It Takes a Community to Raise a Child: Income Support Programs and Lone Mothers

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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Abstract
This thesis employs a comparative framework for examining two different approaches to income support for lone mothers: the current British Columbia (BC) model and the current Swedish model. The two models are based within their respective traditions of the welfare state. Each approach represents a distinctive response to the prevalent economic vulnerability of lone mothers. In order to compare the models, I pose questions related to feminization of poverty, to tensions between worker and parent roles, and to notions of citizenship. Drawing on lessons learned from the BC and Swedish model, this thesis then explores an alternative, community development approach that incorporates principles of social justice and ecological sustainability in the goal of economic security for lone mothers. Lastly, I offer conclusions and planning implications.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Lone mothers and their children have traditionally been perceived as a ‘problem’ constituency in our society. They have been variously pathologized, stigmatized and marginalized. However, this thesis contends family structure is not the problem; it is lone mothers’ vulnerability to economic disadvantage that is of concern. Whatever poverty measure is used, lone mothers emerge as one of the poorest groups in the Western World (Polakow et al, 2001). Similar problems and obstacles confront low-income single mothers in different countries, such as lack of access to education, to stable, well-paid employment, to childcare and to public supports that ease the tensions between work and home life.

Studying the effects of income support policies on lone mothers is important for various reasons. Policies that affect lone mothers impact directly on their children. Reducing child poverty is high on the agenda for many governments, but in order to do so they must address the issue of poverty within the context of lone mothers’ families. In addition, the situation of lone mothers can provide sensitive indicators of the dangers posed to all women by economic and social policies (Winkler, 2002). Understanding the situation of lone mothers can provide insight into the concept of gender equality within a nation. Lone motherhood is a litmus test of gendered social rights (Hobson, 1994).

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate two different models of income support for lone mothers, the current British Columbia (BC) Model and the current Swedish Model, and to address their respective limitations by exploring a community
development approach. I have chosen to focus on Sweden and BC as they represent two contrasting governmental responses to single mothers and poverty even though both are based within the traditions of the welfare state. Contrasting welfare state regimes can contribute to our understanding of social policies and ideology, and provide an opportunity to assess the relative success of different policy approaches.

BC is currently pursuing a strongly neo-liberal approach to policy, while Sweden has a long and continuing tradition of social democracy. BC is an interesting case to study as major changes to income assistance policies are currently taking place here. The current changes represent a culmination of successive governments' policies that firmly entrench the neo-liberal ideology. Sweden offers a distinct alternative in a time when fiscal restraint and reductions to the social safety net seem taken for granted in BC. However, upon examination, it is clear that neither model coherently and comprehensively addresses the needs of single mothers. In light of the respective limitations of the BC and Swedish models, I discuss a community development approach that offers innovative and alternative ways to support lone mothers.

Throughout the thesis I use the terms lone mothers and single mothers interchangeably. The term lone mother is more common in the European literature and the term single mother is more common in North America; hence, I use the two synonymously.

The BC Model

The BC Model is characterized by a neo-liberal approach to social programs. The main thrust of neo-liberalism is to reinforce the primacy of the market for distributing goods and services and regulating human activity. The guiding assumption is that a healthy market will benefit everyone. Associated with growing neo-liberalism has been
a shift from perceiving social rights as an important component of citizenship toward policies that emphasize personal responsibility and the economic self-sufficiency of individuals, regardless of whether they are disabled, unemployed or lone mothers. This model stresses private solutions to social issues (Evans & Wekerle, 1997, Jayasuriya, 2002, Morel 1998, Mulvale, 2001). Social programs within this model are heavily means tested, targeted towards low-income people and provide low benefit rates. For example, people in BC who receive income assistance (IA), including single mothers, live far below the poverty line (Goldberg & Long, 2001).

The Swedish Model

The Swedish Model falls within the social democratic tradition. The social democratic ideology is characterized by support for universal social programs that give support to those who may be economically vulnerable to the fluctuations of the market and are at risk of structural discrimination. The ‘women-friendly’ Swedish welfare state is characterized by family-centred, universal support programs, designed to foster equality among all children. There is strong emphasis on full (full-time and permanent) employment for all mothers. Various programs such as universal childcare and generous parental leaves contribute to this goal. Although, single mothers in Sweden have one of the lowest rates of poverty in the Western World, they are still economically disadvantaged relative to partnered mothers.

Comparisons of Approaches

In order to evaluate the two models, I employ a comparative framework. The framework is composed of three sets of questions. The first set of questions explores the feminization of poverty, which refers to the large number of single mothers and
women whose incomes fall below the mean around the Western world. This is because women earn significantly less than men both in Sweden and Canada, and are over-represented in the lower paid occupations. Single motherhood tends to be correlated with poverty due to the gendered wage gap and/or lone mother's role as primary caregiver. For single mothers with young children, working full time is not always a feasible option, especially without affordable childcare. In BC, the only social program available to single mothers that guarantees a minimum income is "income assistance". However, living on income assistance means living well below the poverty line.

The second set of questions explores the tension between worker and parent roles. Traditionally, most women were not engaged in the paid labour force. Their responsibilities included care giving for family members and looking after the home. With the fairly recent advent of women working outside the home, women have had less time for home responsibilities. However, they have maintained the majority of the responsibilities, as compared to men. Women devote many hours a week to running a household and this can conflict with the demands of full-time work. Because single mothers have no partners to share household duties, this creates particular tensions for members of this group. There are a number of policies in Sweden, such as reduced work hours and public childcare that help to mitigate the tension; however, tensions between work and home life still exist. The option to work part time, as some partnered mothers do, is not always feasible for single mothers due to the need for a full time wage to support their family. In BC the tension is more pronounced than in Sweden, as there are few employment supports in place for single mothers.

The third set of questions I pose centre on the notion of citizenship. T.H. Marshall (1950), a prominent British sociologist defined citizenship rights to include civil, political and social rights. Civil rights include the right of individual freedom, liberty of
the person, right to freedom of speech, thought and faith. Political rights are the rights to exercise political power, either through voting or as an elected representative. A number of authors argue it is necessary to expand the notion of political rights to include the right to participation in decision-making processes (Lister, 1997). The idea of social rights includes ensuring that basic needs are addressed by safety nets and state subsidies to the extent necessary.

The welfare state has embodied in many ways the concept of social rights. Some critics argue against including social rights as a basis for citizenship. They contend it is unfair to expect the state to bear the costs social rights entail. They also argue that social rights are contingent on the duty to engage in paid work. However, social rights promote the effective exercise of civil and political rights by groups who are disadvantaged in terms of power and resources. Without social rights, gross inequalities would undermine the equality of political and civil status inherent in the idea of citizenship (Lister, 1997).

In addition to the notion of rights, citizenship also includes responsibilities and duties. The responsibility of citizenship has been traditionally defined as paying taxes, getting an education, and performing military services. However, others have argued for an expanded notion such as contributing to the welfare of the community (Marshall, 1950, Lister, 1997). The key concept is balancing rights with duties, and broadening our concept of duty to include the care giving and community service work of lone mothers.

Many feminists have shown that liberal democracies have privileged their foundational principles on a ‘public man’ as political actor and thus excluded those who have traditionally been confined to the private sphere, women and children, from becoming engaged citizens (Lister 1997, Rai, 2000). Such is the case in BC where
single mothers on income assistance are treated as second-class citizens because they are not engaged in paid work. They are given a meager income to live on and their contribution to society through their reproduction and social roles is devalued.

The same is true of single mothers on general assistance in Sweden; however, because of other generous supports most single mothers do not have to rely on this program. An employed single mother in Sweden is accorded full social citizenship rights with access to a wide array of the state’s resources.

The Community Development Approach

The community development approach is based on normative ideals given that it is not implemented as a coherent system anywhere in the world. I have pulled together theories, principles and program examples in order to create a community development alternative to the welfare state model. The community development alternative promotes an alternative economic system to capitalism and emphasizes holism and balance in social justice and ecology. This alternative is based on a system of locally governed communities that supports inclusion and empowerment of single mothers through democratization and participation in civic life.

I use the same set of analytic questions, as mentioned above, to analyse this approach. The fundamental objective of this approach is to honour through fostering their economic security, the contributions single mothers make by their domestic, reproductive work, productive work and community roles. The emphasis is on promoting single mothers’ agency by integrating these roles, not privileging one over the other, as happens in the BC and Swedish models.
Format of the Thesis

Chapter Two describes the BC, neo-liberal model of income support for lone mothers, including a discussion of how recent policy changes to income assistance affect lone mothers. Chapter Three explains the Swedish, social democratic model focusing on the policies that relate to lone mothers. Chapter Four compares these two models. Chapter Five explores a community development alternative, describing how it can address many of the limitations in both the BC and Swedish models. Finally, Chapter Six presents conclusions and planning implications.
Chapter II

It Takes a Parent to Raise a Child: Neo-Liberal Policies in BC

2.1 Introduction

Over the past decade in Canada, the federal government and many provincial governments have embraced neo-liberal ideology to inform their governance strategy and social and family policies. Successive governments in BC have increased the use of means tested and targeted income transfer programs and reduced the use of universal social programs. As a continued move in this direction, in 2002, the BC provincial government instituted comprehensive policy changes to the income assistance (IA) or "welfare" system that have reduced rates and restricted eligibility. The type of reforms occurring in BC are consistent with aspects of larger Canadian and international trends. Ontario and Alberta have led the way in welfare reforms in Canada, but many of the reforms in BC are unprecedented.

In this chapter, I will describe the current model of income assistance in BC and the recent policy changes that affect lone mothers. Due to the fact that lone mothers make up a large proportion (37% (BC Stats, 2004)) of the income assistance caseload, it is clear that there are many implications for lone mothers and their economic security. I will limit my discussion to the IA program for single mothers who are classified as employable or temporarily excused from employment. I will not discuss the IA programs for people with disabilities, although some single mothers fall under this category. In addition, I will not address the heterogeneity of lone mothers. There are various subgroups of single mothers for example, aboriginal, immigrants, teenagers, and lesbians. These groups deserve specific attention; however, I am not able to cover this important
characteristic in this chapter or thesis. Despite the differences, there are still common factors that justify treating lone mothers as a group.

