never again mentioned (B.C. Legislative Assembly Debates, 1980). In her challenge, Ms. Brown referred to Kenneth
Keniston's four principles "of reform [that] need to be incorporated in a law".

Ms. Brown's point was that the legislation lacked all of these requirements:

1. except for the briefest emergency period there must be a clear and convincing showing in due process hearings where the child as well as the parents has counsel

2. there must be a strong presumption in favour of children remaining in their natural home or with relatives before a court removes a child from his or her nuclear or extended family

3. children's rights that would guarantee children have their basic needs met: health care, education, shelter, nutrition

4. the right of the child to have an advocate
   (B.C.L.A.D., 1980, p. 4047)

The Family and Child Service Act was assented to in 1980. Its stated intent was to integrate and coordinate services for children. The criticisms of BCASW, of SPARC, and of the Opposition continue to be voiced by these same groups and others. In the last decade native rights in the child welfare field have been recognized to some extent by governemnts. Four bands in B.C. currently have control of their own child welfare, and the Ministry of Social Services has initiated a Native Family and Child Services office in Vancouver.

Provisions of the Family and Child Service Act

The Family and Child Service Act provides the statutory authority to investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect, and the authority to enter into agreements with parents for the care of their children if they are unable to provide it, either for a short term or permanently. The Act gives authority to
the Superintendent of Family and Child Services to apprehend children if they are "in need of protection". The Act defines "in need of protection" as:

(a) abused or neglected so that his (sic) safety or well being is endangered,
(b) abandoned,
(c) deprived of necessary care through the death, absence or disability of his parent,
(d) deprived of necessary medical attention, or
(e) absent from his home in circumstances that endanger his safety or well being (Section 1, B.C. F&CS Act, 1980)

The provisions make it an offense not to report suspected maltreatment of children (Section 7), and the Act sets a temporal framework for procedures of apprehension and the processes of court action.

Funding of child protection services is cost-shared with the federal government through the Canada Assistance Plan and the child protection legislation is administered through the Ministry of Social Services. District offices are the local sites of the ministry. The government divided the province into ten regions, each currently administered by regional directors who fall under the Deputy Minister. Area Managers oversee the district offices in each region. The district offices are in turn headed by supervisors.

Social workers within the ministry may function or specialize in resources, adoption, special needs of children and mentally handicapped adults, and child protection. The number of district offices and social workers in each region, and the specialization of offices depends upon population distribution.
In the 1988 ministry reorganization, Income Assistance offices and Family and Child Services offices became separate sites in the highly populated areas, ostensibly to provide better services.

The mandate of the social workers* and their caseloads may change whenever the ministry reorganizes their service delivery system. This has happened twice in the last three years, and a review of the Family and Child Service Act was begun in 1992 which may lead to further changes. Budget cutbacks, beginning with the Bennett restraint measures in the early 1980's which altered dramatically the services provided by the ministry, continue to tie the hands of social workers. Suggestive evidence derived from exploratory talks with social workers and district supervisors points out that caseloads are too high to ensure quality service in child protection, foster care planning, and adoption. And there are not enough foster homes to accommodate apprehended children.

In examining the Family and Child Service Act, I find large gaps in its provisions. It does not address rights of children, support for mothers (and fathers), and needs of Native families. The only principle specifically highlighted

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*It must be noted that not all "social workers" in the ministry hold social work degrees. A survey in 1987 found that 32% of employees in "social work" positions at the Ministry of Social Services and Housing (as it was then called) had a degree in social work. Informal information from the ministry indicates that this number rose to approximately 42% over the next four years, and that by 1992, of the people hired to fill "social work" positions, 50% held social work degrees (Alcock, 1993).
in the legislation is the following statement which makes up Section 2 of the Act:

In the administration and interpretation of this Act the safety and well being of a child shall be the paramount considerations.

In defense of a lack of stated principles, the Hon. Grace McCarthy stated that "the rights of children are very well spelled out in terms of protection" (B.C.L.A.D., 1980, p. 4046) and she went on to quote Justice Tom Berger who said in "The Social Worker", Spring 1979, that

the law can offer a substantial measure of protection to the family and to children by the guarantees of due process ... but the law cannot guarantee the delivery of services to a whole category of children. (B.C.L.A. Debates, August 19, 1980, p. 4046)

McCarthy argued, therefore, that it was better not to issue a blanket statement of unenforceable principles.

There are no legislated services to families. The F&CS Act is aimed at the protection of children from abuse or neglect by their parents or guardians. Children in families who are having problems but are not "at risk" are not covered in this legislation. The only guarantee offered by the Act is the protection of children from abuse and neglect through investigation and court procedures once an allegation is made. Families who have money to seek private counselling or families with the skills to seek out private and publicly funded resources are at an advantage over families who are poor or who lack the skills and time to get whatever resources are available.
When social workers investigating a case of alleged abuse or neglect find evidence of same (see Chapter two for definition and assessment procedures), they then take a course of action which may include a family service plan. If the children at risk are determined safe in the family home, they may be returned to the care of the mother after they have been apprehended. The mother may then be encouraged to enter any number of programs funded directly or indirectly by the province to help her with the problem that led to the investigation of neglect. These programs include such services as homemakers, alcohol and drug counselling, parenting courses, and assessment and therapy for children with special needs. With the exception of homemaker service, the services often have waiting lists and may not be available when needed.

Many families dealing with allegations of child neglect are headed by single mothers (Campbell, 1991). Poor mothers and children are particularly disadvantaged because in our society, to lack money is to lack power. And poor families are often on welfare. This means that they are already on the receiving end of government monitoring and inadequate income levels. Although the legislation provides for every allegation of child neglect to be investigated, and therefore poor people and minorities would not seem to be targeted, the evidence contradicts this feature of equity. Most of the child protection caseloads are disproportionately poor and of Native heritage (B.C. Ministry of Social Services, 1991; Campbell, 1991).
The legislation does not acknowledge economic hardship as a risk factor. This results in ministry intervention being targeted often at the mother’s parenting abilities, rather than at resource acquisition. Dale and Foster (1986) note that social workers who are powerless to give needed resources to deprived clients as an intervention have to "attempt to make individual women more effective carers rather than providing them with any alternative caring services or resources" (p. 101).

What social workers think about the roles of family members and what social workers believe constitutes adequate care of children is based not only on professional training, research findings, and practice. Social workers also bring to child welfare practice their personal opinions which are influenced by socialization, contemporary norms, and the ideology underpinning social relations (Comley, 1989). In her discussion of ethical dilemmas in social work practice, Margaret Rhodes (1986) reminds us that examining reality without a point of view has come to be seen as an impossible goal, even in science. Thus, "objectivity" is always partial. It is in this same vein that child welfare policy is understood as a product of society’s beliefs and values. Policy constraints on social work practice are founded in the ideological basis of that policy.

The type of support that child protection social workers are able to give is limited by the legislation. They themselves cannot engage in assessment and counselling beyond a prescribed investigation and the child-in-care or family
services planning processes. Hence, several authors conclude that children, mothers and social workers are set up by the legislation to be adversaries (see Sidel, 1986; Pascall, 1986; Dale and Foster, 1986; and Callahan and Attridge, 1990). Moreover, children are not appointed advocates except in extreme cases where a mother may battle years for the return of custody of her children, and the mother is not appointed a social worker or advocate who will support her through the child protection process.

Another example of how the legislation interfaces social work practice is in the legislated "intervention" necessary in the course of investigating and responding to child neglect. As an action, intervention is a form of coercion and one which "refers not only to acts which protect or serve the best interests of the persons coerced but to acts which although they may violate the interests of one person protect others in society ..." (Rhodes, 1986, p. 106). Accepting the partiality of the legislation and social work practice, it would follow that child welfare administrators and social workers can bring all of society’s misogynist and sexist attitudes to the act of intervention. Although the child welfare service response system has changed over the years with practitioners’ growing awareness of just how dangerous the family can be to women and children, changes in policy have been geared more towards cost effectiveness, and remain informed by ideological notions of women’s role within the family.
In the administration of the legislation, there is at least one update of change each month received by holders of the policy manual. These updates have included changes such as amendments to accommodate new legislation; for example, the Family Maintenance Enforcement Act. This Act was put into place to get errant fathers to provide financial support. If a mother does not agree to give information of her ex’s whereabouts, she is threatened with being cut off from benefits. As well, every time there is a reorganization of the ministry service delivery, policy is changed to accommodate internal systemic change.

If the Family and Child Service policy has also changed over the years in reaction to changing societal attitudes about parenting and child care, it is minimal. Where once parent-teen conflict was not considered to fall within the mandate of Family Services unless the child was in need of protection, there is now leeway to counsel with families experiencing parent-teen crisis. Where once an investigation of child maltreatment was begun it had to finish its course, a new Standard prevails allowing termination of an investigation in progress. And policy now clearly states that the preferred residence for children is their own family (B.C. Ministry of Social Services, 1992b). But where the policy has clearly remained the same is in the view toward mothers. Comley (1989) states that "the construction of women as wives, mothers, and carers has become internalised within the social work profession" (p. 55) and is reflected in the absolute absence in the legislation of regard for the needs of
parents. In the application of the legislation to practice, "social workers not only continue to expect women to be good wives and mothers within the patriarchal institution of the family, they also tend to reinforce women’s role as unpaid carers ... and certain social workers still appear to believe that women are natural carers and that they have a duty to care" (Dale and Foster, 1986, p. 100). For social workers who understand the misogyny and sexism underpinning policy, and who attempt to practise feminist social work, there is a daily confrontation with "one dilemma after another -- the ridiculously low income assistance rates, child protection matters where the problem is often poverty, kids who are sick because they live in inadequate rooms and eat inadequate food, and on and on" (social worker speaking out in No Way To Live, Baxter, 1988).

Policy Change

Child welfare policy is not necessarily written to meet the needs of people. As has been pointed out in this chapter, policy is written from a base of beliefs and values which may or may not coincide with identified needs. Policy is also written to fit the mandate of a particular government department. In their determination of departmental mandates, governments are guided by political ideologies. These include notions about what constitutes good mothering and what constitutes a family. For B.C., which has until recently been governed by conservative politics, this has meant that conservative views of family and women’s roles inform the Family and Child Service legislation and
its policy implementation (see the preceding chapters for a detailed analysis of historical and prevailing views of family and motherhood). By conservative, I mean a residual approach to social problems, which is explained by Marilyn Callahan (1985) in her critique of child welfare.

Callahan (1985) characterizes three types of perspectives on child welfare: institutional (social programs for support); radical (fundamental changes); and residual (less state intervention and crisis services only). The Family and Child Services Act would be classified as residual. In identifying which of the perspectives may be favoured by a provincial government guided by social democratic principles, I turned to the paper on child welfare, Protecting Our Children, Supporting Our Families (B.C. Ministry of Social Services, 1992a).

In the document, under "Rights and Responsibilities of Parents", the rights are typified as either family-and-state-as-partners (mirroring the institutional perspective) or exclusive rights and maximum rights (much like the residual perspective). Under the role of the state in child protection, the discussion paper describes two of Callahan’s classifications: the residual role and the family support role (institutional). It also discusses something called the "senior partner role" which is ambiguous but which may imply a move towards partnerships linking families with their communities, much like the move underway in provincial health services where the government wants to "[s]hift
more health care decisions from Victoria to local communities and regions, and involve the public as full partners..." (B.C. Ministry of Health, 1993).

The discussion paper, which is the basis of the provincial review of the Family and Child Service Act which got underway early in 1992, presents a balanced view of the residual and institutional perspectives (the radical perspective is not discussed at all). There was nothing to indicate that the ministry prefers one perspective over another, although it is conceivable that the institutional perspective would be favoured by a social democratic government.

On the federal level, a report has been put out recently by a senate committee titled, "Children in Poverty: Toward a Better Future" (1991). In their exploration of child poverty, the committee hired consultants who analyzed the following taxation benefits: family allowance, children's tax exemption/non-refundable credit, equivalent to married exemption/credit and child care expense deduction. Their findings are that "the various changes made during the latter half of the 'eighties have significantly altered the federal child benefits system ... and that all the traditional objectives of child benefits are being jeopardized by the changes made over the last five years" (p. 101). As a result, the consultants offered two options from which the federal government could choose in order to redress the slide of child benefits, each option containing elements of current benefits but with changes in eligibility based on the consultants' analysis.
Recommendations made by the senate committee challenge the residual approach and are leveled at federal and provincial governments. They include: a call for a national child care policy; a fully indexed minimum wage increased to a level equal to the Statistics Canada poverty line; all federally funded and cost-shared programs and contracts be required to use the new minimum wage; income support programs eliminate penalties now imposed when people enroll in education and training programs; and a federal system of cost-shared rent supplements to be made directly to households who pay more than 30 percent of the income to shelter costs. The perspective of these recommendations could be classified as institutional, while the provincial ministry’s response to child welfare to date has been residual.