2.2 Neo-Liberalism and Social Programs

The transformation that is occurring in the delivery and governance of income assistance is reflective of a neo-liberal ideology that is evident across the country and the globe in the social policy and programs of Ontario, Alberta, the United States and Great Britain. Over the last two decades, governments in liberal democracies have pursued a range of policy changes, in the name of enhancing general economic performance, that have led to substantial reductions in the scope, coherence, and accessibility of the social safety net (Brodie, 2002, Burt, 1997).

In Britain in the 1980's, Margaret Thatcher made sweeping changes to the British benefits system, which affected many low-income people. In 1996 the United States created its *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act*, which focused on restricting eligibility to welfare benefits and a redirection of recipients to find jobs. In the mid to late 1990's the governments of Ontario and Alberta followed suit.

The BC government contends that its new income assistance policies will lead to increased employment for welfare recipients and decreased reliance on government. However, the BC government makes little attempt to create programs that will assist lone mothers (such as childcare funding), in attaining employment that will adequately meet the needs of their family without turning them into the working poor. Both community groups and international organizations, such as the United Nations, have criticized these reforms. They argue that the changes undermine the social safety net and threaten economic security, especially for economically vulnerable populations,
such as single mothers, aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities, seniors, youth, and new immigrants.

2.3 The Ministry of Human Resources

Throughout the years in BC, successive governments have reduced benefit rates, limited accessibility, and required recipients to spend more time in training and job search. The changes introduced in 2002 by the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) were particularly sweeping and reflective of some of the U.S. models, specifically the state of Wisconsin (For more information on Wisconsin’s system see Appendix 1: A Closer Look at the “Wisconsin Miracle”: The Human Side of Welfare Restructuring in Klein and Long, 2003).

The Ministry of Human Resources, which has responsibility for the delivery of income assistance in BC, states that its mission is to provide “services that move people towards sustainable employment and to assist individuals and families in need.” (2003/2004 Ministry of Human Resources Service Plan, 2003). The vision of the Ministry is a “province in which those British Columbians in need are assisted to achieve their social and economic potential” (Ibid). In order to achieve this vision and fulfill its mandate a number of guiding principles have been implemented including “personal responsibility, active participation, innovative partnerships, citizen confidence, fairness and transparency, clear outcomes and accountability for results” (Ibid). In addition to shifts in principles and vision, the government announced in January 2002 that it would be reducing the operating budget of the Ministry of Human Resources by $581 million (30 %) over 3 years (Klein & Long, 2003). In the 2003 BC budget it was announced that the total cut to MHR would be $609 million.
2.4 The Employment and Assistance Act

In April 2002 the government proclaimed the Employment and Assistance Act, which replaced the BC Benefits Act of 1996. This Act, for non-disabled recipients, focuses on shifting people back into the paid workforce and to “provide income assistance for those truly in need”. Unlike B.C. Benefits, the new law does not speak at all about the larger employment or childcare context, or society’s obligation to “preserve a social safety net that is responsive to changing social and economic circumstances” (Preamble to B.C. Benefits). Rather, the focus in the new law is on personal responsibility and on reduction of the number of welfare recipients (Reitsma-Street, 2002).

2.5 Income Support Programs

The Income Assistance Program

The income assistance program in BC is designed as a payer of last resort for those who have no other resources. Recipients are eligible if they have no income, no savings and limited assets. It reflects the value that no social program should encourage individuals to choose income transfers over paid work. Therefore, benefit rates are set very low. A single mother with one child receives $325/ month for the support allowance portion, and $520/ month for her shelter allowance, see Table 2.1 (MHR Policy and Procedures Manual, 2003). Shelter rates are increased $35/ month per child. The support rate for her child is paid through the National Child Benefit program, which provides funds for the BC Family Bonus in BC. Recipients on income assistance receive basic health coverage under the Medical Services Plan and Pharmacare (assistance to pay for medication). Children on income assistance receive basic, conservative dental treatment and optical care through the Healthy Kids program. The Healthy Kids program is also available to children of low-income families (Ibid).
Table 2.1: 2004 Rates for Single Mothers on Income Assistance

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<td>$520.00</td>
<td>$123.49</td>
<td>$969.08</td>
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<td>$325.58</td>
<td>$555.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$325.58</td>
<td>$625.00</td>
<td>$519.72</td>
<td>$1470.30</td>
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The National Child Benefit

The National Child Benefit is a means tested program targeted at child poverty introduced in the late 1990’s by the federal government. The stated goals of the program are to help prevent and reduce the depth of child poverty, promote attachment to the work force, and to reduce overlap and duplication through harmonization of program objectives and benefits for children (Stephenson & Emery, 2003). More than 80 percent of Canadian families with children receive this benefit (Ibid). The program is meant to increase the financial resources of children and remove the barrier many poor families encounter attempting to enter the employment market. By accepting low paying jobs, families on social assistance could lose supplementary benefits, such as non-insured health benefits like medications and dental services. The potential loss of these benefits creates a barrier for families on social assistance, and the National Child Benefit was thought to tear down the “welfare wall”. The “welfare wall” is a term created by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy to describe barriers welfare recipients’ experience leaving the security of regular income assistance and entering the employment market (Durst, 1999).
The two main components of the program are the Canada Child Tax Benefit and the National Child Benefit Supplement. The Canada Child Tax Benefit is a base benefit available to families with children where the family’s taxable income is under $30,004. The Canada Child Tax Benefit funds the BC Family Bonus in BC. The BC Family Bonus replaces income assistance rates for children. For those families on IA the benefit is $123.49/ month per child, see Table 2.1. The National Child Benefit Supplement is available to families whose income is under $21,214; however, this benefit is deducted dollar for dollar in BC from income assistance rates through what is generally known as the “claw back”. Thus lone mothers on income assistance do not benefit in direct dollars from the federal contribution; the federal and provincial government claim that they benefit instead from enhanced employment-related programs, such as the Healthy Kids program (Ibid).

Child Care

There are no publicly funded childcare centres in BC as there are in Sweden. BC offers a subsidy program for low-income parents; however, the subsidies are limited in their effectiveness as they only cover a portion of the childcare costs. The federal government also allows working parents to deduct a portion of childcare expenses from their income tax, but this tax deduction benefits only those using non-family caregivers and benefits mainly those parents with higher incomes. Parents on IA are given a childcare subsidy only if they can prove they need it, for example if they are in a job training program or looking for work.
Parental Leave

Employed parents are entitled to a combined 50 weeks (350 days) of paid parental leave when a child is born or adopted. The leave is paid through the federal employment insurance. A portion of this leave is designated just for mothers. The leave is compensated at 55% of the full salary, with a maximum income cap. Some employers will top up this percentage. There are strict rules around who is eligible. Employment insurance does not apply to students, the self-employed or those without work. Often women who work part time, or in contingent work do not qualify for the leaves. Parents on IA are not eligible for this program.

2.6 Recent Policy Changes

Under the new BC income assistance guidelines, lone mothers' monthly shelter and support payments have been reduced. Before 2002, a single parent received a support allowance of $377 per month, now they receive $325.58. For single parents with two or more children, the total amount of the shelter allowance has been cut. Reductions range from $55 to $75 per month. Previously single parents were able to keep $200 from any employment earnings. Now all earning are subtracted dollar for dollar from their monthly IA cheques. Also, previously single parents could keep $100 from their child support payments. Now the payments are deducted from their cheques. A lone mother's total income from IA could be reduced to up to $400 per month by the 2002 changes (Klein & Long, 2003).

In addition, able-bodied welfare recipients are now subject to a two-year time limit. BC is the first province in Canada to implement a time limit policy. If a single person with no children has been receiving continuous support for two years, he or she may be cut off welfare. Lone mothers who have been receiving assistance for two
years may have their support rate reduced by $100/ month. In February 2004, the government added created an exemption to the time-limit rule. If welfare recipients are complying with their employment plan in full the time limit is not in effect. Nevertheless, single mothers still face the threat of reduction to their welfare rates after two years.

Lone mothers are now expected to find work once their youngest child is three years old; prior to, it was when their child became seven years old. At the same time, the government has eliminated many work entry assistance benefits (such as money for work clothes or child care). Prior to recent changes, many recipients were able to access transition-to-work benefits of up to $150 a month for a maximum of 12 consecutive months, and a workforce entry benefit of up to $200 to cover incidental costs related to entry into paid employment. Importantly, transition-to-work benefits could be used to cover child care costs in excess of the child care subsidy amount. These programs have been replaced with what the BC government calls the Confirmed Job Program (CJP). The CJP offers one-time grants of up to $250 to welfare recipients who can prove that they have secured a job, but require assistance to purchase an essential item to begin work—such as transportation, safety clothing, or work boots.

2.7 Summary
Over the past two decades, successive governments in Britain, the U.S.A and Canada have been transforming their income assistance systems based on the principles of neo-liberalism. Governments have been shifting their involvement in programs and letting the economic market become the leading player. This is evidenced in BC by IA benefit reductions and restriction of eligibility. The government argues these policies will increase employment and decrease reliance on welfare programs.
Chapter III

It Takes a Nation to Raise a Child: Swedish Policies and Lone Mothers

3.1 Introduction

Since 1932, when the Social Democratic party came to power, the government and people of Sweden have been committed to a strong welfare state. Within the social democratic ideology, governments play a significant role in people's lives. Since the 1990's, Sweden has been impacted by globalization and neo-liberalism; however, their basic commitment to families has remained strong.

For the purposes of this chapter, I will discuss income support programs in Sweden that assist single mothers and their children. In Sweden there is a wide array of universal programs that help all families, such as the child allowance and maintenance support guarantee. There are various programs such as universal childcare and generous parental leaves that contribute to the goal of full employment for all mothers. Because of these programs, very few low-income single mothers need to rely on income assistance payments, as we know them in Canada. However, many single mothers are still disadvantaged economically due to their role as primary caregiver and the fact that many work in lower paid jobs, as compared to men.