This chapter had provided a background of historical, social, and political forces shaping child welfare policy in B.C. This brings to light the ideological framework upon which policy is built, and which is articulated in child protection discourse. I will now take the reader into the data and the analysis of child protection files of the Ministry of Social Services to see how this is evidenced in the text.
CHAPTER SEVEN

UNRAVELLING THE TEXT

As I noted in the methodology chapter, the research data and analysis are presented in two parts. In this chapter, the eighteen case studies are presented to give the reader an understanding of specific conditions found in the data, case by case. In Chapter eight I offer an analysis which uncovers emerging themes and examines the ways in which ministry discourse mediates the relations of ruling.

I want to reiterate that a Family Service file is put in the mother’s name by the ministry, even if the father of the children is present in the family unit. What also must be noted is that very little is communicated about the husbands and fathers in the sample files, except for the single father. Although the intent of this study was to focus on the women, the absence of data about the men in the families would yield an analysis concentrating on women regardless. More will be said about this in the discussion.

I also want to note that ministry documents call for the notation of First Nations status where applicable, but they do not require that the ethno-cultural backgrounds of other women be recorded. In the following case studies, the ethno-cultural backgrounds of women are unknown unless the women are First Nations. The term used by the ministry to designate First Nations people is "native" and this term is used in the unravelling of the child protection file text.
Anne:

The file on the family of the woman we call Anne contains data which show how Family and Child Services workers play the role of "peace keepers" when the man of the house assaults or threatens the mother. When Anne’s file was opened in 1990, she was a thirty-seven year old mother of one boy, aged 2 years. She and her son were living with his father. The first report to the ministry office was called in by Anne herself; she was in need of support and financial assistance because she left her physically abusive husband. He had assaulted her over the weekend and she and her son had been placed by the ministry Emergency Services (E.S.) in a downtown eastside hotel.

July 3: She was ... having trouble providing adequate food to her son because of lack of cooking facilities. She spoke despairingly of their relationship and of her own sense of vulnerability at some length. We talked about support services etc. but I suspect a follow up call would be helpful. (F01-01)

Anne seems to have left for the sake of her child:

Anne denies that husband hurt the child but he did recently attempt to choke her in the boy’s presence. His [the son’s] distress at seeing her harmed motivated her to leave. (F01-02)

At some point after this Anne returned to her husband and then almost one year later the second report to Emergency Services was recorded:

April 21: Anne called wanting shelter for herself and son from her husband. I asked her to self refer to Powell Place. Approximately 15 minutes later the husband calls to say that his wife is making up stories and that it was a waste of government money to place his wife at a hotel. In the background I could hear Anne yelling in the background that she had been threatened with a knife. I asked Car 86 [police car with one officer and one social worker] to drive by the home and interview the family. (F01-03)
Regardless of the husband's repeated violent acts towards Anne, there is no evidence that the ministry had a concern he may abuse the child. The question of his violence towards Anne was apparently not taken seriously in this report even though Anne was clearly upset. The worker seemed to take a face value that Anne's husband was not a menace:

E.S. Update, April 21: We attended at the home where Anne ... made a call to Powell Place and was accepted. We stood by to keep the peace. Anne was distraught and not able to articulate just what the problem was but I gathered that there have been several break-ups and as many reconciliations. Husband was not in the least menacing and spoke mainly of the lack of communication between them. The child appeared well cared for and was boisterous and energetic. (F01-05)

When the man of the house assaults and threatens the mother but does not present a risk to his child, ministry workers cannot stay involved with the family to offer support to the mother herself. In Anne's case, the biased notion that somehow the woman is at fault when she is physically abused by the man was also operating. The following entry infers that Anne colludes in a "volatile relationship":

This family became known after homemaking services were requested because of mother's post partum depression by her family doctor. A few days previous to this Anne called E.S. in need of assistance after leaving her spouse who was being physically abusive. Anne had her 1 1/2 year old son with her. A FS file was opened to monitor until they were able to get psychiatric help due to their past life-styles, their volatile relationship and its affect on their child. (F01-06)

Their past "life-styles" included "long and extensive history of drug use and abuse...she is addicted and is administered methadone daily" (F01-08).
Her partner was also addicted and also on methadone. Both parents said "they are committed to keep their family together...Husband has asked for names of agencies where he can get help to control his anger and his physical violence towards Anne. He has not arranged for counselling to date" (F01-08).

The ministry put in homemaker service three times a week for four hours at the request of Anne’s doctor. Four months after the last request by Anne for help, the file was closed: "Client is outside of ... catchment area. No further services requested at this time" (F01-10).

Out of the seventeen case files in this sample which are listed in the names of the mothers, Anne is the only mother whose child had not gone into care, either voluntarily through a Short Term Care Agreement or through apprehension.
Betty:

In 1989, when Betty’s file was opened, she was a thirty-year-old mother of a newborn baby. The social worker at the hospital called to alert the ministry that the baby showed some symptoms of withdrawal:

November: Social worker at St. Paul’s called to alert us to the case -- concerned mother may not be able to offer this child an appropriate environment. Some symptoms of withdrawal noted, although not severe. (F02-01)

Betty had told the social worker that she had used alcohol and cocaine throughout pregnancy. The baby went first to Sunny Hill hospital and then to a specialized foster home for NAS infants, infants who are born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.

December: Contacted again by social worker. Betty discharged November 30th, called there Dec. 1 but has not been in contact since that date. Child now manifesting some symptoms, placed on morphine and will be going to Sunny Hill. Had spoken to maternal grandparent -- he has grave concerns about mother’s ability to look after child. Betty told the social worker at hospital that she had used alcohol and cocaine throughout pregnancy. (F02-02)

The six-month temporary wardship granted to the Superintendent of Family and Child Services was followed by permanent wardship five months later when the parents failed to show at court. There is no indication in the files of the whereabouts of Betty prior to the court date. Following the entry dated December, the next entry was dated the following summer:

August: Neither parent appeared at court for permanent wardship hearing. (F02-04)
The next year Betty gave birth to another baby, also born addicted and sent to Sunny Hill hospital for care. Betty’s whereabouts were unknown once she left the hospital. The plan of the ministry was to get permanent wardship, which they did. The file was closed once this was accomplished.

The file of Betty exemplifies the disjointed nature of services to mothers and their children. Apparently no attempt was made to determine the needs of the mother. She may well have been known to other agencies, she may well have been a Ministry of Social Services recipient, but no connections were made to try to assess her needs, to determine if she wanted to attempt to keep her babies. There is little information in the file:

November: Reason for closure -- baby is permanent ward. (F02-05)

On such little information, how does a ministry worker base decisions to apprehend?
Connie:

Connie’s file was re-opened when her thirteen-year-old daughter was brought to Emergency Services by police. She was found at a noisy party. Connie’s daughter said her home was a "place where sister gets all the attention. Connie drinks a lot and her boyfriend tries to boss daughter around" (F03-01).

Connie’s other daughter was seventeen at the time. She was thought to be a slow learner. Connie also had a son who was a permanent ward and who was diagnosed as mildly mentally retarded. Both daughters had been in and out of Short Term Care for years and had stayed with relatives at different times. Until the daughter was brought to E.S. by police, all the previous recordings in the file were for non-protection Short Term Care Agreements.

Prior to the event when police found Connie’s younger daughter at the party, a service request had been put into the ministry:

Daughter had been living with her uncle for the past month. Daughter returned home. Daughter’s friend called police to request they attend a domestic dispute. Daughter had tried to leave home, her uncle locked her in her room. Daughter screaming and yelling. Connie attended Emergency Services, all parties angry. Daughter has history of running away. I would not be surprised if she AWOL’s. (F03-02)

Just over one year later, another call to the ministry from Connie’s sister voiced concern of neglect:

May, 1990: Connie’s sister called, feels her nieces are neglected. The home is messy. There is no food in the home, Connie hasn’t been at home for at least 2 days. Girls are sleeping on blankets on
the floor with no beds ... older girl not able to attend school because she does not have bus pass ... Connie is downtown on skid row in the bars.... Placements with relatives have not worked in the past as the girls have "ripped off" the relatives and run away. (F03-04)

Later that year the older daughter was brought to Emergency Services by a street worker. She had been spending time on Hastings Street with a known drug dealer. They couldn’t locate Connie. The younger daughter was apprehended "because Connie unable to provide a stable residence for her" (F03-09). The Plan by the ministry was to "apply for temporary order and maintain daughter’s placement and schooling" (F03-09).

Approximately six months later, the younger daughter was made a permanent ward at the age of 15 years. There is no information as to what happened to the older daughter who would have been nineteen years, the age of consent and not the concern of the ministry. The mother seemed to have disappeared.

Connie had two children who were developmentally delayed. Was Connie developmentally delayed? This question is raised because of a description of her behavior in the following recording:

January: Family continues to act in a dysfunctional manner. Connie continues to act as a confused, indecisive adolescent who occasionally and in an inappropriate manner, tried to assume parenting role. (F03-08)

Connie was forty-four years old, not an adolescent. Did she need professional help in life skills and parenting skills development? According to file text, this was never questioned.
**Donna:**

Donna’s file opened after her two children were apprehended because they were apparently left alone all night. Donna, a Native woman, was at that time twenty-eight years old, her children were seven and twelve years. The daughter’s teacher had called the ministry because the daughter told her that they had been left alone. The teacher noted that both children "generally appeared to be well cared for" (F04-02).

1985: Donna denied the fact that she had been out all night. She was furious when I came in with the children. Both children appeared healthy and appropriately dressed. Neither had any concerns about their mother. (F04-01)

A year later, Donna requested homemaker help so she could attend AA meetings. It was noted:

For the record there have been no reports of alcohol abuse in past months. Son has been seen in the office with Donna and appears healthy, responsible and well cared for. (F04-03)

One month later, Donna’s eight year old son was apprehended from a downtown eastside sub shop when has was found there by police at 9:00 p.m. Donna was next door in a pub with her common-law. Donna and her partner were granted a three-month supervision order and her son was discharged to her care. Later that year Donna gave birth to a baby girl.

A year later, Donna called the ministry to say that her older daughter had run away. She had been having difficulties in school and had the wrong type of friends. A year after that call, Donna called again requesting a referral to
Project Parent and a homemaker as "she and her daughter see a counsellor each week" (F04-08).

In 1989, Donna's older daughter had a baby. There is no information in the file about the daughter's thoughts or feelings about her baby.

Daughter is living with her parents. She just had a baby last week. She and Donna wanted to apply for CIHR [Child in home of Relative, a financial arrangement whereby a relative is given money for caring for a child]...(F04-09)

Later in that year the daughter was brought into the ministry by a street worker:

Daughter brought in by DYAS, has been living on the street on and off for last 3 months refusing to return home because she and her mother do not get along and Donna's husband has twice made sexual advances towards her. She was beat up by ex-boyfriend ... Her baby died this past summer [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome]. Decision to apprehend. (F04-10)

The fact that her baby had died was not dealt with in the recordings, except in passing. How it affected the daughter and her family was not recorded at all.

There is absolutely no sense of the stepfather/husband because the ministry workers, according to the files, never had contact with him directly. No follow up was done with the daughter's allegations that he had sexually harassed her. The file was closed when the daughter decided to return home to live. Her stepfather had "attended a residential alcohol treatment centre" and "daughter is comfortable in home now" (F04-12).
Ethel:

Ethel was a young mother of a baby boy when her file was opened. She had separated from her husband because she thought his sexual behaviour around their 3 1/2 month old son was inappropriate.

August 1: Ethel is presently staying at _______ transition house but will be moving into her own suite in August. Ethel wants to reunite with husband if they can complete a counselling program. Husband acknowledges phoning a sexual fantasy line and masturbating but never around the infant.

September 8: Home visit. Husband not pleased to see me. He became angry and refused to see anyone who was a sexologist or the sexual medicine unit. He said he had no sexual problems - - they had a communication problem. (F05-06)

The transition house worker said "Ethel is expressing ambivalence about caring for child. She is breast feeding and apparently having difficulty producing enough milk and needs rest. I obtained a homemaker" (F05-01).

Ethel had an abusive childhood. She suspected she was sexually abused by a foster grandfather. There was also a notation in her file regarding the family physician being aware that Ethel had been forced to strip and act in blue movies in the past. Information about when this happened or who forced her was not given.

The bulk of the file text is about Ethel’s psychiatric problems and their effect on her ability to mother. Her mental stability is noted by her husband when they separate:

1984: Husband says that he loves Ethel and his son. He says that she can be emotionally unstable and imagines thing. He has been
with her during times when she was convinced that the television was speaking to her and sending messages. (F05-04)

Ethel's psychiatric problems continued. In 1985 the social worker noted that she was in distress. Ethel was diagnosed as manic depressive:

September: Matters are deteriorating rapidly...Ethel placed at [psychiatric care centre] under her own volition. She was assessed as being actively psychotic and manic depressive. Grandmother agreed to care for her son.

But when she left the centre and was receiving care through the Community Care Team, the file notes that Ethel was diagnosed as being schizophrenic. One may wonder if there was a misdiagnosis and what consequences that could have had on her mental health.

Ethel continued her mothering in between the stays at psychiatric care centres. She was also diagnosed as having uterine cancer which ended in surgery. Her son was placed in foster homes or with his grandmother during these periods, and whether or not his father visited him is not noted. However, in January of 1987 the husband's lawyer informed the ministry that the father was granted temporary interim custody of his son, who was then 3 years old.

Ethel from time to time worried that her husband was sexually abusing their son and at one point her mother, who often visited the boy at his father's home, said she noticed tears on his rectum. This was reported, the boy was checked at Children's Hospital, and the file read, "sexual abuse complaint was unfounded" (F05-21).
Ethel became involved with another man, got pregnant, left him, and resided with her mother after her second baby was born. Ethel attended Healthiest Babies Possible and continued her treatment through the Community Care Team but her behavior was a concern:

**October:** Social worker from [hospital] called. Ethel gave birth to a boy. They were very concerned about her ability to parent the child. Homemaker put in five hours/day, Monday to Friday. (F05-22)

Ethel was thought to be obsessed with allegations of sexual abuse of her older son by her former husband. The file closes with these notes:

**April, 1989:** Ethel lives with her son and mother. At this time Ethel is in contact with the Community Care Team [for psychiatric care] and her mother is providing care for son.

It is likely that Ethel will contact MSSH again regarding concern that oldest son is being sexually abused. The school counsellor explained that staff had seen no symptoms and would contact MSSH should any concerns arise. (F05-26)
Fran:

Fran is a twenty-six year old Native mother of one boy, aged two years. In 1985 she lived with her sister. The file was opened to give Fran’s son Short Term Care because Fran and her sister had a fight, Fran had to leave, and she had no accommodation.

There are no earlier recordings than September 1985, but the recording social worker gave accounts of past interventions:

The ______ family is a multi-generation multi-problem native Indian family whose latest family branches are proving to be very frail support for their children. Social worker believes a future for the children of being in and out of foster care is almost certainty. (F06-02)

Fran and her sister have a history of alcohol abuse and resultant child neglect ... The warnings have been issued and the lectures given but the girls [sic] own experience of life in their society, and the abilities of their extended family networks to provide barely tolerable levels of care for the children have prevented apprehensions up until now. (F06-03)

... Fran’s recent behavior of taking her STCA child away from care home for a few hours, then turning this into a few days while she played tourist in Seattle, is a typical example. Her mother, of course, was able to prevent son’s apprehension by virtue of her willingness to stand-in for her errant daughter. (F06-04)

Fran can see son for a max of 4 hours - no overnights are allowed as her present residence is unknown and would probably be undesirable for an infant’s care...(F06-05)

This initial recording is a diatribe against Fran and her family, exemplifying how mothers are blamed. The text is also racist in the way the family’s history is viewed.
Fran and her sister were painted with the same brush by the ministry and staff at a local non-profit agency. Even when Fran made efforts to stop drinking, she was still thought to be a neglecting mother because she continued to live with her sister, who continued to drink:

Alert. December 13: Other adults move in with Fran and sister, all are heavy drinkers and hostile to MHR [Ministry of Human Resources now called Ministry of Social Services]. Social worker and Public Health Nurse visited home as sister’s son had serious impetigo. Sister only got treatment for son under threat of apprehension. Social worker remains concerned. (F06-07)

[non-profit agency] staff called. Fran and another sister were intoxicated and children were in their care. Car 86 workers [police office and social worker] found mother through her mother. Children asleep at a friend’s. Fran did not appear to be drunk. (F06-09)

Four years later, Fran had another baby and her file was reopened when she requested a childcare worker for her older son who was exhibiting aggressive behaviour. This was in the fall of 1989. Fran’s common-law husband was reported abusive to her older son, as witnessed by school staff. Fran at that time was seeing a Community Care Team worker for counselling and the worker confronted her about her common-law’s behavior. No mention in the file was made about confronting him, nor the risk factor of having him in the family.

In April, 1990, Fran called the ministry to request a child care worker for her son who was still acting out. As a result, a child protection report was filed in which Fran was named as the neglecting parent. Although Fran was the one who called the ministry asking for help for her son who had been expelled from
school, and although when Fran self-referred previously it was deemed "non-protection" (and although in other files self-referral is reported as "non-protection"), this particular report was nonetheless reported as "child protection".

The file recordings are confusing to the reader at this point because the next entry, which is almost one year later when an anonymous caller alleged child neglect, notes that a childcare worker had not "become involved with the family after September 1989 request for one by Community Care Team" (F06-17). So, Fran and her son had evidently coped without the support services (childcare worker) that Fran had requested several months previously. Fran’s attempts at improving her life and her family’s was noted at that point:

February 1991: Fran advised me that she attends upgrading at the Native Education Centre. Son goes to school and baby is looked after by his grandmother. Fran denied the concerns reported, said she was studying too hard to be able to drink or do drugs...The apartment, this date, was fairly tidy and the family was eating lunch ... (F06-18)

A special services worker was assigned to the family.

The file was closed in September of that year and services stopped, with Fran telling the worker that "she and baby’s father had married... and she feels son has adjusted well to their new home and school" (F06-21). The social worker commented that Fran sounded happy.
Gloria:

Gloria was a twenty-four year old Native mother of two children when her file was opened. Gloria’s relationship with the ministry lasted just over a year. It began with a call from a crisis center worker:

May 30: Crisis centre worker called. Gloria was in a safe home after her boyfriend beat her up. On Saturday Gloria superficially cut her wrists. Had visit with Gloria. She’s had a tough life with a lot of excess baggage. e.g. she was sexually abused by her father and brothers throughout her life and then was forced to prostitute herself for seven years. She realized she needs counselling but needs a baby sitter. (F07-01)

Two months later, Gloria is charged with abandonment when she leaves the family home to escape her violent partner. The circumstances are not clear, except that she was running away to protect herself, and the ministry blames her for neglecting her children.

July 9: Gloria was distraught and left her family home and her children with her common-law who has assaulted her and her son in the past. The common-law is before the court for such charges. Children apprehended at grandfather’s house where they were visiting. (F07-02)

The following month Gloria called the ministry to have her children go into a temporary foster home. She had left her abusing partner and had applied for a restraining order. She went to the states to visit her step-father who was dying of cancer and had no place to make a home for the children when she returned. The ministry reported this need for Short Term Care as “child protection”, citing “neglect” and “emotional abuse” as risk factors. The usual practice of the ministry is to report self-referral as "non-protection" because it is
seen as family support rather than protection insofar as the responsible parent is asking for help before neglect or abuse is probable or evidenced. Gloria was charged as neglectful even though she took the necessary steps to prevent any neglect or abuse from happening!

It was agreed by the ministry to support her efforts to obtain parenting skills. Gloria "accepted the services of a [family advancement] worker to work on parenting skills" (F07-05). Once Gloria found accommodation, she asked for the children to be returned, they were, and the file was closed.
Hannah:

The child protection authorities entered Hannah’s life when they apprehended her baby at midnight, called in by a babysitter who could no longer stay. Hannah had left her baby in the care of a friend who in turn called in a sitter. The sitter said Hannah’s friend had been drinking. "There was very little food and a great number of empty beer bottles as well as two empty liquor bottles" (F08-01).

When Hannah went to Emergency Services to plead for the return of the baby (her history was one of drinking in the downtown eastside) a social worker noted, "Hannah stated that she was enrolled in a job training program and attend AA regularly. The [other] social worker felt that Hannah presented as ‘a very caring, responsible and concerned parent who was trying to make a go of it’" (F08-02). The file at that time was closed with this statement: "Hannah went to Round Lake. Although Hannah has been sober for one year she felt she needed support in order to continue to refrain from use of alcohol" (F08-03).

One year later, after having her second child, she reported to the ministry an allegation of sexual abuse of her older daughter by her common-law husband, whom she had just left. At that point, Hannah disclosed to the social worker that she had had a son at a very young age, had adopted him out, and that it was then Hannah started drinking. She was raped twice during that time in her life, and recalled she had been sexually abused by an uncle during her
childhood. Hannah’s common-law admitted sexually molesting her daughter and he was charged with sexual assault.

Knowing her daughter was sexually abused triggered her own past and Hannah then went through a period of distress and depression. She moved from her common-law to a transition house and the staff noted:

Hannah was neglectful of kids, she was ‘depressed and not coping with the children’. Hannah admitted to the staff at [the transition house] that she had thought a lot about bringing the kids into care. (F08-11)

Hannah’s own need to be cared for in her time of distress was not recognized by her worker:

Although Hannah is determined to put her life in order, some of her expectations about how to accomplish this seem unrealistic and not very well thought out. e.g. immediately after daughter was molested, mother wanted to go into a treatment program to deal with her own issues. She quickly put aside the needs of her daughters to focus on her personal problems. As [transition house] staff pointed out, mother was capable of dismissing her daughters emotional and physical needs by ‘putting them to bed’. Hannah doesn’t seem to realize just how much her daughters need her right now. So, whereas Hannah’s determination to ‘get better’ herself is a positive sign, her inability to deal with her daughters present needs is not. (F08-12)

The file was closed on a note that defies this previous recording. In spite of the mother-blaming she had to withstand, Hannah met all of her goals:

Closing Recording: Over past year Hannah has achieved all of the goals set out for herself:
1. completion of her grade 10 GED.
2. on-going alcohol counselling and sexual abuse counselling.
3. tubal ligation after her last child.
4. continuation of her therapy and education on a long-term basis. (F08-14)
Irene:

The file in Irene’s name opened in 1984 when her three-year-old daughter was apprehended because she contracted gonorrhea from her father, Irene’s husband. This case is particularly sad because it spans seven years and, over the course of time, Irene’s gradual and then rapid deterioration is fully documented. In 1984 Irene is described as "generally quiet and passive in nature". She is thought to be a caring parent:

Irene appears to have spent considerable time and effort teaching daughter. She has been patient and seems to enjoy their time together. She could perhaps use some help in discipline of daughter and in establishing limits for her behavior. Irene is open to new parenting ideas, saying "you can always learn something". Irene states clearly that her first commitment is to her daughter ...

(F09-02)

The following recording points out that the intervention made by child protection workers in relation to the sexual abuse by the father focussed on Irene’s apparent inability to be a good mother:

Plan of Action:
1. Project Parent - 6 to 8 months, two times a week. Father could be integrated into P.P. at some point down the road when deemed appropriate.
2. Return daughter to mother ASAP. Father is not to live with them.
4. Father must receive treatment regarding sexual abuse issues by a recognized expert in the field.

Was Irene being held responsible for allowing her husband to sexually abuse her daughter?

Irene’s husband was convicted of sexual assault, sentenced to jail, and placed on probation for five years. Irene had her daughter returned to her two
months after the apprehension and she was discharged from care one year later. Irene managed well during this time. The social worker reports were glowing:

Irene’s progress has been remarkable over the past year and she has shown incredible effort and motivation in following through with plans to improve her life and that of daughter’s. She has been very determined to regain control of her family and the future. Daughter has also moved from being a self destructive out of control child to being quite healthy and reasonably behaved. (F09-05)

During the two years following the apprehension, Irene and her daughter were in therapy. Her daughter had sexual abuse counselling and Irene attended VISACS for sexual abuse counselling herself. When Irene was a child she was sexually abused but her history is not well documented, with only occasional allusions to her past. Project Parent was attended faithfully for one year. As well, Irene completed a pre-employment course. In 1985, this was the course of action:

Suggested Plan of Action:
1. Educational - Irene completed pre-employment in May. She is slated to go to ____ College for upgrading.
2. Daycare - will be needed
3. Homemakers - have been readily provided
4. Custody - has begun procedures for custody and divorce. She has also applied for Victims Compensation money.
5. At mother’s discretion, supervised visits may be granted between father and daughter.
6. Irene has clear idea of her goals. (F09-10)

In January, 1986, an anonymous caller complained of Irene partying. Upon questioning by the social worker, Irene said she was too busy to party. The daycare worker questioned by the social worker only had positive remarks
about the family, stating that any lack of food or clothing was due to a lack of 
money, not neglect. Irene’s daughter suffered from a genetic condition which 
produced dark circles under her eyes, a condition which was the basis of other 
neglect calls over time. At that point, Irene was thought to be "consistent and 
loving" (F09-14). She told the social worker that her daughter had begun to 
exhibit more sexual acting-out behavior and Irene reacted favourably to the 
social worker’s suggestion that her daughter attend a non-profit agency which 
provides services to children with behavior problems.