2.4 Income Support Programs in Sweden

Since World War Two, as rapid industrial growth created an economic surplus, Sweden has chosen to redistribute resources in order to foster equality among all children, regardless of family form. This obligation to children has deep roots in Swedish social policy, stemming from the early 1900's. This commitment has transferred large portions of private responsibility for raising children to the public sphere.
Sweden's policy goals stress reducing inequality and promoting gender equity more than reducing poverty. By fostering women's equality they believe children will benefit. Swedish policy makers are likely to see structural problems as the source of inequality rather than individual defect. For example, if it is difficult for a low-income earner to afford housing, then the problem is seen as one of low wages and high housing cost. The state's response is to increase wages and housing stock (Winkler, 2002). Sweden's national commitment to equality reveals itself as a process marked by a sense of solidarity. Swedes view solidarity as sharing the burdens as well as the benefits of society (Ibid). In general, universal welfare polices have enhanced solidarity among different classes and promoted broad support for the welfare state.

The Social Democratic governments of Sweden have stressed the importance of full employment and the role of labour market policies in supporting families and children. Earnings from a job are viewed as the fundamental source of family income and gender equity in Sweden. All mothers are expected to work and have access to many of the same universal benefits. Policies have focused on the employed mother, advancing programs that promote childcare, women's employment opportunities, decent working conditions and progressive taxation. Promoting women's economic independence has blurred the line between single and married women. For example, instead of being taxed as a couple, husband and wives are taxed individually, which creates a better tax advantage for the lower paid spouse, usually the woman. Single mothers are viewed as socially and economically independent, although specific policies recognize their needs based on the stages of the lifecycle. Only 5% of lone mothers live in poverty, defined as incomes below half the national average (Ibid).

Labour force participation rates for women with children are very high, among the highest in the industrial world, regardless of marital status (Kamerman & Kahn,
1988). In Sweden 87% of lone mothers are in paid work (Duncan & Edwards, 1996). This is due to attempts by the state to try and help balance work and home life through universal allowances, housing subsidies, generous paid leaves and flexible, part time work schedules, and public child care systems.

**Neo-Liberalism in Sweden**

In the early 1990's, Sweden was hit by an economic recession and unemployment increased. In 1991, the Social Democrats lost control and a five party coalition government took over governmental leadership. The new administration was marked by explicit adherence to the neo-liberal policies of privatization, reduction of the public sector, and wage replacement benefits and changes to labour laws (Winkler, 2002). This 'crisis package' introduced reductions to sick leave coverage and parental leave, and increased taxes on food. More people relied on general assistance due to high employment. In 1994, the Social Democrats regained power; however, the victory did not result in any quick return to the traditional democratic program. Government leaders argued that the new global economy required concessions from Swedish workers, such as higher levels of unemployment and a longer workday (Ibid). The role of women was re-constructed and women began to be viewed in the context of a marital economic unit, rather than as economically independent. Unemployment and increased user fees affected single mothers more significantly that partnered mothers. The government also eliminated the single parent's tax deduction at this time.

Although the Swedish government embraced some of the neo-liberal ideology and policies during this time, fundamentally it stayed true to their concept of equality and sense of solidarity. The government maintained policies that ensured the lives of single mothers and their children would not be substantially more deprived than others'.
Over the years, the state has maintained the universal allowances, housing subsidies, childcare centres and general assistance that support all families, including lone mothers. The following section outlines these programs.

**Child Allowance**

All Swedish families with children receive a child allowance regardless of income. The allowance is given in place of tax deductions since deductions imply keeping one's income for one's own family, while the child allowance demonstrates society's commitment to providing equality and well-being amongst children. The child allowance reflects the state's position that all members of society benefit from the raising of healthy children and therefore all adults should contribute to the cost of raising these future citizens.

**Child Support Guarantee/ Maintenance Support**

The Swedish government provides a maintenance support guarantee to all single parents if a non-custodial parent refuses to pay or the support ordered is below the minimum amount. The government assumes responsibility for re-claiming the support owed directly from the non-custodial parent. The intent behind the program is to ensure that children living in a single parent household are guaranteed a standard of living that is equal to children with co-habitating parents (Winkler, 2002). In 1994, the Social Democratic government re-named the child support guarantee as “maintenance support”. The maintenance support differs from the child support guarantee in that it includes means testing, but only against the non-resident’s parent income. For the resident parent it is a flat rate grant. The maintenance support varies by the age of the child but currently is supposed to account for 50% of the child's needs (Winker, 2002).
This model of child support places a greater emphasis on collective support for children. The state plays a primary role in guaranteeing that support. This differs from the B.C. model in that BC emphasizes the private responsibility of parents for their children. In B.C., the state plays a secondary, essentially enforcement role, unless the mother is on IA and then the government plays a more active role.

**Housing Allowance and Educational Support**

Many single parents in Sweden receive the income-tested housing allowance. These allowances are cash benefits, which offset some of the costs of housing, and are available to all low-income families. Sweden has free university tuition and offers generous loans and grants to single mothers pursuing educational goals.

**Parental Leave**

The parental leave program is an entitlement to claim time off from the job in order to care for a child. In order to qualify for these benefits the parent must be working prior to the birth or adoption of a child. Parents are entitled to 450 days of maternity, paternity and parental leave, 360 days of which are given with 80% wage compensation, the remainder at a flat, lower rate (Leira, 2002). The maternity leave is reserved specifically for mothers and includes a period prior to the birth of the child. Fathers are granted ‘daddy days’ when their child is born and a portion of the parental leave is reserved just for fathers. The statutory leave arrangement also includes the right of employed parents to a leave of absence from work with wage compensation to care for sick children. Parents have a legislated right to reduce their workday to six hours for child caring responsibilities.
Subsidized Child Care and the Care Allowance

The municipalities in Sweden run high quality, subsidized child care centres. Single parents are given priority for childcare spaces over two parent families. Over the last decade there has been a wide debate regarding care allowances versus childcare spaces.

Briefly, in 1994, the Five Party Coalition government enacted the care allowance. The care allowance is a cash benefit ($285 US per month) that goes directly to the parent with children one to three years old unless their child has a place in the municipal childcare centre. The allowance decreases to reflect the hours the child is at the childcare centre. Advocates argue this program allows "choice" for one parent to look after their own child at home. However, later in 1994 the re-elected Social Democratic government argued that the care allowance makes women less economically independent and therefore more vulnerable. The care allowance generally benefits two parents families, since single mothers usually can not afford to stay home full time on this allowance.

General Assistance

The general assistance program is most similar to our B.C. welfare system. It is heavily means tested and is the last resort for those who are unable to support themselves. It is heavily stigmatized and has no categorical eligibility requirements (Winkler, 2002). The municipalities have responsibility for the delivery of this service.

3.3 Summary

The Swedish welfare state embraces the value that full employment with associated public support is the best way to enhance lone mothers’ economic security. This view
underscores the belief that economic independence contributes to women's equality. Sweden's policies have generally been effective. Swedish single mothers fair better than their counterparts in the rest of the world.
Chapter IV
Comparisons of the BC and Swedish Models

4.1 Introduction

In order to evaluate and compare the two models I employ three sets of questions. I revisit these questions in Chapter Five in order to explore the implications of these questions for a community development approach. First, I pose questions related to the feminization of poverty. I ask whether and to what degree do single mothers have incomes that fall below the mean, how correlated single motherhood is with poverty status, and how these outcomes relate to particular aspects of each policy model.

Secondly, I explore the tension between worker and parent roles. Are there tensions between these roles in each country? Are these tensions felt equally by all parents, or are they gendered and/or unique to lone mothers? Do government policies mitigate or exacerbate these tensions and how? Are the programs and policies designed to address such tensions effective for lone mothers?

Thirdly, I investigate the notion of citizenship. What are the social and political rights and citizenship responsibilities assumed within the BC and Swedish model? How do these relate specifically to lone mothers? And do notions of citizenship foster inclusion or marginalization of lone mothers?

4.2 Feminization of Poverty

To what degree, if any, do single mothers and their children have incomes that fall below the mean?

Feminization of poverty usually occurs for two reasons. Firstly, parenthood generally leads to reduced earnings in order to care for one's child because less time is spent in the work force; Secondly, women are less likely to be in a well paying job, in
large part due to the issue of occupational sex segregation. In general Sweden has been able to protect mothers from poverty by their policy goal of full employment and associated public supports. BC however, has failed dismally to protect single mothers from poverty due to its lack of support for working mothers. In both countries occupational sex segregation and a gendered wage gap contributes to the feminization of poverty.

The Canadian and BC policy approach has been less effective than Sweden in protecting lone mother households from experiencing poverty. (Refer to Figure 4.1 for comparisons). Generally within Sweden, universal family and labour policies have addressed the reduction in earnings due to care giving responsibilities. In Canada the child poverty rates are 15.5%, as compared to 2.6% in Sweden for 2000, (Jackson, 2002). Swedish lone mothers are not nearly as destitute as those in BC. Data from the Luxembourg Income Survey (1990) shows that in Canada 58% of lone parents have earned incomes below one half of the median income as compared to 31% of Swedish parents. When calculated with post transfer income the difference becomes more pronounced. In Canada 40% of lone parents live in poverty, versus 3.5% (Bradshaw, 1998). This is in large part due to the labour force policies such as public support through day care, parental leaves and child allowances.
Single mothers and women in general are disadvantaged by the gendered wage discrepancy and the occupational sex segregation in BC and Sweden. In Sweden, women and single mothers still make less money than men and generally hold jobs with lesser status. Men hold the majority of positions in managerial jobs in Sweden. They earn more and are more dominant in higher status positions (Bergqvist & Jungar, 2000).

In Canada, a federal task force on pay equity found that a full time working women earned on average about 71 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterpart in 2000 (Paraskevas, 2004). In BC, men made on average $50,159 and women made $35,636 per year in 2001 (BC Stats, 2004). Certain lower paid occupations remain dominated by women, such as retail sales, health care, or administrative work.
How correlated single motherhood is with poverty status?

Lone mothers are particularly vulnerable to economic insecurity due to their role as primary caregivers for their children. Figure 4.2, shows the high percentage of Canadian lone mothers who live below the low income cut-off line. In 1998, 42% of all families headed by lone-parent mothers had after tax incomes which fell below Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off Line (Statistic Canada, 2003). This compares with just 7% of two parent families with children. In BC the median family income for 2000 for lone parent families was $33,829 (BC Stats, 2004). This compares to the median family income of couple families of $70,033 (Ibid).