Eight months later a social worker’s visit to the family raised an alarm:

September: Visited Irene. She lives with daughter in a very dark 
basement suite. The place was tidy but very smelly. Irene and I 
have been trying to meet for a month but Irene slept through a 
couple of appointments and gave me the wrong address. Irene ... 
was very drowsy throughout the interview, I wonder if she is 
taking drugs. (F09-16)

I was somewhat concerned after my visit. It appears to me that 
Irene is on a downhill slide and the district supervisor agreed that 
this is possible. It appears to me to be a borderline neglect 
situation. (F09-18)

The following service plan points out that there was no focus on Irene’s 
behavior as it affected her life, only as it interfered with her care for her 
daughter:

Plan:
- monitor through school and Project _______[services to daughter] 
- support Irene in obtaining a custody order denying access

Two months later, Irene’s daughter went into care with a Short Term Care 
Agreement because of neglect: "Irene has been neglecting daughter for
sometime, and has been prostituting and involved in drugs" (F09-20). There is no recording citing evidence of this.

Four months later it was found out that Irene had a partner with whom she got pregnant. Irene was to give up the baby for adoption. Her daughter was returned home two months following. While she was in care Irene was "extremely inconsistent in her visiting, which daughter finds difficult. Irene almost always late and missed a number of visits" (F09-22). There is no mention whether Irene had transportation or money to get to where daughter was staying, nor the distance she had to travel.

In the summer of 1987, Irene’s daughter said that her mother’s partner hit her and often locked her in her room at night. The couple were warned by the social worker to change their disciplining, that apprehension was near. At that time a social worker made the comment: "...there is some suspicion that [Irene’s partner] is her pimp, and that he is heavily involved in cocaine but they deny this" (F09-26). Later that year, Irene did admit she was hooking but that she never did it out of the home.

In February, 1988, the social worker noted that the daughter was exhibiting anxiety and "sexual content" although the worker stated that Irene "has a great deal of understanding of daughter and uses a lot of good parenting techniques" (F09-31). The daughter was "medically" and was found to be medically healthy. The dark circles under her eyes were confirmed as a genetic condition, not as a result of nutritional deficit or allergy. Irene’s daughter’s
acting-out behavior escalated and Irene’s behavior became more reclusive. She avoided callers and did not respond to notes put under the door by the social worker.

Irene once again got pregnant with her partner. This time Irene decided to keep the baby. A list of concerns was noted by the social worker:

April, 1988:
- meeting at school, Irene not present. I visited home, no answer
- when child care worker drops daughter off home, Irene’s partner does not talk to her or greet her daughter
- nurturing is from daughter to mother
- during kindergarten year Irene would arrive late to pick up but give the child no apology or hug
- when school secretary phones because daughter not at school, sometimes daughter answers and says she’ll come "if I can get my mom up" (F09-34)

Plan:
- I will pursue residential treatment options
- one-to-one worker with daughter (F09-35)

Irene’s daughter went into Short Term Care, living in a residence. Irene gave birth to a baby girl who had no signs of drug withdrawal and the baby went home. Irene and her partner were visited frequently by social workers over the next few months. It was noted time and again that the home had men coming and going, specifically "black men". It was during this time that social workers noted their concerns about drugs and prostitution. Whenever men of colour were present, the recording social worker noted that. Presumably Irene’s partner was Black because when her baby was born Irene said, "she’s dark like _____ " (F09-37). It seems reasonable that he would have Black friends and one questions why the references to "colour" were made.
As time passed, Irene's deterioration was recorded:

June, 1989: Home visit to Irene, two black men left as usual. She again looked awful, when I commented she said "so many problems". Baby looked well ... There are no toys for stimulation for baby ... (F09-59)

The following entries give indications that Irene could have been trying to get out of a bad situation and that she was quite likely afraid of her partner:

July 27: Home visit to serve Irene, found her alone(!). She interacted more with baby who looks thin and is getting the dark circles. Still no toys ... Irene spoke much more freely today ... admitted cocaine habit and asked for information re: treatment resources. (F09-61)

July 28: Home visit. Irene says [her partner] is very paranoid ... and always expects her or someone to be informing on him. (F09-62)

Aug 13: Irene called Emergency Services for transition house placement which they arranged, but she changed her mind... (F09-63)

Aug 16: Home visit ... Irene alseep, another black male asleep on couch. Irene seemed to have no impetus to leave. She said [her partner] found the phone numbers I left her and was angry. (F09-64)

Irene admitted that she was prostituting and that she and her partner were addicted to cocaine. She complained that he took all the money, didn’t leave her enough for food for her and the baby. It was at that time that a social worker made this file entry:

Nov: Strong potential for sexual abuse, due to Irene’s own history of being sexually abused and her demonstrated inability to protect her first child; she chose an abusive partner, did not notice abuse for some time; did act appropriately on discovery, but later had relationship with at least one known abuser and provided almost
no supervision of daughter running at large in a high risk complex.
(F09-70)

The worker’s words give the allusion that Irene was culpable in the sexual abuse of her daughter by her ex-partner and that she colluded in her own abuse.

Irene was once again pregnant, and when the baby was born it was diagnosed as having NAS: Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. The baby was apprehended because of the parents’ transient lifestyle (prostitution, drugs, and moving to downtown eastside). In view of their past history, the 20-month-old was also apprehended. Irene’s older daughter had been made a permanent ward some months before. Irene did not attend the court hearings. With no further children in the home, the file was closed.

Irene went from being a mother who showed remarkable progress to one who didn’t show at all. From the accounts of the social workers, Irene was controlled and sexually abused by men all of her life.
Joan:

In 1988, Joan was a sixteen-year-old who had been apprehended, had gone AWOL, was prostituting and using drugs, was charged with assault causing bodily harm, and who had a "pimp" boyfriend. And then she was pregnant.

After the baby was born, MSSH put in a lot of supportive services (re: one to one worker, homemaker). Joan did not accept the help...(F10-07)

There was a Short Term Care Agreement ... boyfriend had taken the baby and gone to a streetworker saying that he couldn't find Joan. Baby was apprehended. Joan went to Toronto, did no planning re: getting baby back and a permanent order was granted. (F10-08)

The Family Service file was opened in 1991 because Joan was expecting another baby. A former social worker said the family was "like hillbillies" (F10-05). Joan herself was termed "subfunctional; hostile; possibly physically violent; she is living with her mother who is not much more functional" (F10-03).

Joan had the baby at the end of February. She "appeared receptive to all support services" but the records cautioned that she "appeared incapable of make safe decisions" (F10-12). Joan and her mother moved to Vancouver from the interior with the baby and lived in an apartment where the landlady took care of the baby often.

July: On many occasions Joan left the baby with [landlady] while she spent the night elsewhere with her whereabouts unknown ... On several occasions Joan disappeared for several days, and during one of her disappearances [landlady] took the baby to
Children’s Hospital because the child was suffering possible seizures. A guardian’s consent was needed for the child therefore baby was apprehended. (F10-15)

Joan did not show the concern the ministry needed to be assured she loved and wanted the baby so they made the daughter a permanent ward: "The mother has only visited the child five times since the apprehension and those visits were only accomplished because a child care worker had to pick up and transport Joan to the office for visits" (F10-16). The baby went to Joan’s cousin in the east. There is no mention in the records how the ministry found out about the cousin.
Kathy:

Kathy’s file was opened seven years prior to the closing date. Kathy was thirty-two years old at the time the file was opened, her two children were one and six years of age. She was married to the man who fathered her children, and he was residing with the family. Kathy is Native and moved to B.C. with her family a year prior to file opening.

The file was opened with a child protection intake. The following is taken from the running records:

March 17 -- Children apprehended. Father came home drunk and got abusive with Kathy. She left to stay with a friend, leaving children behind. She called a babysitter in to look in on them on Saturday but babysitter decided to drink instead. Father left house at 10 a.m. to look for Kathy. That afternoon son went to a neighbour who called Emergency Services. Kathy returned home 6:30 p.m. and contacted Emergency Services. Father and Kathy met at Children’s Hospital. Father going to detox and would not be back in the home. After lengthy talk Kathy better understands what happened and why and I think will be more likely to contact Emergency Services for help than to abandon her children. (F11-01)

Although Kathy left her children at home to escape her abusive husband, and called in a babysitter the next day to look after the children (she was not to know the sitter didn’t show up until after she got home later that day), Kathy was charged with abandoning her children. The father on the other hand was never attributed with abandonment even though he was the parent who left the home knowing the children were unattended. The father did return to the
home, and in subsequent meetings with the social worker his neglectful behavior was not raised.

Over the course of the months following the initial intake, Social Services workers had ongoing contact with the family, particularly around the court hearing held in May when a 3-month supervision order was given. This meant that for three months the parenting abilities of Kathy and presumably her husband had been monitored.

The following entry addresses the continued abuse of Kathy by her husband.

March 22 -- Father still drinking and beaten up. Hearing May 1st. Visited Kathy, home looked much better and mother almost friendly. Non status as her father sold his status years ago. Contacted social worker in Saskatchewan. Son in care three times, twice by agreement (once while she was undergoing alcohol treatment) and in September when he was abandoned and in care one month. Mother had a drinking problem and a poor relationship with Saskatchewan social services. She had lied about living with father and has been beaten by him, always promising to break up with him. Has been through 2-3 alcohol programs and seen as untrusting and difficult to work with. No history of child abuse. (F11-02)

The abuse against Kathy and her reluctance to leave her abusing husband is seen to be her problem, not his.

Following the initial intake there was another report of child neglect but the records are not clear what the incident was. Another entry was made the following month:

April 30 -- Both Kathy and father in to talk about weekend Emergency Services report although they did not come in together. Kathy admits to getting lonely and went drinking only to run into
father with another woman. She got very jealous and admits got very out of control. She is aware she is having a problem but is very reluctant to get help. She had thought of getting counselling ... After a long talk agreed to try Project Parent. Discussed Short Term Care Agreement but she could not live with this. Father in later. He recognized that Kathy has more than she can handle now i.e. (1) moving (2) court and (3) children and school for son. Father would like to help her over next few days. Agreed this might lessen mother’s burden now but over the long run would probably not work as nothing has really changed in their lives. He agreed and felt Kathy needed help but was unable to accept anything coming from MHR. He says she sees any government program as being only set up to take things away from her and definitely sees herself as a victim. It is clear to me that Kathy will only consider help while in crisis and probably by the time Project Parent has an opening (one month) she will no longer see it as helpful. (F11-05)

This recording gives evidence of how the ministry continued to place the onus on Kathy even when the children’s father was present. Not only was her husband not held responsible for any family problems but this man who violently assaulted her was allowed to speak for her.

Although Kathy ended up going to Project Parent, it was said by the program workers that "the project would be of no use to them. They feel her parenting is adequate without them" (F11-08). Affirmed as she was by those workers, when Kathy met again with the social worker she talked of her inadequacies and how she felt responsible for the relationship with her husband, as this entry shows:

She still feels ... that she must give in to him or the argument lasts for hours. Said father not interested in counselling. (F11-09)
There is no indication in the files whether the social worker tacitly agreed or openly challenged the premise that the woman has to take responsibility for all family and marital relations.

Their case was reopened a year later when their young daughter was apprehended from a daycare centre. Kathy and her husband did not pick up their daughter before closing time and the staff there said the parents had arrived at other times intoxicated. The issues around poverty and self-esteem and a sense of hopelessness are disclosed by the parents in the following entry:

July 12 -- Parents have started AA. I told Kathy about CIP opportunity at daycare centre. She was not interested as she perceives the program as cheap labour. They are reticent to engage in therapy. They felt the therapist they tried had set them one against the other and that she did not respect them because of their socio-economic situation. I told them those feelings were probably more their own than those of the therapist. However, they were real to them. I explained that therapy is difficult and only works when the people really want to do it. Father told me they often get very discouraged because of poverty. (F11-12)

The context of this woman's life is more fully understood in this recording, as is her ability to analyze social issues. As the recordings continue, there is a sense that both parents are trying to change their lives for the better and yet are getting more discouraged. Both parents go to AA four times a week and are provided a homemaker through Social Services to care for children during the meetings.

July 18 -- I told them I was impressed by their visiting [daughter in care]. They are incredibly consistent in transporting the child to and from daycare and foster home. Emergency Services social worker saw Kathy "working" Thursday night. [note: working means prostitution] Father came in saying he is under too much
stress taking daughter to hospital for allergy tests and back and forth to daycare. I agreed it was demanding. (F11-13)

Yet another apprehension is carried out the following February, seven months later. Both children are put into a foster home. The son is said to have behavioral problems by his school teacher, is disturbed, and steals lunch from other children because he is hungry. The parents visit almost daily, although they got evicted from their home for being rowdy and drunk. The foster father could not handle the son and the children were moved to separate resource facilities. Both father and Kathy were still battling alcohol:

April -- Kathy upset because she and father had been fighting. Father blames her for daughter’s crying. She said she wanted to leave him but couldn’t because she felt sorry for him. He apparently goes to her apartment when drunk and knocks on the door until she opens it. She usually opens the door for fear of being evicted. Kathy called and asked to be placed in an Alcohol and Drug Program. A 3-month wait at Aurora House and Round Lake. Mother discouraged. (F11-16)

The next month Kathy went into a transition house because her husband wouldn’t leave her alone. She had frequently been late visiting her daughter at the foster home or wouldn’t show up which upset her daughter. She was presenting herself as a "confused person" to the new case worker (in all there were six ministry case workers assigned to Kathy and her family over a seven year period). But in her confusion, and with the help of the transition house staff, Kathy was beginning to question how her marriage had been a "one-sided, non-reciprocal relationship" (F11-17). Adding to the notion that Kathy
was confused, the following entry confuses the reader because the content
contradicts previous recordings about a disturbed son and troubled daughter:

June 19 -- The one positive aspect with this couple: individually
both have been good parents...both have been able to provide a
good maturing relationship with the children and that both children
are very close to both parents. (F11-18)

A July entry indicated that the parents had separated permanently and
Kathy was volunteering at a family drop-in agency and handling single
parenthood well with the assistance of weekly homemaker respite care. But
then a year passed and a recording noted that Kathy put the children into care
under a Short Term Care Agreement (STCA) because she could no longer cope
with the responsibility of caring for them. She thought she may give custody
of her daughter to the father.

August 17 -- Kathy dry for over one year and is just now trying to
get the strength together to work on issues. She is very hurt and
riddled with guilt for the damage she has done to son. (F11-21)

Kathy’s son was in care for over two and one-half years. Kathy
continued to seek help. Kathy’s visits to her son were sporadic.

June -- Began [native life skills program]. Started VISACS
[counselling and group therapy for sexual abuse survivors] and
celebrated three years sobriety this month. This year Kathy also
started seeing therapist at the community care team. Son vists
with Kathy and his sister on weekends. In March Kathy lost control
and spanked daughter. Son intervened and mother started
punching him and chasing him around with a belt. Kathy told son
to get out. Son apprehended because STCA ended. Kathy not
ready to take son back but was prepared to work cooperatively to
have him return. (F11-25)
Another year passed, with Kathy having the children on weekends. Her son was finally returned home. When she had to move and couldn’t find a place, she moved into her husband’s apartment. He beat her up. Kathy had a paid job at a native centre but lost the job when she didn’t show up for work. In September her son was to attend an out-of-area school he’d been at the year before and Kathy blew up at the social worker when she found out the ministry would not pay for the bus pass. Although her social worker said she had options and that the ministry was there for support, needed financial resources were not being offered. Kathy continued to work at her relationship with her family:

September -- ... Kathy claims she does not spend a lot of time away from son and daughter. They do a lot as a family. She usually gets away on Thursday nights when she goes to her AA meetings. The children are hardly left alone ... Kathy admits she was thinking about son coming back into care. After giving it some thought she decided that she would give it a chance. She was in agreement to family counselling. She and son are presently attending art therapy. (F11-27)

The following winter Kathy’s worker noted the risk factor and made an assessment:

February -- Risk Factor/Assessment:
- Kathy’s low frustration level. Concern that she has talked about taking off, leaving children
- son’s provoking behavior and mother’s difficulty dealing with this
- inadequate living arrangements (3 people living in a one bedroom apartment)
- Kathy’s history of anger management problems and depression
- son’s unwillingness to discuss his family situation with anyone. His inability to trust
- son’s difficulties in school and Kathy’s frustration around this
- immediate need for family counselling
Outcome:
Kathy and son are seeing art therapist. Kathy wants to attend family counselling with both children. She has sought some individual help. There is a child care worker and homemaker in the home at present. Letter sent to B.C. Housing for accommodation. (F11-28)

It is not clear what was done with this assessment by the worker. The "outcome" noted in the file shows that Kathy seemed to be trying to improve her parenting skills and deal with the past abuse in her life. The daily struggle with poverty that Kathy had lamented about years before still plagued her abilities to mother.

The file was transferred to another district office one month later. The March entry had a notation that the art therapist had called, advising that Kathy was "really distressed", "talking suicide", and had made threats of killing herself in front of the children, and that one of Kathy’s major concerns was the lack of space in a one bedroom apartment. Based on the fact that Kathy carried out her motherly duties over the course of the next few days without any problem, one wonders if Kathy’s threats of suicide were a strategy to get the ministry to push for subsidized housing. Three months later the file recordings note that the son went to Alberta for the summer to visit his aunt and that Kathy’s ex-husband had applied for custody of the daughter and son through the Family Relations Act. There was no mention whether the father had quit drinking, nor how Kathy responded to this news. The last two entries in the file are short and to the point:
September -- Father was successful with his FRA application. Daughter and son moved in with him. (F11-33)

October -- Since Kathy no longer has the children in her care, this FS file can be closed. (F11-34)

We do not know how Kathy fared, nor if she even visited the children.

Because her children were no longer with her, Kathy was no longer of concern.
Lynne:

Lynne was forty-nine years of age when her file was opened. She had two daughters, fourteen and seventeen years old. Lynne was divorced from the children’s father.

Lynne’s younger daughter went to the ministry and said she could no longer live with her mother, who was too strict. The daughter said she couldn’t abide by her mother’s rules: "no skirts above knees, no make-up, in by 6 p.m. on school nights, no loud music" (F12-03).

The daughter’s father said he was concerned about what he termed the emotional abuse of his daughter by Lynne. He wanted his daughter to live with him and his new wife and family. Lynne refused. She said he was a "con artist and emotionally twisted" and that he didn’t abide by the original court order and that he never visited his daughter when he was supposed to. The social worker noted that Lynne was "consumed with hatred and mistrust for father" (F12-04).

Over a three year span, Lynne’s daughter attempted living with relatives, at a residential place, and finally with her father. Life with father didn’t turn out and she left his home.

One does not get a sense of this family or of Lynne, except that she is painted as an hysterical, old fashioned husband-hating woman. The daughter’s life is sketchy: she had a boyfriend. In order to protect him "she let herself be gang raped" (F12-06) and then eventually her boyfriend got her pregnant. She decided to keep the baby, against both her parents’ wishes.
The file closes, noting that Lynne's daughter was discharged from care to live on her own. She was eighteen at that point and a mother. This meant she ceased being a child in need of protection.
Moira:

The story of Moira is short. The file contains only a few terse recordings. In 1984, she was a twenty-five year old Native woman with three children in care in Alberta. She had a history of alcohol abuse and prostitution.

In 1984, when the B.C. child welfare authorities became involved, Moira wanted to get her children back. She agreed to make "significant changes in her life" (F13-01) and proceeded to do just that.

Outcome of treatment:
Mother has really made significant gains in her personal life style through the past 18 months. She has stopped drinking and has accepted the assistance offered by the Native Alcohol Services. She has relocated to better than adequate accommodations. Though unable to find employment, she has been financially stable for the past year ... Furthermore, she has been working as a volunteer teachers assistant...(F13-05)

The social worker recording her outcome attributed Moira’s success to her commitment to change and to government services: "Majority of these significant changes that Moira has made is by working hard and accepting the support, help and advice of [social worker]" (F13-05).

Moira was reunited with her children.
Nancy:

In 1990, Nancy was twenty-seven years old. She had one child adopted out and had just given birth to a baby in Vancouver. The hospital social worker alerted the ministry that Nancy would need a homemaker. Homemaker service was authorized and the next day the homemaker attempted to see Nancy but she was not at home. The homemaker alerted Emergency Services who in turn called the social worker at home and then said they were "going to check St. Paul’s hospital" (F14-02). It was unclear by the recordings why there was so much concern about Nancy but nonetheless two days later the homemaker supervisor made the following report to the social worker:

Homemaker Supervisor had the following concerns:
- Mother came across as being very monotone -- flat, face looked very pale and may have been depressed. Mother told homemaker that she is very concerned about her cat. Nancy has had the cat for three years and a social worker had once told her the cat was dangerous and could smother the baby ... Nancy decided to have a friend take care of the cat for a while.
- Mother also expressed her concerns..."what changes the baby will make"...Nancy had the baby in full sun (very hot day). Homemaker supervisor suggested she move the baby. Nancy is short of baby clothes, formula and stroller. Nancy did not express much warmth towards the baby. (F14-04)

The experiences of Nancy show how services put in place to "help" new mothers are used to investigate and gather evidence against them. The limitations of using a homemaker to assess a mother’s capabilities is exemplified in the above recording. The report noted deficits in Nancy’s mothering based on little information and one short visit. If Nancy was concerned about her cat, this shows an animal lover and a caring mother who
gives up her cat for her baby. It's also not clear what behaviors led the homemaker to think Nancy was not expressing "much" warmth. Homemaker training does not include assessment skills. Nancy's lack of clothing and formula could have had more to do with welfare rates that fall below the poverty line than mismanagement of money, or lack of interest (editorial note: this past year I priced a stroller. The costs ranged from $142 to $320, including taxes. The welfare rate for food and clothing and diapers and anything else needed, for a mother and child, is $590).

Even though a social worker was involved in this case and could have contacted the financial aid worker, Nancy and her five day old baby had to fend for themselves to get extra funds for formula and clothing: "Nancy will ask her FAW for formula and clothing monies" (F14-06).

The concern about Nancy was finally brought out in the recordings. Nancy had been under psychiatric care in the past. Although Nancy "was very open in revealing this information" (F14-05) her capacity to mother became suspect. It was not clear from reading the file whether the social worker knew what the psychiatric history was because there is no diagnosis noted anywhere.

Social Worker called Public Health Nurse and informed her of the concerns. Also gave mother's background (psychiatrist) and asked PHN to check on mother and child on regular basis and to contact the ministry if she has any concerns. (F14-08)

Whether a social worker actually visited Nancy is not clear from the records. But risk factors were noted anyway:
Risk factors: Nancy’s history of psychiatric problems -- the lack of warmth shown towards the baby - the lack of supports among Nancy’s family and friends - all of the above along with the needs of a newborn plus the chance of mother becoming depressed. (F14-10)

How the chance of depression was deduced is, again, not clear because there is no written communication providing evidence that an assessment was made nor on what information the prognosis was based.

Five months following the birth, an anonymous caller said she had concerns about Nancy’s mothering. The complaints were detailed but there is no recording that shows whether there was evidence of neglect.

During the next year Nancy often had her sister care for the baby. From Nancy, her sister, and further homemaker reports "it soon became evident ... that [Nancy] was able to provide for baby’s basic physical needs but she was struggling in meeting baby’s emotional needs" (F14-13).

One year after the baby was born, Nancy signed a Short Term Care Agreement. In June, the baby was adopted out. The social worker wrote that Nancy "was positive this is best decision for baby and herself. She is still struggling with her depression and many childhood issues which still have a negative influence" (F14-12). What the childhood issues were was never noted.
Olga:

The case file of Olga, a Native woman who is married, was open for only six months.

The police called the ministry to apprehend when they found Olga’s seven year old boy alone. He said he had been alone for days and he thought his mother was drinking at a downtown eastside hotel. He did not know his father’s whereabouts.

Olga and her husband said they had left their son for some time one day but that there had been a neighbour and uncle keeping their eye on the child. The family is Native, and it is common custom to have extended family members look out for children. At the court hearing the many family members who were closely connected to the family vouched for Olga’s good mothering and her husband’s good fathering. A six-month supervision order was granted. There was no further concern by the ministry about this family during the six months, and the file was closed.
Patrice:

Patrice was a twenty-two year old mother of a newborn baby when a ministry worker wanted to refer her to Project Parent in 1988 because of her "rocky past". Patrice was agreeable. Patrice lived with her common-law husband in a basement suite in the home of her mother-in-law. The father of the baby was not asked to attend Project Parent.