In Sweden single mothers are socially and economically disadvantaged when comparisons are done between two-parent families and one-parent families (Winkler, 2002). The Swedish standard of living for families with children assumes two wages. This makes it difficult for single mothers to thrive within this society. Since the move towards neo-liberalism, gains made for women as independent economic units have been weakened. Successive governments have begun using the two-parent family as the basic family unit. The assumption of two-wage earning parents inherently
disadvantages single mothers. This points to gendered discrimination still evident in Swedish policy.

How does feminization of poverty relate to particular aspects of each policy model?

In general the Swedish approach to family-related policy rests on the philosophy that children represent a public responsibility. As noted by Sheila Kamerman (1980), "European countries have a long history of acknowledging that children are a major societal resource and that the whole society should share in the costs of rearing them" (p. 24). In contrast, in BC, the support of children is regarded as a private parental responsibility (see Table 4.1). The types of social programs that are available within a neo-liberal system reflect a particular model of the family. Magrit Eichler (1993) describes the model of the family that underlies neo-liberal Canadian social policy as the 'Individual Model of the Family'. This model assumes that the parent is responsible for both the economic well-being and the care provision for dependent children. The state has no responsibility for the children in society, unless families have a low-income and temporary help is needed. The reduction of spending on social programs in the name of neo-liberalism and fiscal restraint has further entrenched this private responsibility.
Table 4.1: Comparison between Family Program in BC and Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>BC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Allowance/ National Child Benefit</strong></td>
<td>All families</td>
<td>Low-income families (1/2 benefit clawed back from families on IA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Maintenance Guarantee</strong></td>
<td>All single parent families</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Care</strong></td>
<td>Subsidized for all families</td>
<td>Limited subsidies for low-income families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parental Leave</strong></td>
<td>400 days @ 80% compensation + reduce work hour + time to care for sick child</td>
<td>350 days @ 55% compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General/ Income Assistance</strong></td>
<td>Low-income families (single mother/ 1 child receives $969/month)</td>
<td>Low-income families</td>
</tr>
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Sweden has been more successful than has BC in supporting working lone mothers, as evidenced by the high rates of employment for lone mothers (87% in Sweden versus 58% in Canada) and by the rates of poverty for working mothers. In Canada 60% of lone mothers in paid work lived in poverty due in large part to lack of public support (see Figure 4.1). In Sweden, only 10% of mothers in paid work lived in poverty, due largely to universal family programs (Bradshaw, 1998). For example, in 1996 only 24% of lone parent families in Canada received child maintenance payments versus 100% in Sweden (Eisler, 1997). In Sweden, the government offers a maintenance guarantee to all lone parents. In Canada, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to go to court and fight for their support. If it is inadequate or the non-custodial parent cannot pay then the lone parent is out of luck. However if the single mother is on IA the government will track down fathers and enforce payment (and the support payment is clawed back 100% from the mother's IA cheque).

In order for employment to decrease the feminization of poverty, single mothers must be recipients of public support. The theme that increased participation in the BC labour market force raises the standard of living for single mothers needs critical assessment and evaluation in view of limited public support and the realities of the labour market. Globalization has transformed the labour market from full time, tenured work to more so-called 'flexible', contingent or non-standard work (Stephenson & Emery, 2003). This transformation has been key in increasing economic vulnerability of women, especially single mothers. Lone mothers, when compared to other women, have a more difficult route to employment and their comparative situation in terms of employment participation and relative income levels has worsened over the years (Ibid). The labour force analysis in Canada indicates that single mothers have substantially lower employment rates than partnered mothers (Ibid). Census information reveals that
58% of lone mothers are employed but half of these women are working on a part-time or part-year basis (Ibid). In Canada, employed women, including single mothers are over-represented in the non-standard employment category, including part-time, part-year and temporary employment (Ibid). The greater tendency for women to be employed in non-standard work is significant for several reasons. Non-standard employees have less access to benefits such as health care and pensions. Many of the jobs they can find do not offer the stability or income they need to support their families. In 1996, more than 37% of working single mothers earned less than $10 per hour, compared to 26% for all employees in Canada (Burke & Shields, 1999). Low wages, coupled with part-time or temporary work makes it difficult to make ends meet. This places lone mothers in a precarious financial position and raises dilemmas about the best way to support themselves and their family.

Income Assistance and Feminization of Poverty

Many single mothers rely on IA due to the lack of well paid employment and lack of comprehensive family and employment supports. In 2002 lone-parent families made up approximately 37% of cases in the Ministry of Human Resources (BC Stats, 2004). Women head the vast majority of these families. Being in receipt of income assistance guarantees poverty, as the rates are so low. The current annual income of a single mother on income assistance is under $12,000, well below the low-income cut off line. The low income cut off line in BC is $23,561 (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2002). This system is not adequate to meet the needs of single mothers because it is based on a paid employment model of poverty (Kamerman & Kahn, 1988). IA is designed as a payer of last resort to those who are temporarily out of work. The causes of single mothers' poverty are different from those of who are temporarily out of
work. IA does not address the effect of the women's role as unpaid caregiver within the family nor the differential position within the paid labour market (Eisler, 1997).

The BC system pre-supposes that single mothers have the individual ability to meet her family's basic needs, at subsistence IA rates. This system necessitates that many single mothers have to make tradeoffs to make sure her children are fed. For example, she may not eat enough so she can pay the rent. Or she may resort to charity based services such as food banks.

The recent changes to the BC income assistance policies have increased the economic hardship for single mothers. Before the rates only covered 65% of the minimum living costs; now, they are even more inadequate (Long & Goldberg, 2002). In a 2002 paper entitled *The Cost of Eating in BC*, the Dieticians of Canada and the Community Nutritionists Council of BC warned about the implications of inadequate welfare benefits. According to this report, those on social assistance already lack sufficient income to purchase a healthy diet, and undernourished children are more susceptible to illness, have diminished attention spans and are unable to perform at school as well as their nourished peers (Ibid).

The shelter portion of the income assistance cheques is inadequate to meet the costs of rent in Vancouver, BC. Based on Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation rental data from October 2002, the maximum shelter allowance ($555) for a single mother plus two children permitted the family to access only .4% of all two bedroom apartments in Greater Vancouver, and no three bedroom apartments (Ibid).

While these reforms are fairly recent in BC it is possible to look to other jurisdictions to predict how the BC reforms will affect the feminization of poverty. The outcomes of welfare reform in Alberta and Ontario would seem to suggest that female lone parents have much to lose under a system of stringent eligibility requirements and
lowered benefits. Sylvia Bashevkin (2002) in her book *Welfare Hot Buttons: Women, Work, and Social Policy Reform*, focused on a particularly vulnerable segment of lone mothers, those under 25 years old. She writes after 1995 – that is, after welfare reforms in Alberta and Ontario began – poverty rates for young lone mothers increased from 83% to 91%. These statistics illustrate that welfare reforms functions both to deepen poverty and to raise dilemmas for those who remain recipients of income assistance. When benefits are lowered in order to minimize ‘dependence’ on the system, families who remain on public assistance fall deeper into poverty. However, starting wages are often less than welfare payments. Their ‘choice’ is poverty within the welfare system or poverty within the work world.

In 1999, the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris gave a speech to the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce saying that “over the last three years our province has started to pull itself back on track... It took hard work and sacrifices by the people of Ontario and as a result families are better off.” However, the report by Bezanson & McMurray (2001) called, *Booming for Whom? People in Ontario talk about Incomes, Jobs and Social Programs* would argue that instead of being better off, many households in Ontario are struggling to get by because of fewer job protections, less generous social programs and cuts to social spending. For example, the annual incomes of single mothers in Ontario fell by 3.1% from 1995 to 1997 ($27,617 to $26,771) making it more difficult to pay rent and put food on the table.

A debate exists in the American literature about the effects of welfare reform on single parent families. In the United States (US), the welfare reforms mainly affect single parents, as people without children are not entitled to collect welfare. According to a study by the Washington-based Economic Policy Institute, the 1996 reforms have caused increased hardship, due to restricted eligibility, lowered benefit rates and time
limits. The survey found that among families that left welfare between 1997 and 1999 for full time employment, nearly half experienced hardships such as going without food, necessary medical care or housing. Other studies show that while the incidence of poverty in the US declined overall during the 1990's, poverty has deepened for those who remained poor, and has increased among working families (Boushey & Gunderson, 2001). Nevertheless, it is important to note that BC's policies differ from that of American welfare reforms in that US reforms were not entirely driven by a fiscal imperative. In fact, the US increased its spending on low-income people in the post 1996 welfare reform period through supports that help people make the transition to paid employment (such as childcare, transportation, training and educational opportunities and earning exemptions). Unfortunately, this is not the case in BC; the current changes are accompanied by a 30% budget cut to the Ministry of Human Resources.

4.3 Worker versus Parent Tensions

Are there tensions between these roles in each country and are these tensions felt equally by all parents, or are they gendered and/or unique to lone mothers?

The first wave of feminism in the 1970's generally advocated for equality and 'sameness' between men and women. Women were encouraged to become like men in terms of access to employment and financial freedom. Because of this movement women and single mothers have generally made gains in economic independence. However, despite different social policies promoting a more equal distribution of care labour, women have maintained most responsibility for parenting and household duties. For example, in Sweden the prolonged parental leave is still a preserve of mothers. In 1996, fathers took only 12% of the paid parental leave (Bergqvist & Jungar, 2000).
The policy goal of full employment both in Sweden and BC for single mothers creates tension since very little time is left over for household and care giving responsibilities. Because single mothers have no partners to share household duties, this creates particular tensions for members of this group.

Do government policies mitigate or exacerbate these tensions and how?

Through employment supports in Sweden, the government has helped to mitigate tensions between the worker and parent role. However, in BC tensions are high due to the government’s lack of support.