Shortly after that time a friend of her mother-in-law called to say the baby was being neglected. The Public Health Nurse visited weekly and her overall impressions were "that the baby is gaining weight extremely well, baby is relaxed and happy, mother handles infant well, and hygiene/housekeeping is okay" (F16-02).

Patrice’s partner was, however, abusive. He beat her and on one occasion tore up her apartment and stole money from her. He was sent to jail on another charge for seven years.

About two and one-half years after the birth of Patrice’s baby another protection call came into the ministry. Patrice’s baby had been apprehended from a friend’s home which "was cold and dirty. Little food and child has flea bites. Friend’s own four kids are permanent wards" (F16-04). Her baby’s custody by the friend was explained by Patrice. She was afraid her mother-in-law would follow through on her threats to apply for custody of the baby and frightened by this, "placed her child with friend" (F16-05).
Satisfied in the following months that Patrice was taking adequate care of the baby, the closing recording stated:

Patrice seems to have stabilized over the last few months. She attended Project Parent only on one occasion, stating that she felt uncomfortable as she did not know anyone there. She did register her daughter at a playschool ... ______ told me that she had not seen Patrice on the streets for a long time Patrice told me that she has stopped hooking since she has a new man in her life ... (F16-06).

The social worker accepted this information at face value. The supervision order had expired and the file was closed.
Quinlynne:

In 1990 when the ministry apprehended her four-year-old child, Quinlynne was a Native woman of twenty-three years. She had been staying at a transition house, having escaped her violent partner.

Quinlynne left the transition house one night, leaving her daughter in the care of one of the other residents. She phoned to say she would return the next day, then failed to show. The police advised the transition house that Quinlynne had been picked up for solicitation. On one occasion two months earlier, a playground leader informed the ministry that Quinlynne was drunk and her daughter had shown up without any breakfast. At that time they were sent to an alcohol treatment residence. This time Quinlynne’s child was placed in a longer term foster home.

Staff at the alcohol treatment centre noticed bruises on Quinlynne, and her daughter seemed afraid to go home. There were two other occasions where the ministry was called in because Quinlynne had left her daughter while she prostituted. The ministry advised Quinlynne to attend Project Parent and to get alcohol counselling. Her abuse by men and the trauma that the assaults would have on Quinlynne’s abilities to mother were not noted in the text.

February:
- Quinlynne keeps only about half her visits with her child
- she attended Agape program one time
- Project Parent now has opening but mother failed to attend
- by observing Quinlynne’s missed appointments and her lack of follow up to programs -- likely mother has a drug or alcohol problem  (F17-06)
It was also noted that Quinlynne was often missing for weeks. Her daughter remained in care and was eventually put into custody of her maternal grandmother in the prairies through the Family Relations Act.
Alan:

Alan is the only single male parent in the study sample. His file was opened in 1984 when concerns about his son and daughter were expressed by the school. His file spans seven years and, unlike similar cases in this study sample where the family was headed by a mother, he never had his children apprehended.

The first intake listed a number of problems cited by school staff that Alan’s children were having:

February, 1984: ...Kids seem to be having all sorts of problems such as
- always late for school -- poor appearance
- often seem to be hungry -- neither have friends
- daughter isolated and depressed
- talk about having no furniture
- consistent arguing between them
- bulk of housework is daughter’s responsibility

Father may well benefit from some outside support...services for kids. Alan may be resistant although he is aware that a social worker will be in contact.

Service Plan: No case made. (M01-01)

Separately or together, many of these problems meet the criteria of being "at risk" according to the Family and Child Service Act. Yet the social worker did not follow up.

The next intake is dated April, 1985. The school was not so concerned any longer, they appeared to the social worker to have "adopted a more accepting attitude toward this single parent family" (M01-02). The social
worker agreed that there was "not as much a concern as in February and in fact even has a ring of normality, given the family’s situation" (M01-03).

Such an understanding attitude is admirable. And unique. In the seventeen cases in this study which are documented above, most of whom are single parent mothers, not once were their family problems described as having a ring of normality, given the circumstances.

The mothers in the seventeen cases presented in this chapter were never granted a contextual relativity by the ministry for problems they or their children were having, but Alan was:

June, 1985: ...The school feels strongly that a referral is important [of son to psychologist for assessment]...to date our involvement has been attempts to be supportive. Alan has ... been somewhat defensive and resistent to our input ... it seems Alan could benefit from some assistance ... as he is a hard working father with little time on his hands. (F01-05) (emphasis added)

This contextual relativity was granted even though, "son and daughter are lacking in supervision and general care...which may be at the bottom of some of the son’s negative behavior" (M01-07). And yet, because Alan "was not able to recall that he had been advised to seek psychiatric help for his son", Alan would not do so until the following September when school was back in session and he could check on this advice. Again, no follow up was made by the ministry.

One year later, in October, 1986, Alan’s son was still having problems. He had outbursts at school, "expressing exaggerated anger when provoked by a
classmate". The boy had to be restrained and then later sobbed for one-half hour.

October, 1986: Son has tension and frustration pented. This is not an isolated concern about son. Over past two years similar concern has been noted. Alan seems hesitant or unable to seek out a possible solution for son. Needs support to obtain some help for son’s emotional outbursts. (M01-02)

There was no service plan found in the file, presumably this was dropped as were the complaints since 1984.

Four years later Alan’s son "got out of control at [school], beating the walls and floor" (M01-09). Two months later Alan’s son was "medically excluded from school after throwing a fit" (M01-10). Still the ministry workers did not intervene. Again, there were allowances made for Alan, presumably because he was a working, single father. A social worker remarked, "Alan cares for his son but does not want son to be treated by a psychiatrist on an on-going basis ... Alan refused to meet to consider son entering alternate school (M01-12). The reason for closing the file at that time was that "son will not be attending alternate school so FS file need not be open" (M01-13).

In December, eight months after the file was closed, it was re-opened with this entry:

December 18: Daughter was brought to [resource home] by police yesterday as she was violent to herself and other people. Cannot stay at resource because she is only 18 ... she lives independently (M01-11).
Neither child was apparently given services because father wouldn’t agree to it. And he was never challenged by a ministry which repeatedly challenged mothers.
CHAPTER EIGHT

ANALYSIS

Mothers’ Behaviors as Indicators of Child Neglect

The text of ministry files was analyzed to determine what observations are being made about child neglect and what is being communicated. During the coding process, I looked for text that named or alluded to child neglect to begin conceptualizing the data. I asked the question, "what represents child neglect?"

During the coding process, I found that the indicators of neglect were less tangible than were the descriptions of the parents’ behaviors. That is, the children in the case studies were predominantly healthy and well clothed and fed. They were not apprehended because they were exhibiting signs of neglect, rather their mothers were exhibiting behaviors that were thought to be risk factors and therefore had the potential for neglect. The citation of mothers’ behaviors as indicators of child neglect is consistent with the literature. Chapter two of this study notes that most authors and practitioners cite Polansky’s (1981) definition which describes neglect as having occurred if the responsible parent allows a child to suffer or fails to provide the child with essential ingredients for physical, intellectual, and emotional development. On the surface, it seems reasonable to target parental behavior as a risk factor because, indeed, if a parent does not exhibit responsible behavior a child could fall down stairs, get burned from a hot iron, and so forth. Where it becomes
problematic is in the operationalization of "essential ingredients" and in the assumptions and biases underlying any interpretation of behavior. What the data highlight is that child protection workers assess behaviors solely on their clinical judgment that is steeped in gender, class, and cultural bias. Fran's experience is an example. Fran is a First Nations woman and her family customarily shared childcare and had close relationships. Fran shared accommodation with her sister which, in this context, was a cultural norm. Yet, the social worker thought Fran's choice to live with her alcoholic sister was an indication that Fran was a neglecting mother, even though she herself was staying dry and her children showed no signs of neglect.

Another example is the assessment of Kathy's behaviors. She escaped her drunken and abusive husband one evening, and ran to a friend's home. Since her husband had never abused the children before, Kathy had no reason to believe he would at that point, and therefore left the sleeping children with him. When her husband, the father of the children, did leave the children alone the next day while he went out looking for Kathy, the ministry was alerted by a neighbour and the children were subsequently apprehended. It was not the father, however, who was held responsible for abandoning his children, it was Kathy. One could reasonably argue that she had not abandoned her children, especially when it is pointed out that she called in a babysitter the next day, probably because she couldn't trust the father to responsibly care for them. But what is being communicated about Kathy and, by association, all mothers
of families involved with the ministry for reasons of neglect, is that it is mothers
who exhibit neglectful behavior, not fathers.

The coding process did uncover some dimensions of neglect specific to
the children themselves. In the cases of mothers who were addicted and who
gave birth to babies suffering Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, the babies were
defined as being in need of protection from neglect because of their physical
condition. And Irene’s daughter was locked in her bedroom by her step father
which prevented her from getting something to eat when she was hungry in the
morning. Another example is with the children of the single parent father,
Alan. His children were described as hungry, stealing food, the daughter
isolated and depressed, the son having a cold over a long period of time, and
each having a poor appearance.

Neglect was also clearly spelled out when a child was left unattended,
such as in the case of Donna. Her eight-year-old son was apprehended when
he was found unattended in a downtown coffee shop at nine o’clock at night.
There were also cases where the children’s acting out behaviors indicated
psychological disturbance. Donna’s son and Alan’s son were both thought to
need psychological help by school staff.

During the coding procedures in which comparisons between case text
were made, the data show that the conceptualization of neglect in the sample
focussed on the mothers’ behaviors. In the case of Alan, who is the single
parent father, the child protection workers did not determine his parenting
behaviors to be a causal condition for his son's disturbed behavior in the same way that they assessed neglect in the cases of the mothers. In his case, workers repeatedly contextualized the conditions and said Alan was doing the best he could, given his situation. As the categories developed from the conceptualization of child neglect across the data, mother-blaming in assessment and intervention emerged as a central theme.

Mother-blaming in Assessment and Intervention

The observations in this sample of child neglect cases, and the judgments drawn from these observations, communicate the ideological notion that women and women alone have to shoulder the responsibility of caring for children. Women in this study were clearly held responsible for the violence in their lives, for their poverty, and for their inability to cope with those stressors and others.

Mother-blaming is both overt and intimated in communications. In the case of Irene, the social worker communicated that Irene "chose an abusive partner", as if she went out looking to be beaten and to have her daughter sexually abused. Irene's behavior upon discovering the sexual abuse was appropriate (she immediately reported it) but she was nonetheless held suspect because of her inability to choose a better man. Anne was thought to be somehow responsible for her husband's physical abuse of her when that violence was framed by the social worker as "their volatile relationship" (F01-06).
Mothers' behaviors were targeted as indicators of risk when their requests for help by the ministry were classified as "protection" rather than "non-protection". This happened to Fran and Gloria, two First Nations women. There was neither evidence of neglect nor the likelihood of it because the mothers were taking the necessary steps to prevent abuse or neglect from happening. The implication is that some mothers can't be trusted. The consequence is that a charge of child protection is left on their Family Service files even when the call was for preventive services. It does matter to the mother and to the community whether or not she is "found" to be neglectful: she and her children live with that stigma.

By looking at gender in relation to the response by ministry workers, it became clear that little focus was given the men in the families. If the ministry response system virtually ignores the husbands and fathers even when they are present, then by implication women are seen as culpable. In the case of the single father, the only case in which a file is in the father's name, the specious nature of the assessment process for child neglect comes into full bloom. The frequency with which Alan is afforded a social context as a constituent in determining child neglect, and the absolute absence of it in the cases where the parent held responsible is the mother, suggests that gender does make a difference in attributing cause. Alan had a file opened with the ministry over a period of seven years, and yet not once during that time did social workers intervene to provide services to his children if Alan indicated he did not want
the services. And, unlike similar cases in this study sample where the family was headed by a single mother, Alan never had his children apprehended. The point is not that they should have been apprehended, but that Alan was accorded understanding and support not given any of the mothers.

The coding procedure of developing categories showed that the interventions that were made in relation to the mothers were not responsive to individual needs. Whether a mother had a drinking problem, was distraught because of a violent partner, or couldn’t afford adequate housing or food, the most commonly used interventions were Short Term Care Agreements and Homemaker childcare. Based on the comments of the mothers, these interventions were deemed useful to most of them by providing respite care, but they were temporary in nature and did not address the presenting problems. As well, they played into the recurring theme of mother-blaming. The data show that once the respite care intervention was put into place, the presenting problem was no longer a point of focus for the social worker. The implication is that the mothers’ deficiencies were the causal conditions, not the indicators of inadequate housing, or violent male partners, or addiction.