The BC policy goal of employment for single mothers on income assistance with young children exacerbates the worker/parent tensions. Over the years in BC, the age of the child has become younger and younger as to when the mother is expected to find work. The most current policy states that when the youngest child is three years, the mother must look for work. Full time employment leaves little time for caregiving responsibilities and increases the worker/parent tensions, especially for single mothers.

Although the BC government has placed an emphasis on transition to work, they have done little to actively support employed mothers. In order to work full time, single mothers need childcare. However, in 2002 the government has reduced the childcare subsidy budget by $24 million or 19%. Subsidies are used by low-income parents to help pay for private day care. The subsidy rates for single mothers only cover a small portion of the actual day care costs. The subsidy rates vary for the type of care and for the age of the child. Family care is regulated care run in private homes. Family care for a pre-schooler costs $561 (Forer & Hunter, 2001). The subsidy pays for $354. Therefore, single mothers would have to make up the difference of $200/month.
Saving an additional $200 per month is next to impossible while living on the meagre welfare rates or while making minimum wage.

The government has also cut earning exemptions and work entry assistance benefits for people on welfare. Previous to the 2002 changes, single mothers were allowed to keep $200 of their employment earnings. Now whatever money they earn gets deducted dollar for dollar, reducing the incentive to hold a part-time job and gain work experience.

Are the programs and policies designed to address such tensions effective for lone mothers?

In Sweden, parents have the opportunity to reduce their working hours in order to make time for caregiving responsibilities. However, part time work, the predominant employment form for mothers of young children, has weaker status on the labour market, with less job security and lower wages. The opportunity to reduce working hours continues to marginalize and set aside women's work, as their income is viewed as the secondary source. For single mothers as the only financial provider in the family, the 'choice' to work less is not always possible. This situation benefits women who are in a partnered relationship. The emphasis on the family unit continues to enshrine gender roles and income distribution and enforce the family as a micro economic system (Winkler, 2002).
4.4 Notions of Citizenship

What are the social and political rights and citizenship responsibilities assumed within each model and how do these relate specifically to lone mothers?

Social Rights

In Sweden and BC the notion of social rights, such as entitlement to the generous parental leaves, stems from employment. Motherhood does not confer "deserving status, difference-based entitlement or protection from the market" that guarantees access to social rights (Pulkingham & Ternowetsky, 1997 p. 21). Full time care giving is not perceived as a citizenship responsibility that bestows full social and political rights.

The Swedish national commitment to reducing structural inequalities as evidenced through many universal benefits reduces much of the pathology and stigmatization that occurs for BC single mothers on IA. In BC stigmatization occurs through means testing. In Sweden working parents are not seen as defective if they use public transfers. However, in BC, raising children is viewed as a private function and the use of income transfers is stigmatized. In Sweden the universal child allowance and maintenance support is viewed as a tool to help parents raise children that will become workers for the next generation. That said, earnings are the basis for family livelihood. The universal benefits are not adequate to support a family. An unemployed single mother is Sweden is not entitled to the generous parental leaves. She must resort to the general assistance program to support herself and her children. Although she is eligible for the universal allowances, the standard of living is low. And, much like receiving welfare in B.C., receiving general assistance is heavily stigmatized, illustrating the connection between citizenship and employment.
Political Rights

Within the BC model, there is limited understanding of the political contributions women make, as mothers and citizens, in our society. Women's voices generally are not encouraged in the public sphere. Men represent the majority of positions at the elected provincial and federal level. Low-income single mothers are even less represented at decision-making tables. Policies are made generally by men and single mothers remain the objects of these policies.

In Sweden there has been an attempt to ensure equal representation at an elected level. In 1998, women accounted for 40-50% of elected representatives at the local, regional and central level (Bergqvist & Jungar, 2002). However, men are still more dominant in managerial positions and in higher status positions and are therefore more influential in some decision-making capacities. As evidenced by the lack of inclusive decision making processes, there is continued need to examine the role of women and single mothers related to political citizenship rights in both models.

Citizenship Responsibilities

In Sweden, there is a strong work ethic and engaging in paid employment is a key citizenship responsibility (Winkler, 2002). The Swedish welfare state is based on the notion that the path to women's and single mothers' citizenship should be through paid work; however, this is an arguable point and definitions of work and citizenship need to be re-considered. The goal of full employment for mothers in Sweden and BC reinforces the idea that the labour market is the primary mechanism for allocating financial resources, and hence for giving people the capacity to participate in the economic and social life of the community. Paid labour is seen as the primary way for most of society's social and economic goals to be achieved, despite the fact that much
socially necessary and useful work is unpaid such as caring for the elderly and for children. Women traditionally do most of the unpaid work (Ife, 2002).

Full time parenting is valued up to a certain age of the child and then the parent is encouraged to re-enter the work force. In 1985 in Sweden, the Moderate Party argued that the care of one’s small children should be considered work for the purposes of receiving general assistance. However, the problem with this argument is that the caregiving work would be compensated at a very low level, and not in accordance with collective bargaining agreements, which is the case with parental leaves. Although general assistance would allow for single mothers to stay at home with their children, it would be a “meagre living, stigmatized and harsh” (Winkler, 2002, p. 223). The ruling party did not implement the Moderate Party’s proposal, citing their concern about further marginalization of single mothers.

The debate between the care allowance and public childcare spaces raised similar concerns. In the 1960’s, there was widespread deliberation over the implementation of care allowances for all mothers to subsidize their choice to stay home with young children. This policy alternative was tied to positions in the debate “over women’s roles and the meaning of work for citizenship purposes and whether freedom of choice meant the freedom to choose to stay home or choose to work” (Winkler, 2002, p. 278). Feminists argued that women who had to work (including single mothers) paid, through taxes and women’s marginalized status in the workforce, for other women’s ‘choice’ to remain at home. The proposed care allowance would not be large enough to allow a single mother to live comfortably. The care allowance was enacted briefly in 1994 by the five-party coalition government but was rescinded when the Social Democrats came back to power.
Both the reconsideration of work for the general assistance and the care allowance debate illustrates the tensions within the notion of citizenship responsibilities and entitlement to social rights. This tension demonstrates the theme that Carole Pateman (1987) refers to as Wollstonecraft's dilemma: whether social rights for women should be granted on the basis of their sameness or their difference from men. The policies have been put forth as promoting parental choice. Having parents stay home with their young children may be constructed as a good thing; however, unless it is adequately compensated, single mothers and children will face greater economic disadvantage and social exclusion.

*Do notions of citizenship foster inclusion or marginalization of lone mothers?*

Within the neo-liberal model of income assistance, those on income assistance are perceived as second-class citizens. Instead of being perceived as contributing citizens with rights and responsibilities, people on welfare become 'clients' first, individuals who are objects of the system. Single mothers are defined, constructed and labeled as dependents. This labeling diminishes their citizen rights (Fraser, 1989). Policy makers view single mothers as those who need to be "fixed" to acquire skills to be productive, tax paying citizens. Single mothers and welfare recipients in general are pathologized. The language in the BC legislation and the Ministry of Human Resources Service Plan (2003) reflects the attitude that people who rely on income assistance are undeserving, lazy, and require 'incentives' to remove them from unhealthy 'dependency' on the system. Rarely do underlying structural factors like persistently high unemployment, the shortage of childcare, the value of the work, or lack of affordable housing enter into the discussion. They are marginalized as citizens. Poverty is viewed as an individual/family pathology- a behavioral disorder and the product of bad

4.5 Summary

Unlike Sweden, the Canadian welfare state has failed to develop a comprehensive policy system to address the requirement of lone mothers to provide for themselves and their children both financially and physically. Mothers in BC are caught in the contradictions of full employment policies. Without public childcare, employment is not always economically feasible, due to the cost of childcare and the low wages some women receive. The assumption is that the mother has the capacity to provide for her children from within her own resources through paid employment. However combining work and care giving is difficult without public support. Without a well-paid job, many single mothers must rely on the minimal and stigmatized state benefits of income assistance.

Both the Swedish and BC models raise the question of how we adequately reward caregivers in our society, the people who do the socially necessary yet unpaid work. Both approaches are based on the model of the worker-citizen. This model privileges the wage earner over the caregiver. In both models care work, which is traditionally women’s work, is undervalued. Full social and political citizenship rights are denied to those who are not engaged in paid labour.
Chapter V

It Takes a Community to Raise a Child: Planning for Change

5.1 Introduction

Given the limitations of the two previous models, in this chapter I explore an alternative framework to income support through community development. This chapter draws on the body of literature from various disciplines such as social work and community planning and addresses many of the shortcomings of the BC and Swedish models of income support. Where appropriate, I have included historic or international examples, but there is no implemented model to evaluate as I have done for the BC and Swedish model. I have formulated an alternative approach on the basis of theories, principles and examples of community development.

Community development is based on the principles of social justice and ecological sustainability. It is often characterized by the attempt to decentralize services, programs and decision-making power to communities and citizens. Community development challenges the structural barriers in society, and seeks alternatives to the existing social, economic and political systems (Ife, 2002). One of the key values is of inclusive citizen participation through democratization of planning and policy making. Those who have been traditionally marginalized in mainstream models are sought out and given a voice. The environment, which is traditionally missing from discussion of the welfare state, is included.

The community development approach is based on social capital, the store of social relationships and conventions that create trust, mutual assistance and social solidarity as an alternative to the welfare state (Restakis, 2001). A prominent practitioner and theorist in this area, Robert Putnam states that social capital is what
allows societies to undertake collective action thereby increasing the capacity of the community to be self-reliant (Restakis, 2001). The cooperative approach fosters community cohesiveness and development at a time when communities are increasingly divided and strained by social and economic pressures. In that climate the possibilities for employing cooperative solutions to enhance the quality of our lives shows considerable promise. It offers unique strengths that can help Canadians maintain their customary national commitments to a fair social safety net, traditions of social justice and concern for creating healthy communities (Restakis, 2001).

However, the notion of 'community' should not be embraced uncritically. Like families, communities can be "a place of support, nourishment, and refuge, or on the other hand places of intolerance and oppression" (Wharf, 1997, p.3). The emphasis on community cannot be at the expense of social policies that provide equitable access to health, education, and employment programs, protection in times of economic hardship and the maintenance and enforcement of human rights (Ibid). Community development can meet these needs if thoughtful, critical and principled approaches are followed.