One may argue that it is irrelevant how services come to be provided, as long as the mothers and children are benefited by them. In fact, two UBC social work professors have made just this point in conversation with me. I suggest that it does matter because what is being communicated about child neglect in file recordings reflects to the attitude that child neglect is rooted in
the individual deficiencies of mothers. In the case of Hannah, the distress and depression she suffered when her own past of sexual abuse was triggered by the knowledge that her daughter had been sexually abused, was not understood at all. Her inability to meet her children’s physical and emotional needs was seen as neglect (F08-11) and she is thought to be unrealistic and thought blameworthy for putting aside her daughters’ needs to meet her own needs (F08-12). Her courage in facing memories of childhood pain is not acknowledged, and the text shows no understanding of the normal process of healing from sexual abuse (McCannell, 1993).

The women in this study were not seen as women, they were only viewed as mothers; mothers who were not accorded the right to have needs of their own.

As the comparisons were made in the analytic procedures, the dimensions of interventions pointed to yet another prominent theme, one which shows the Ministry of Social Services to be engaged in a policing role.

**Intervention as Policing Strategy**

The axial coding procedure of making connections between categories showed that interventions were also used to monitor the mother and gather evidence. Homemakers and Public Health nurses were used in some cases to support or refute evidence of child neglect. But whether it was explained to the mothers that the resource people played this role as well as service provider, is not known. In the case of Nancy, the homemaker reports were critical in the
social worker assessment of risk factors that ultimately led to support of the decision to put the baby up for adoption.

The case studies also show that limited types of resources were utilized by (or were made available to) social workers in response to circumstances surrounding their assessments of child neglect. Few of the interventions could be considered "treatment" although interventions in this study were often called "treatment interventions", and often the mothers were already involved in some treatment program or therapy (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous, psychiatrist) when the ministry workers intervened in the family.

In the cases of the families where the mothers were the targets of the intervention "treatments", there is nothing to indicate any measure of success. When a family comes to the attention of the ministry, the ministry stays involved for at least three months (the minimum length of a supervisory court order) if there is any concern that a child is at risk. Anne moved out of the catchment area and it was for this reason that the file recorded: "No further services requested at this time" (F01-10). Connie, the forty-four year old mother of two teen daughters who may have been developmentally disabled, had her younger daughter in and out of Short Term Care Agreements for over thirteen years. During that time no assessment of Connie was done that may have helped the ministry understand her needs as a parent and intervene more efficaciously. Hannah faced more blame than support from the ministry and, in spite of a social worker's assessment that Hannah was depressed and not
responding appropriately to her children, she managed to achieve her goals of education, sobriety, and therapy for herself and daughters. And Hannah’s file was closed without mention of parenting deficits.

In examining the case studies, it appears happenstance if any of the files were closed with assurance that the interventions made a difference. Anne moved out of the catchment area, Irene succumbed to the control and abuse by men, Joan was a teen mother who lost two babies to apprehension, Lynne’s daughter moved from being a child-in-care to being a teen mother who moved out on her own, and Moira was reunited with her children without any indication that the ministry played a helping role.

This discussion of the efficacy of ministry intervention suggests that the actions of the child welfare agency serve to police families more than to help them make beneficial changes. Two additional themes emerged as the data were categorized, one of poverty as a context of child neglect and the other of institutional racism.

**Poverty as a Context of Child Neglect**

However many times the point has been made in this study that poverty has a strong correlation to child neglect, it must be understood that the causes of poverty are not the same for everyone. Ruth Sidel (1986), in her discussion on the feminization of poverty, says that some of the key causes of poverty among women are fundamentally different from the cause of poverty among men and that the same remedies cannot, therefore, be implemented ... the lives of the vast majority of women reflect a very different reality.
Women's lives are inextricably bound up with caring for others... for men, for elderly parents, for grandchildren, for friends ... (p. 25).

Few of the women in the study had jobs, or partners with steady employment, and several were clearly noted to have been on income assistance (welfare).

The impact on the mothers and their children from living on incomes below the poverty line are stripped of subjective knowing. If alluded to at all, the consequences of poverty are attributed to inadequate mothering. For example, Kathy's one-bedroom apartment was noted as "inadequate living arrangements" and a risk factor in the social worker's assessment of Kathy's ability to give adequate care to her children. What wasn't noted in the risk assessment was the reality of the vacancy rate (which at that time was less than one percent) and the gap between real market rents and the benefits allotted for shelter.

When the mothers had to go to a foster home to visit their child(ren), their need for extra money for bus fare, or the organizing it takes to plan bus routes and walking time to see their children in the suburban areas where so many of the foster families reside, are not taken into account. When Kathy and her husband expressed to the social worker that they felt disrespected because they were poor, and that they often got discouraged because of poverty (F11-12), the social worker did not record her response, if in fact she responded empathically.

Whether any of the social workers understood the stressors of poverty is not known. Social workers cannot make an intervention that targets an
economic risk factor because the B.C. child welfare legislation, discussed in Chapter six, limits the assessment of child neglect to the deficiencies of the parent, not the deficiencies of the social institutions themselves. This constraint in the legislation points to the fact that women, as the adjunct to the male dominated ruling apparatuses, have had their experiences in caring interpreted and judged by those not traditionally involved in the labour of caring.

Institutional Racism in Child Welfare Practice

In the eighteen families in the study, seven mothers were identified as Native (39%). With First Nations people in B.C. totalling approximately two percent of the population (Campbell, 1991), Native families are overrepresented in the sample. The chapters in this study dealing with the theories of causation of child neglect and the historical developments of the family and motherhood discuss some of the factors which have led to First Nations families and children being targeted for intervention disproportionately to the mainstream population. The case studies exemplify how the heritage of First Nations people and how their differing child rearing methods are ignored or, when acknowledged in one case, are disparaged.

The lives of Donna, Gloria, Kathy, Moira, Olga, and Quinlynne are subjected to assessment by ministry workers without any mention of their aboriginal ancestry. Although their files are check-marked "Native" this procedure is followed only to alert staff that in the case of apprehension, if the family has the designated status, the Indian Band would have to be notified.
There is no consideration of culture in the families’ needs, or the cultural
differences in child rearing, or how this country’s racist policies are woven into
the antecedents of presenting problems. Nothing in the text indicates these
families are of First Nations origin.

In Fran’s case, her aboriginal heritage is commented upon but in a
deprecating way. Her family is described as a "multi-generation multi-problem
native Indian family" (F06-02). She and her sister are warned and given
"lectures" by the social workers about their alcohol abuse and "resultant child
neglect". The recording social worker says, "but the girls own experience of
life in their society, and the abilities of their extended family networks to
provide barely tolerable levels of care for their children have prevented
apprehensions up until now" (F06-03). The social worker alleged Fran "played
tourist in Seattle" when she was supposed to have her son only for a few hours
yet this researcher’s experience working with First Nations people is that their
extended families reach down into the States, defying the border as a boundary
of nations. It is quite likely that Fran was visiting with family. Although it
could be argued that regardless of why Fran was in Seattle, she was only to
have her son away for a few hours, this response still lacks an understanding of
people’s family ties. For First Nations people, or for other people who are
coping with stressors of structured dislocation, an arbitrary time frame based on
somebody else’s schedule often does not meet their own financial and social
needs.
There is no mention of workers trying to find First Nations foster homes for any of the children who were either apprehended or put into Short Term Care. The issue is not raised in any of the data.

In the case of Irene, her husband was a man of Colour, presumably Black. Yet, social worker recordings made a point of denoting men of Colour being present at home visits by social workers. Some examples are: "...when I arrived ...black friend playing with the baby..." (F09-66); "Irene asleep, another black male asleep on couch" (F09-64); "Found her and [partner] in apartment of W. Indian friends downstairs.." (F09-45). One can't help but draw the conclusion that the recordings were of a racist nature: that is, if Black men were present then the worker thought this additional evidence that Irene was involved in illegal acts of drugs and prostitution.

**Violence as a Feature of Control**

Using the transactional system of analysis advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1990), which examines "action/interaction in relationship to their conditions and consequences" (p. 158), the violence perpetrated by men against women and women's victimization as children when they are sexually abused by male family members emerges as a salient feature in the case studies. Seven of the mothers were either sexually assaulted in their childhood by men in their family (some sexually assaulted by other men as well) or physically assaulted by their male partners as adults. Five other women in the study had resorted to or had been forced into prostitution (Betty, Irene, Moira,
Patrice, and Quinlynne), with the consequence of sexual assault and violence endangering their lives. **Well over the majority of the mothers in this study had to contend with men who loomed over them with threats and acts of violence.**

What is also evident in the theme of violence as a feature of control is the subjugation of teenage girls by men in their families and by their boyfriends. Joan and the daughters of Lynne, Connie, Donna, and Alan all move from being children victimized by male parents or male parental figures to being controlled by their boyfriends or assaulted by other males. Many of them end up being teen mothers, repeating the cycle of oppression of their own mothers.

The analysis put forward by Reitsma-Street (1991) of the policing and social control of girls and women was discussed in Chapter five. Reitsma-Street talks about the notion of a cycle of oppression, first as girl children, then as adolescents, then as mothers. Her research shows that girls seriously restrict the development of their own interests and independence, and that sexual assault, unwanted pregnancy, poverty and dependency can characterize their lives. This rings true for the young women in the study. The ruling apparatuses of the child welfare system play a role in this cycle insofar as bureaucratic procedures contribute to objectified knowledges of women’s experiences.

**Objectified Knowledges in Child Neglect**

For young women (teenagers) who moved from dependency on the child welfare system as minors to dependency on the other arm of the Ministry of
Social Services as teenage "welfare" mothers, I noted that the child welfare system continued its influential role in the cycle of oppression discussed above. The data in this study show that at first the child welfare system acted as the "protector" of these girl children (although the data also show that in most cases the men who abused or threatened the teenagers were not challenged). And then, when these girl children become teen mothers, they played out the role that their own mothers had: their behaviors became suspect when a social worker looked for evidence that these "girls" could not adequately mother their new babies.

During the course of examining the data, I made memos as I was sorting concepts and developing categories. It was in the process of sorting memos that I saw clearly how women’s experiences were made objectified knowledges. To explain how women’s experiences in this study were made objectified knowledges, I will take the feature of violence that is a common thread in the case studies and discuss how the experiences of women with that violence are made invisible by the ruling apparatuses or used as evidence in blaming mothers.

It is in the context of physical violence and sexual assault that most of the women in this study carried out their role as "mother". Seen in this context, these women’s bodies had to undergo the trauma of sexual assault and physical assault, their psyches inundated by these bodily invasions and ego destroyers. And then, because they were mothers, they were expected to live
up to the patriarchal institution of motherhood. How can women be expected to do this when they are still reverberating from such horrifying and burdensome experiences? They had to immediately rally, presenting to the child welfare authorities behavior that indicated adequate mothering, for fear that their children would be apprehended.

What these experiences of women highlight is how they, as women, are torn apart first by violence, and then torn apart emotionally when they lose their children to apprehension. The imagery is one of dislocation; fragments of women suspended in an environment in which they have no control. The processes which dislocate women are the ones to which Dorothy Smith (1990) refers when she talks of the objectified knowledges: women have their experiences stripped of the subjective and made a separate objective category. The bureaucratic procedures of investigation, intervention, and apprehension, and the forms of communication and action which strip women's experiences of the subjective are mediated by texts, the texts which make up ministry files.

In the development of this study I was reminded by my thesis committee of the absolute silence of the mothers in this study. During the child neglect investigations the social workers do not explore, nor do they factor into their assessments the explanations of the mothers. In her research into post partum depression, Sandra Knight (1992) identifies the deprivation of mothers, sanctioned by the patriarchal institution of motherhood, as being central to the experience of depression in mothers (p. 19). Knight says that the work of
mothers is unrecognized and mothering involves a tremendous workload. Job stress, again not recognized in domestic labour, is another factor noted by Knight. "Mothers get pulled in several directions at once" (p. 25) and when they finish a day of motherwork, it has to be done all over again. Loss of identity and low self-esteem point to the fallacy that mothering is an important job, a myth perpetuated about women's "labour of love".

Even when a mother can give a reasonable explanation of the circumstances that led the ministry to investigate alleged child neglect, as in the case of Kathy, her words go unacknowledged. Kathy left her children at home to escape her abusive husband whom she knew was not abusive to the children, and called in a babysitter the next day to look after the children. Yet, she was still thought by the social worker to have abandoned her children. Kathy was held culpable. I suggest that the bureaucratic procedures of the ministry, which strip the reality of women's experiences and make them objectified, serve to uphold the ideological notion that women should have sole responsibility for children and that they are blame-worthy for anything that goes wrong in the family. The communications of the ministry in their files are a discourse that mediates power relations by constructing child neglect in such a way as to locate responsibility with the mother.