Governments of neo-liberal ideology have co-opted some aspects of community development for their own agenda. They have labelled exercises in downsizing and reductions to government programs in the name of building community capacity. However, these exercises actually have negative outcomes for communities especially for its most vulnerable members. Within this approach, downsizing and fiscal reductions are not part of the equation. Supporting community development will cost state government money. Decentralization of programs and polices is key but state governments still have a number of crucial roles to play, as I will discuss later.
Community development is holistic and touches on many aspects of society; however, due to the confines of this thesis, I have limited my discussion to the role of community development in enhancing the economic security of lone mothers.

5.2 Beyond the Welfare State

Many social activists advocate for a stronger welfare state with increased funding for universal programs to support single mothers such as the programs they have in Sweden. However, there is an emerging widespread perception that traditional roles and responsibilities of the welfare state are inadequate to meet the pressing challenges facing our society. There are a number of authors who contend that the welfare state has not served society well and we need to look to a different paradigm in delivering human services (Myrdal, 1960, Boothroyd, 1991, Nozick, 1992, McKnight, 1996, Mulvale, 2001, Restakis, 2001, Ife, 2002). These authors believe that the welfare state has not met the needs of its citizens, nor the environment. Feminists critique the welfare state for not creating true equality for women (Pateman, 1987, Lister, 1997, Mulvale, 2001, Leira, 2002). As I have shown in earlier chapters women are disadvantaged by both the liberal and social democratic systems.

Numerous authors argue that although we have expanded our spending on social services and health care, the measures of social pathology are growing relentlessly (McKnight, 1996, Nozick, 1992). They advocate for a total restructuring of the social system which will re-establish community as the focal point for meeting human needs. Money should be spent on supporting neighbourhoods and communities rather than on big, impersonal bureaucracies.

Mulvale (2001) and Ife (2001) among others offer an ecology-oriented critique of the welfare state. The welfare state depends on an expanding economy based on over
production, resource depletion, over consumption and pollution. This economic system is not ecologically sustainable. The community development approach departs significantly from the BC and Swedish Model on its views on the environment. Traditional welfare states have not incorporated environmental sustainability into their policies. Within the community development approach preserving the ecology is one of the key principles. It posits that through small-scale local initiatives, ecological goals can be met.

5.3 Definition of Community

For the purposes of this paper, I use Alexis de Tocqueville’s basic definition of community as “small groups of common citizens coming together to form organizations that solve problems.” (as cited in McKnight, 1995). Communities are based on defined geographical boundaries and would have a relatively small population, in order to promote interaction on a scale that could be readily controlled and used by individuals. The community development approach would generally be easier to implement in smaller rural communities because of the size, the clear boundaries, the stable population and existing community ties. The challenge lies in implementing it in urban and suburban areas; however it can be done, albeit the boundaries may be more fluid. The nature of transiency in our society is counter-productive to the idea of stable communities. It is hard to get people involved and to ‘buy into’ community processes if they are always moving. The one counter point is that if people are included in community processes they may feel like they have a stake and want to stay.
5.4 Principles of Community Development

Community development is built upon a foundation of fundamental values and principles and an understanding of the inter-related nature of a community. I have drawn from the book, *Community Development*, Jim Ife (2002) and First Nations' worldviews to inform my discussion. Ife (2002) bases his model of community development on two foundational principles: ecology and social justice. I have adopted these principles and his subsequent descriptions for this chapter. The principle of ecology incorporates sustainability. Sustainability means that systems must be maintained in the long term, that resources should be only used at the rate they can be replenished and consumption should be minimized rather than maximized. Social justice relates to ensuring all marginalized people are included within the community. Empowerment of the disadvantaged is key. Community development should seek to affirm human rights, and people should be able to realize their full potential and be protected from discrimination and oppression. One of the integral components is the notion of human agency for single mothers. Human agency is defined as the capacity for individuals to be autonomous, purposeful actors capable of choice (Lister, 1997). In the BC and Swedish models, low-income lone mothers are not given much choice about how to live their lives. In the BC model, many live on welfare in poverty or find paid employment and live in poverty. In Sweden, they can live in poverty on general assistance or they can find a job and live marginally better off. Generally, it is not possible to care give full time and live in comfort as a single mother. However, women’s agency is of central concern in community development. Women’s and single mothers' freedom lie in the ability to participate and control the economic and social conditions of their lives, as well as to be free from discrimination and dominance (Ibid).
The spiritual and cultural teaching of First Nations can add greatly to the discussion of community development. Although there are various distinct First Nations across BC and Canada, many share common traditions and values about community. In general, their worldview encompasses a holistic approach. Figure 5.1 illustrates the fluid boundaries between the concepts of families, individual and communities (Martin Spigelman Research Associates, 1998). This framework is contrasted to the mainstream’s worldview of each entity as being quite separate.

As stated in Chapter 4, the Individual Model of the Family is the premise for the BC system (Eichler, 1993). Single mothers are expected to have sole financial and emotional responsibility for themselves and their children and there is limited recognition of the need to give and receive support from the family and community. In the First Nations framework, children are the responsibility of the individual, family and community.

Figure 5.2 illustrates the values that underlie community. Those values include responsibility, respect, work and balance. In the circle below, work is not defined in the
mainstream's way such as earning money to support oneself. Work is defined as the contribution you make to the community whether it be child rearing or picking berries for an elder. The notion of balance refers to the teachings of the medicine wheel and the need to integrate aspects of the mental, physical, spiritual and emotional into community and individual life (Ibid). Each person has responsibility to respect one another and the community.

5.5 Decentralization and Citizen Participation

Decentralization and citizen participation are key components in the governance structure of community development. Decentralization is the transferring of both delegation of power and control from one level of authority to another. Services are delivered from local as opposed to centrally located offices (Clague et al, 1984). Decentralization is valued in order to make services and policy making more accessible
and visible to community members. Conventional wisdom holds that responsibility for policy should devolve to the lowest level of government possible (Ibid).

**Maori Example**

The report *Making Welfare Work: Social Assistance in First Nations Communities* includes examples of Maori services in New Zealand where community development frameworks for income support programs have been implemented (Martin Spigelman Research Associates, 1998). The framework integrates the holistic worldview of the Maori people and builds on their belief in the strength of community.

The Maori and the New Zealand government developed a social assistance system, which relied less on state-provided services and more on extended family and tribal-based services. These Maori institutions, rather than the state, were made the primary providers of service (Baretta-Herman, 1994). In 1986 a Ministerial Advisory Committee report recommended that local District Executive Committees and Institutional Management Committees be established and given greater responsibility for the social assistance program. The government's Department of Social Welfare committed itself to decentralization and devolution of decision-making power to iwi (tribal) authorities. The government was committed to Maori participation in policy planning and service delivery, and bi-cultural staff recruitment, training and orientation (Ibid).

Although the change was rapid, it was not all positive. Barretta-Herman (1994) and Kingfisher and Goldsmith (2001) examine the issue through a broad examination of social policy development as it relates to welfare reform and points out that there are negative effects of the decentralization of social welfare departments. This decentralization occurred under the guise of empowering communities in order to avoid
the growing criticism surrounding other social policy reform and fiscal reduction. Shrinking resources served to limit the decision-making ability of the district and created competition among the community groups and organization, as well as between Districts. The accountability and control mechanism that the government established limited the ability of the Districts to exercise authority. The authors concluded, for decentralization to be truly meaningful, it has to accompanied by a transfer of real authority and decision-making ability, and by a commitment to adequate funding through an extended period of time. It also has to be accompanied by a commitment to community development and to developing capacity within the community.

Despite drawbacks to the implementation, certain positive development emerged from this new structure. The District Committees provided the communities with the opportunity to participate in service planning. Community members served as a resource for the development of culturally appropriate programs. The initiative succeeded in involving the community in a formal partnership for service planning and delivery. It did not, however, address the underlying causes or conditions of poverty and marginalization of the Maori people.

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is a key component of the decision-making process within decentralization. Ife (2002) discusses the concept of citizen participation in relation to social justice. Communities should be able to define their own needs rather than having them defined by others and should be able to find solutions for those needs. Garnering inclusive participation is a reaction to our representative form of democracy that favours the elite and big business. For citizen participation to be effective, enlightened,
informed and experienced citizenry is required. Citizen participation is introduced to provide an opportunity for those who have not previously been involved in public affairs.

Community Resource Boards in BC

The Community Resource Board (CRB) experiment of the 1970's is an interesting historical example of an attempt to decentralize social services to communities and increase citizen participation. In 1972 the New Democratic Party was elected to power. Then Minister of Human Resources proceeded to restructure the social services department to ensure broad citizen input and responsiveness to local needs (Rekart, 1988). The Community Resource Board Act (1974) provided for public participation, planning and provision of social services. This restructuring of social services gave the community a predominant role in the delivery of social programs. The Community Resource Boards' mandate was to:

- encourage and support citizen involvement in all concerns that affect the quality of life in the community; to encourage an integrated service system and a preventative approach; to identify needs and establish priorities; to monitor and evaluate; and to receive, administer and allocate funds from public and other sources in an equitable, rational manner. (*Community Resource Board Act, 1974*)

However, the minister and government were not willing to give up all control and the minister retained the ultimate authority over decisions (Clague et al, 1984).

In 1975 the Social Credit Party returned to power. The new Minister of Human Resources, dismantled the Community Resource Boards and by 1977 control over policy and delivery of social services reverted back to Victoria (Rekart, 1988).

There are many interesting lessons to learn from this experiment. The authors of *Reforming Human Services: The Experience of Community Resource Boards in BC* (1984) contend in general that the Community Resource Board experiment was a
success and had many positive outcomes. However, during this time there were many critics of the Boards. Most civic governments were opposed to the CRB’s. The Mayor of Vancouver thought the experiment was a complete failure due to the low number of voter turnout for the elections. The CRB’s also conflicted with patterns of established civic government. They appeared to be a way for senior government to download responsibility back to the municipalities for social welfare, at a time when municipalities had just been relieved of the responsibility. The social service sector felt offended because the Minister was not interested in using the professional and organizational resources of established agencies. They felt slighted that the government would choose to rely on citizen’s ‘lay knowledge’ over their expert and professional opinions. Questions of accountability were key for the critics. Since the CRB’s did not have a tax base, many critics felt they lacked accountability to all tax payers. In addition, the costs for delivering social services was increased by this model. The CRB’s also highlighted the issue of regional disparity. Vancouver was given more money and services than other rural areas.

However, despite these negative opinions, there were many beneficial aspects associated with the experiment. One of the most positive outcomes was the increase in citizen input into the delivery of social services. In 1975, there were 60 Boards in existence in BC. Eight hundred community people were directly involved in various aspect of the planning, coordination, and funding of social programs. In addition, 1500-2000 more people acted as volunteers in public forums and participated in surveys. What the elected board lacked in their own composition was offset to a degree by the involvement of consumers and citizens. The Boards established an integrated, decentralized delivery of social services within the public sector. Community social services became more coherent in form and content.
5.6 The Community Board

Drawing on the above examples, I present a structure of governance for the community. It is integral to the community development process that the state delegate decision-making control to communities in order to administer social programs and funds as they see fit. As shown in the Maori example, the state also needs to transfer enough funds to allow the programs to be viable.

The communities would follow general municipal boundaries but could have committees responsible for smaller neighbourhood units. In this approach the community would be responsible for the delivery of social services, the identification of needs, the planning of services to meet those needs, the establishment of priorities within and among 'competing' services, and the monitoring and evaluation of programs (Ife, 2002). In the current income assistance system the centralized bureaucracy in Victoria, the capital of BC, sets policy. They set rates and benefits and create programs for single mothers generally without consultation with communities. Often the government will have a community agency deliver services but the agency will be expected to follow procedures and policy set in Victoria. In contrast, under my suggested model services would be designed and provided by and for local community members, including the single mothers, rather than being designed by 'expert' technicians from elsewhere.

The governance model could be based loosely on the Community Resource Board structure of elected community members. Some way has to be found to delegate decision-making while retaining inclusive participation. It is impractical to expect all community members to be actively involved in all the decisions that have to be made. The Community Board would be based on the principles of participatory democracy.
The Board would actively recruit those who have been traditionally marginalized and excluded from politics such as low-income single mothers. Empowerment, one of the components of the principle of social justice, aims to increase the power of the disadvantaged. Low-income single mothers fall into the category of those who are disadvantaged or oppressed within our current system. Paulo Friere (1985) and Gustavo Gutierrez (1983) speak eloquently of the process of 'conscientization', an approach that is anchored in the belief that society “shall not have our great leap forward ... until the marginalized and exploited become the artisans of their own liberation- until their voice makes itself heard directly, without mediation, without interpreters” (Gutierrez, 193, p. 65). This is a key point in the model of community development. Low-income single mothers are valued as agents of social change. The knowledge from their lived experience is key in understanding how the community can support them.

The Board would be mandated to include all community members in decision-making processes. The participatory budgeting process ("orçamento participativo") in Sao Paulo, Brazil is a particularly good example of participatory democracy in action. The communities perform a significant role in the allocation of investments through alternative capital budgeting procedures. The evaluation of the instrument over the years has shown a remarkable attendance to the budgeting process and participation by the community (Baierle, 1998)

*The Role of the State*

The state government still retains a role in the delivery of social services (see Figure 5.3). Although they do not provide direct service, they maintain responsibility for the redistribution of income and control over certain standards. The state would be the
major funder of the community's programs in order to maintain equality throughout the geographic areas. This would be met through progressive taxation, whereby those with higher incomes are taxed at a higher rate. The state has a critical role in the dissemination of information and the encouraging of networking between communities. The state has a key role in implementing the systemic transformation that is needed for the community development model to happen.
5.7 Program Examples

In the community development approach the community becomes responsible for most of the services that directly affect low-income single mothers. For example, some of the basic issues for the low-income single mothers are childcare, education, housing, obtaining nutritious food, training and job opportunities.

One of the key values in this approach is that the community takes ownership for what are now considered private problems. The strength of community development is the ability to pool resources and create programs and supports that are beneficial for community members. Most of the programs described below would be accessible to all community members since one of the foundational principles is the promotion of diverse community membership with varied family structure, incomes and ethnicities.

There are examples of this approach throughout BC and Canada, mostly found within the cooperative movement. However, these initiatives are piecemeal and not uniformly supported by government. The key is for state government to create a comprehensive, integrated strategy and delegate decision-making responsibility and program delivery to communities. The local Board, complete with extensive input from the single mothers and the other users, would make suggestions of where to allocate resources from the state and how best to deliver the programs. Figure 5.4 illustrates the relationship between the community board and the specific programs.
Child Care

Childcare is an important issue for single mothers and many working families. In order to engage in paid work, parents need quality child care at a low cost. In BC, most day care is privately run and limited subsidies are issued to low-income families. It has been inadequate in meeting the needs of most parents. All parents, especially single parents would benefit from community owned childcare. It would be funded through the community board and be available to all families at a very minimal cost. There are numerous examples of cooperatively run childcare throughout BC. The Vancouver Island Cooperative Preschool Association (VICPA) supports 14 parent participation preschools on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands (Vancouver Island Cooperative Preschool Website, 2004). VICPA has been in existence since 1949. It has been an advocate for high quality early childhood education for children and professional standards for adults who work with them. VICPA preschools meet or exceed provincial
government licensing and safety standards. Parents benefit from being a part of the running of the preschool and children benefit from the high educational quality.

Housing

The lack of adequate, affordable housing is a huge problem for lone mothers, especially in Vancouver, BC. Federal and provincial funding for social housing programs have declined in the 1990's. The market housing system has not responded adequately to low income people's needs. The community could build and subsidize safe and affordable housing to ensure lone mother and their children have a decent place to live. This could consist of housing which includes various forms of tenure. Members would purchase a share of the building and then decide to rent or buy their own unit. The model of cooperative housing and co-housing has been used widely across Canada. About half of all co-op households in Canada pay a monthly charge geared to their income. Government funds cover the difference between this payment and the co-op's full charge, based on certain eligibility requirements. Yet housing co-ops still cost less to operate than other types of housing. Co-ops cost 19 per cent less to operate than municipal or private non-profit housing and 71 per cent less than public housing (owned by the federal or provincial governments), according to a 1992 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation study of federal co-operative housing programs (Canadian Cooperative Association of Canada, n.d.). Most housing co-operatives are members of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, a national apex organization which works with government on behalf of housing co-operatives and their members, coordinates group buying among co-operatives, and offers training and organizational development assistance to housing co-ops across the country.
The type of housing the community builds can contribute to the ecological sustainability of the community. Building compact, high-density housing, near amenities can reduce sprawl and increase the use of walking and cycling. The housing should be available to a mixed type of families and incomes so as to promote diversity within the building and community.

**Nutritious Food**

The use of food banks and wide spread hunger has been a reality in the era of welfare reform in Canada and BC. Food security is a key component is supporting lone mothers. Food Share, based in Toronto is a good example of an organization that offers community based projects to help put food on people’s tables. Food Share promotes cooperative buying systems, collective kitchens and community gardens that have the potential to address short term issues of household hunger, while providing longer term benefits by building capacity of individuals and communities (Mulvale, 2001). The organization aims to take food out of the realm of market based commodities, and make it a basic human right, like air or water. Single mothers would benefit from the model of food security. Community gardens and community kitchens are an excellent way to save money, gain skills and build relationships. Excess produce could be sold at the local farmers market. Community gardens meet the ecological sustainable goal for communities in a number of ways. The garden could be run organically with little or no pesticides. In addition, growing local food reduces the reliance on food from other countries, which has large environmental costs due to the need to ship or haul food over long distance expending fuel and other resources.
Income Maintenance

The topic of income maintenance is complex and not one I can give definitive answers for. There is a need to recognize single mother’s unpaid labour in the household, especially if they are not involved in the paid labour force; however, it is important not to weaken women’s economic security through the attachment to the labour force. As illustrated by the care allowance debate in Sweden, by allocating transfers to only stay-at-home mothers, there is a risk of further entrenching the traditional division of labour. In order to fully meet the needs of single mothers, there needs to be a variety of income and employment supports. The central concern is to find a balance between the recognition of the value of work women do as mothers in a private sphere and promotion of their right to participate on equal terms with men in the public sphere and labour market (Lister, 1997). A number of authors offer reasons to adopt a basic income guarantee or citizen income (Lister, 1997, Mulvale 2001). This is an income unconditionally granted to all on an individual basis including children, without means test or work requirement. This is a very controversial proposal, especially given the increasing cuts to social programs and welfare systems. It is an interesting concept as it would reduce the stigmatization of receiving welfare and has the possibility of encouraging men to take up more of the care giving and community responsibilities. However others argue that it could inadvertently serve to reinforce men’s economic advantage over women, if men continued to make high incomes in the paid labour force while women’s labour force attachment weakened due to time spent away from paid work.

In order to reduce the disincentive towards work in the labour force for men and women, meaningful, well-paid work that is controlled by community members needs to
be created. An example of a community run business is Bambinos Family Cooperatives in Victoria, BC. In 1998, 4 single mothers on income assistance decided they wanted to establish a "family friendly" business, selling used clothing and material for children. Financing for the project was made available through Rising Tide and ongoing technical support comes from CEDCO, local community economic development agencies. Bambinos regularly receives materials and support from a number of groups in the community. Although this initiative does not address the external issues such as parental leave and pay equity, they do have control over balancing work and home life in terms of paid working hours.

Included within these programs need to be education and job training possibilities. A historic example is the Vancouver Opportunities Program of the 1960's and 1970's. The program illustrated an empowerment framework for supporting single mothers on social assistance. The program was managed by single mothers on social assistance and included mutual support and self-help groups, life skills and pre-employment training, volunteer placements and job development. (Clague and Wharf, 1997). This is a good example of an empowerment model but also did little to address outside structural barriers women faced such as the gendered wage gap.

5.8 Analysis of the Community Development Approach

Feminization of Poverty

In the previous chapter I discussed the concept of feminization of poverty in relation to the BC and Swedish Models. This concept is also useful to evaluate the community development approach.