I have argued in this study that the dominant ideologies in the western world influence our ways of thinking about mother-child relations, determine what we believe constitutes a family, and inform conceptual practices in the
child welfare system. The discourse of child neglect theory, which is critiqued in Chapter five, is shown to reflect the dominant ideologies, and the mother-blaming inherent in it is found woven throughout the text analyzed in this study. And it influences the development of our child protection laws. The narrow focus of child protection legislation is narrow in part because of the dominant ideologies which locate child neglect in the pathology of the mother, and not in the social structures that are built upon inequality of gender, class, and ‘race’. Social workers, as with families, get caught in the child welfare system and are subject to the conceptual practices of the ruling apparatuses. The narrow focus of the legislation does influence the approach taken by social workers, and they may unwittingly find themselves serving more to police mothers than to help. The implications of the findings in this study for social workers are discussed next.
CHAPTER NINE

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRAXIS

The analysis in this study gave ample evidence of women caring for their children in overwhelming social and economic circumstances. What was highlighted as the themes emerged were the ways in which mothers and their children fell victim to the service delivery system, a system in which the assessment of child neglect and the types of intervention made by child welfare authorities served more to police than help. How the needs of children and their mothers were conceived and to what extent the families benefited from child welfare intervention were constrained by limited resources but also by the ideological notions of women’s caring that informs the narrow mandate of the legislation and acts to influence social work practice.

Ruth Sidel talks about the "culture lag" of the notion that a woman will be taken care of by a man. The reality of women’s lives does not reflect this idea any more, yet it is still being promoted by virtually all of the social institutions of our culture (Sidel, 1986). It is in this way that social policy can be implemented in a response to a need and then found of little help because it is based on false assumptions about social relations. This is what Gillian Pascall (1986) means when she says "The assumption that all was well within the family is a legacy which survives in social administration" (p. 12). The consequences, Pascall remarks, is that "the Welfare State has so often been found not merely inadequate, not merely short of resources and short of vision,
but often inhumane in its treatment of those to be 'helped' ..." (p. 12). I think this study has provided evidence of this, exemplifying the ways in which it happens.

Pascall’s phrase, "The assumption that all is well within the family", has a wealth of meaning behind it. It brings back into focus the complex relationships that exist within a family, relationships that are still premised on the concept of the division of labour, with a man firmly placed as the head of the household and woman subordinate. Pascall continues:

But 'support for the family' in social policy can almost always be interpreted to mean support for the most rigidly demarcated breadwinner/dependent model of the family ... (Pascall, 1986, p. 68).

Pascall raises the point that it is the ideology of familism underlying social policy that decides "such questions as whether -- or at what age -- the raising of children is 'educational' and part of the public world, or whether it is nurturing and a 'private responsibility'" (p. 68).

The implications of the predominance of familism for social policy development is that how problems of child neglect are defined are based, not on women’s experience as mothers, but on an ideology predicated on theories in which male dominance is a given and which ensures its protection.

Swift (1991) maintains that the division of labour which accords care of children solely to women and the role of the state as parens patriae results in a child welfare system that has little energy for preventive services because it is
focused on investigation, intervention and legal processes. The B.C. Family and Child Service Act limits its scope to protecting children from their parents (mothers). The Family and Child Service Act does not acknowledge risk factors arising from the systemic inequalities in a capitalist patriarchy. Rather, child protection concerns are focussed at the individual level.

Dale and Foster (1986) argue that individual casework with deprived families "is often a form of social control over women rather than a means of support for them" (p.101). Hanmer and Statham (1988) strongly agree: "... another example of institutionalized sexism [is] where women social workers are called upon to reinforce women's responsibilities as wives, mothers and carers, and to ignore the poverty and employment issues facing women clients" (p. 40).

In a study done by Callahan and Attridge (1990) child welfare social workers talked of the difficulties which investigations caused: "... workers were expected to carry out two crucial investigations ... First ... they had to determine if an offense had occurred, whether under the Criminal Code or the Family and Child Service Act or both. Second, they had to assess whether the children could live safely in their own home ... At once the worker was the prosecutor of the offender, defender of the children and judge of the mother" (p.42). It was clear in this study that social workers and mothers were put at odds and that "child welfare work divides women from within and from each other" (p.43). The notion of dividing women into "them" and "us" is reiterated
by Levine and Estable (1981). They note that social worker mothers "are not immune to the effects of the motherhood prescription in their own lives ... if we admit to ourselves that we don’t achieve [being the ideal mother] -- GUILT. We sense the potentially frightening reality that there aren’t, after all, valid distinctions between ... social worker mothers and client mothers" (p.32).

It is this notion of dividing women into "them" and "us" which confounded my work as an advocate with mothers fighting the child welfare system. As a social worker and a feminist, I could not objectify my clients as "them"; my clients and I had more in common as women than we had differences as social worker/client. The problematic faced in child welfare practice is the complete disregard by the child welfare system for the fact that children’s welfare is inextricably bound to the welfare of women. And the welfare of women is located in the relations of ruling.

Social workers are trained to believe in the efficacy of social work interventions. Yet, the training is biased. For example, the methodology of a counselling technique is understood by the worker; and she is familiar with child welfare literature, theories about neglect, approaches to intervention, and the interviewing process. The recipients of social work, on the other hand, lack this knowledge base. They rely on their own experiences to make sense of social work interventions. The research done by Mayer and Timms (1970) explicates how the client’s perceptions differ from those of the social worker. In relation to insight-oriented counselling techniques, Mayer and Timms found
that clients had misconceptions about why social workers were asking for a family history and did not realize that their workers would approach problems differently than themselves:

Mrs. Hastings stated that the worker was trying to 'take the pressure off'. She was convinced the worker was shifting the focus away from her current difficulties with her husband to a more pleasant topic in order to relax her ... Another client ... assumed that the purpose of the questions was to learn how deserving she was: once the worker learned how difficult her life had been, he would understandably be more anxious to help. (Mayer and Timms, 1970, p.72)

Rhodes (1986) alludes to this when she raises the dilemma of confidentiality in practice: "One basic problem ... is that the nature of the relationship was not adequately spelled out at the beginning [of the casework] nor redefined as it changed" (p.70). She also points out how unusual a relationship is between a citizen and her social worker: "To be asked to ‘trust’ and talk openly to a stranger who has power over your life is an odd situation..." (Rhodes, 1986, p.70). In a cultural context, it is not only an odd situation but a racist one if such disclosure is not a cultural norm for the client.

Hanmer and Statham (1988) wrote a book about women-centred social work practice because they believe there is a strong need to reframe "the relevance of gender to social work ... The contradictions and paradoxes that govern women’s lives are ill understood by social work educators and in social work practice" (p.1). Parton and Parton (1989) note that even though child
protection policy and practice is increasingly recognizing the relationship between social inequality and child abuse and neglect, the "dangerous conditions are viewed as indicators of abuse rather than targets for intervention" (p. 45).

In the analysis of the data in this study, the absolute silencing of women -- not asking them for their frames of reference or their understanding of events -- meant that the social workers were not at all in tune with what the mothers were experiencing in relation to the interventions. If social workers are to take into consideration mothers’ real experiences with the ruling apparatuses, the needs of women will have to a component of assessment.

But how do we as social workers reframe the relevance to social work of gender, as well as ‘race’ and class and other determinants of social inequality? Lena Dominelli and Eileen McLeod (1989) delineate four main spheres of social work that have a "valuable contribution to make to welfare" in their critical examination of social work practice. These are:

* Redefining social problems from a feminist perspective
* Working in feminist campaigns and networks
* Feminist therapy and counselling
* Creating a feminist statutory social work
I will not address each sphere in this discussion, although each is equally valid and crucial. I will direct the reader to the first and last because of the nature of child protection as a statutory service.

Redefining social problems from a feminist perspective is exemplified in the analyses presented in this study in which women's experiences of motherhood are understood from the site of women's experiences as opposed to the objectified knowledges of the ruling apparatuses. Feminist analysis gives life to the struggle and stress embodying motherwork within a patriarchal state. The problem is not, "How do mothers come to neglect their children?". Rather, feminists define the problem as it exists in reality: "How do we support women as mothers and work together to transform the destructive patriarchal institutions that debilitate generation after generation of women and children?"

In statutory social work, we must develop ways of helping our women clients gain a sense of themselves within systems that devalue women and their labour. In her discourse on taking women students seriously, Adrienne Rich (1979) explores how women teachers have two choices: to lend weight to the indoctrination of women to passivity, self-depreciation, and a sense of powerlessness, or to consider what they have to work against, in themselves and in their students, in curriculum content, the structure of the institution, and so forth. To pursue the latter, Rich says, means taking ourselves seriously: Recognizing that central responsibility of a woman to herself, without which we remain always the Other, the defined, the object, the victim; believing that there is a unique
quality of validation, affirmation, challenge, support, that one woman can offer another. (p. 240)

If we re-read this passage, only think "social worker and client", rather than "teacher and student" (although we are all teachers and students to each other in this exploration of power relations), we begin to see what Rich means about taking ourselves and other women seriously.

Dominelli and McLeod (1989) suggest that a social worker, in keeping with an egalitarian feminist interaction with her client, would present herself as a resource to be drawn on by the client in the interest of the client’s own welfare (p. 116). At every turn, the feminist social worker would work with her client to maximize resources (as opposed to being the expert), and engage in discussion which would give a social analysis of the problem experienced by the client. Social workers would value themselves and their women clients as women. Discovering all the ways our lives are similar to our clients, and acknowledging and respecting all the ways in which our lives are different (economically and ethno-culturally, for example) can maintain the feminist integrity we are working towards. I believe this kind of practice can counteract the dominant ideologies by the very nature of redefining what it is to be a social worker and what it is that is the social "problem". There are no simple and discrete actions that can dramatically change the present systems, including the belief systems that tell us what a good mother is and isn’t. We can, however, refuse to collaborate in perpetuating these systems by finding ways of working around them.
In summary, this study has examined a series of discourses and textual analysis which show how the bureaucratic processes of the child welfare system strip women's experiences of the subjective, and perpetuate the notion that child neglect is rooted in the deficiencies of mothers. When child neglect is viewed from a perspective of women's experiences in everyday life, and examined utilizing feminist frameworks, the conclusions that are reached differ substantially from traditional approaches. Such an understanding of women's experiences could lead to far reaching economic changes and social arrangements.

It is through the conceptual procedures of the ruling apparatuses -- the social construction of child neglect -- that the relations of ruling are maintained. And the ruling apparatuses that shape social policy, as this study has argued, mediate protection not only of the power relations of gender but also those of 'race' and class.

If social work practice is to respond to clients' experiences in the everyday world, we will have to actively work towards change within the profession. We will have to acknowledge how women are stripped of their subjective knowing in the bureaucratic processes of assessment and intervention. We will have to understand that the ruling apparatuses make women's experiences objectified knowledges, completely devaluing the caring labour we lovingly give, as well as the labour that we have extracted from us, often brutally by men or coercively by the state. And we will have to
understand how women social work students are stripped of their ways of knowing in the bureaucratic processes of education, which leads to yet another set of objectified knowledges, which yet again serves the relations of ruling.

Feminist research in social work is being done, is being encouraged (by some, and in spite of the academy's resistance), and is opening ways for women's voices to be heard. We need further feminist research to identify the ways in which social work education and social work practice situations act to mediate the relations of ruling. And from this, develop teaching methodologies to help social workers gain an awareness of their own gender, 'race', and class biases. And we will have to implement changes in child welfare policy, administration, and practice to reflect the subjective knowing to which we have opened ourselves.

Yet, social work research, education, practice, and policy development are not discrete components of work. It would be a contradiction in terms to separate out these "areas" in the course of developing change within a feminist framework. In a paper on "The Single Mothers Housing Network", McCannell, Lumb and McNicoll (in press) explain that praxis links the "personal and political realities" and "moves beyond [a] focus on 'things' ... to a focus on processes and the ways in which interaction occurs". Noting McCannell's explication that "feminist social work praxis builds on self-in-relation understandings of development, knowledge of social network processes, and understanding of the dynamics of social movements", the authors use the imagery of a spiral to
describe the building of knowledge and the practice of social work. In ever an helixical movement, and defying any separation between research, education, practice and policy, "practice, knowledge, again practice and again knowledge continues to build". It is the connectedness of feminist praxis that both describes our realities and allows us this sujective knowing.
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