The goal within community development is to reduce the number of single mothers in poverty. This is done by increasing the community's capacity to care for
those who are most marginalized. The community development approach builds on and strengthens the community ties and social networks that are evident in daily life. It views society in a more cooperative vein, rather than privileging the individualism as is done in neo-liberal policies.

The large number of single mothers and children living in poverty attest to the difficulties of playing the dual roles of primary wage earner and caregiver within the BC model. Within the neo-liberal framework, if they cannot make ends meet they are told to budget their money more effectively. In the community development approach, the goal is to reduce the feminization of poverty by transferring the responsibility for children to the community.

Worker Versus Parent Tensions

The second evaluative concept explored the tension between worker and parent roles in the BC and Swedish model and are germane for the analysis of community development. The worker versus caregiver tension can be diminished in the community development model by reducing paid work hours for all community members. Many feminists believe that the six hour work day for all workers is one of the most important pre-conditions for equality between men and women in work life, family life and citizenship work. If men had to work the same hours, working a six hour day job would not disadvantage women. It would allow both men and women to share the burdens of running a household and caring for children more equally. The six hour work day would also allow single parents more time for family life and participation in political activities, although disadvantage would still occur since single parents do not have another parent to share the duties of running the household.
Once men are freed of full time paid work responsibility the hope is they will be encouraged to take time for all children in the community, not just their own. The organization of Big Brothers is a good example of men volunteering their time to be a role model for boys that may be missing a father figure. This approach encourages a shift in focus of attention from women to men as well as to the wider societal responsibility for children and others in need of care (Pateman, 1987).

*Notions of Citizenship*

The third evaluative concept employed in the last chapter centred on the notions of citizenship. Within the community development approach, the goal is to broaden the notion of citizenship responsibility so all members of the community have access to social and political rights. The Guiding Principles for Social Development Welfare Policies adopted by the United Nations sum up an ideal definition of citizenship: “The enhancement of well being by raising the level of living, ensuring social justice and widening opportunities for people to develop their highest capacities as healthy, educated, participating and contributing citizens.” (as qtd in Lister, 1997).

A grounded concept of citizenship, which can be of value to women and single mothers, has to embrace both individual rights (social and reproductive) and political participation and has to analyze the relationship between the two (Lister, 1997). In the previous two models, the citizen wage earner is privileged over the citizen caregiver, reflecting hierarchy of work form which accords greater status to primary wage work, however, useless, over other forms of work, however useful (Leira, 2002). Social citizenship rights in BC and Sweden are contingent on the duty to engage in paid work. This value is the concept underlying workfare programs.
The Swedish and BC definition of work is based on male worker model of paid employment. In this model, work is valued when it is done outside the home, in the public sphere. Those that do not have paid work are not valued. Maria Angeles Duran (1994) writes “unpaid work is trapped in a system of special, unwritten, inexplicit rules, poorly defined in family law, not openly agreed and frequently in contradiction with the general principles of paid work” (p. 24). Unpaid workers lack many of the citizenship rights of other workers. This is problematic within an analysis on the value of parenthood, as well as the more pragmatic consideration of the changing labour force. Within the changing labour force and the move to non-standard work, not everyone is able to find full-time tenured employment. Because of this transformation is it important for government and society to re-evaluate the notions of citizenship and work.

In the community development approach citizenship responsibilities encompass more than just engaging in paid work. Social rights are granted when people work together to improve their own quality of life and that of others (Lister, 1997). Caregiving would be classified as a citizenship responsibility that entitles one to social rights such as a basic income guarantee, day care and pay equity.

The new definition includes socially necessary and useful work in the labour market, unpaid caring work in the family, and various forms of services in the community (Mulvale, 2001). Much of the activities women engage in now fall under this new definition of citizenship responsibilities. Many women and single mothers are involved in work in volunteer capacities such as advocating for social and environmental change that is instrumental to the health of our society. Women are often involved in spiritual activities, caring for the elderly, volunteering in school and other places, and with the arts.
A form of ‘wage for mother work’ policy has been put in place in France and several other European Union states. It has allowed lone mothers not to seek paid employment and to live on the benefit in recognition of the role as parents. However, the danger of this policy is to further entrench the traditional division of labour between care work by women and labour market work for men. A profound redistribution of the paid and unpaid work and care is called for, one that goes beyond the largely symbolic support entailed in promoting parental choice (Leira, 2002). There needs to be adequate supports that give lone mothers real choices about whether they stay home or whether they work in the paid labour market. The entrenchment of women’s oppression must be guarded against at the community level.

Through granting single mothers social rights such as a basic income guarantee and employment supports, their political rights are supported. Without having their material needs met, single mothers cannot become political actors. Within the BC and Swedish model, single mothers are the policy takers, not the policy makers. They are viewed as objects rather than subjects in the social service system. The Community Development approach encourages single mothers’ political voice within the decision-making processes of the community. The approach decentralizes government so that local citizens have more access to decision-making. In both Sweden and BC most policies that affect single mothers are made centrally, through a hierarchical, bureaucratic structure. In the community development model, single mothers are instrumental in making the policy decisions that affect themselves and their community.

By creating a locally based governance structure, the access for single mothers to participate in decision-making is increased. In community development the vision of citizenship is one that involves the collective and participatory engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of community. Collective action can boost self-
confidence as women start to see themselves as political actors and effective citizens. They will no longer be viewed as clients but as participating members of the community. Single mothers will be viewed as subjects and not just objects of social policy making (Lister, 1997).

Citizen participation is introduced to provide an opportunity for those who have not previously been involved in public affairs to have a voice. However, this does not always happen. The notion of citizen participation is gendered. It tends to assume that citizens have the time and other resources to fulfill their obligations of citizenship. Often those with money, power and status will dominate the more local forms of governance. The more demanding the concept of citizenship, the more likely it will represent a minority. That minority is likely to be male, as was the classical ideal. The classical Athenian male was largely freed from labour by non-citizens, slaves and women so that he could participate in the daily affairs of government. Time is a resource, often skewed in men's favour. Often women do not have the time to contribute to the decision making process. It may create another source of guilt for the already over burdened women. However, what is important is to create the ability for all women and single mothers to participate in the community processes. This does not have to be translated into a requirement. What is important is that conditions are created that enables all citizens to participate (Lister, 1997). It can be viewed more on a continuum where people might participate more or less at different points in their lives. Citizen participation cannot be expected in isolation or else it will contribute to continued structural discrimination. It needs to happen in conjunction with the other goals of community development such as income maintenance and employment support for lone mothers.

The state government has a key role here in creating and upholding a community constitution that promotes inclusion in community processes and decision making.
However there is a fine balance to staying true to the principles of social justice and gender equality without becoming autocratic over the community. Valuing the community's voice and knowledge must be balanced with these foundational values; however, oppressive or discriminatory practices must not be tolerated within the community.

5.9 Summary

Community development addresses many of the limitations in the BC and Swedish models. The biggest limitation is the privileging of the worker-citizen over the caregiver-citizen. The tension of worker and caregiver is ultimately reduced through programs and policies that support the agency of single mothers in how they care for their children. Ultimately, care work is valued and single mothers are perceived as an integral part of the holistic nature of the community. Single mothers are supported materially by a number of income and employment programs such as child care but are also encouraged to be political actors in the decision-making processes. Table 5.1 below outlines the comparisons and contrast of the three approaches as discussed above.
### Table 5.1: Comparisons of Approaches

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<th>BC Model</th>
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<th>Community Development Approach</th>
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<td>State-level</td>
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<td><strong>Citizen Participation in Decision Making</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Economic Unit</strong></td>
<td>Individual/Family</td>
<td>Individual/Family</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility for Children</strong></td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Individual and State</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citizenship</strong></td>
<td>High-income worker</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Member of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecological Perspective</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although community development has a wide array of benefits, there is a major challenge to this approach: that of implementation. Our society in BC is currently based on a competition that values the market and globalization. It would not be easy to create such a dramatic overhauling of our system. The provincial and federal governments, both need to be on side and make many difficult decisions in the face of major opposition from those that benefit from the maintenance of the status quo.
Chapter VI

Conclusion and Planning Implications

This thesis adopted a comparative framework to explore two different approaches of income support for lone mothers: the British Columbia (BC) model and the Swedish model. The two approaches represent distinct responses to single mothers and poverty. Upon examination, it is clear that the BC model does not meet the economic needs of single mothers and their children. Single mothers in Sweden fare better; however, economic discrimination between paired and lone mothers still exists. The community development approach addresses limitations in the Swedish and BC models and creates a holistic, integrated approach to supporting lone mothers as caregivers and workers.

Of important note for this overall discussion is the fact that being an economically vulnerable single mother relates to a specific, generally short phase in life. Usually, single mothers need the most support when their children are very young. This is significant as single mothers should not be viewed as a drain on society's resources, but citizens doing important work who need extra support at very specific times in their lives, such as supports provided to the elderly.

During this stage in the lifecycle, communities need to provide for time away from the labour market for parents to care for their children and the ability to synchronize care and work once they return. Generous parental leaves should be offered to men and women. After parental leave is over, work hours could be reduced for more time for care giving and community responsibilities. In addition, emphasis needs to be given to pay equity so that women's wages are more in line with men's.
There are many planning implications for the discussion of income support for lone mothers. Planning and policy making for social services need to be done in conjunction with those most affected. Currently planning is done by those far removed from the community. The current system relies heavily on 'experts' to make decisions. The discussion in Chapter 5 on community development illustrates the importance of inclusive processes in planning. Citizen participation must be undertaken with critical judgement. Who is the 'citizen' is citizen participation? As planners are we reaching those whose voices have been silenced and marginalized?

The principle of praxis is another important planning implication. Praxis is defined as theory informing practice, which in turn informs theories. It is based in the notion that as planners, we should be grounded with the people in the communities for whom we are serving. As community planners we should be continuing to understand how community development could best support lone mothers. This should combine further theoretical research with practice and most of all should include the wisdom of single mothers themselves.
References


Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2002, October). *Housing Market Information System-Rent Range by Area*


