THE GOOD MOTHER:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LITERACY ADVICE TO MOTHERS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

by

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ABSTRACT

Often presented as a means of communicating the latest in scientific research to parents, literacy advice is a key strategy used by educational institutions to address persistent gaps in literacy achievement across socio-economic groups. The rationale for creating and disseminating literacy advice is that if families adhere to it, their children will become literate, succeed in school, and become productive members of society. Drawing on Foucauldian approaches to discourse analysis, feminist theories, and the concept of mothering and literacy as situated practices, the study explores literacy advice to parents as a gendered practice of power rather than an institutional truth.

Based on the analysis of over three hundred literacy advice texts published in Britain and North America since the Nineteenth Century, the study demonstrated that contemporary literacy advice to parents is deeply rooted in the cultural ideal of the "good mother." Discourses of domestic pedagogy, intensive mothering, and the "normal" family normalize middle class domesticity and the ideal of the good mother as essential to children's literacy acquisition and academic success. The findings suggest that reliance upon women's domestic literacy work to promote children's academic success not only reproduces gender inequalities, but has implications for equity in literacy learning opportunities among diversely situated children and families.

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CHAPTER I: LITERACY ADVICE TO MOTHERS IN THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

"I don't want to play that game anymore."

Maya Schofield, October 18, 2001

It is four p.m. and my five year-old daughter Maya and I are in the car, on our way to the supermarket to get some last minute groceries for dinner. I have just picked her up from school and am heading into the "after-school" phase of the day. Throughout the day I have shifted roles and switched gears several times: from the frantic early morning rush to get child, signed home reading packs, and lunches to school, to the morning adult education class I teach, to my exam preparations in the afternoon, and now to the childcare/supper/bedtime routine that in some circles is called the "Mothering Hour" and in other circles is called the "Disaster Hour." I am preoccupied as I weave through traffic, but I try to be attentive, even interested, in playing yet another "I spy" game with Maya.

"Why don't we play using the first letter of the alphabet?" I suggest.

"No, that's boring," she replies. "I want to use colours."

"But using letters is a good way to help you read," I assert and then pause. I surprise myself. Why should it matter whether we use letters or not? What difference does it make? Why am I agreeing to play a game when I am feeling tired and distracted?

By now my daughter is thinking about other things. "It's OK," she says, "I don't want to play that game anymore."

Until this episode, I was convinced that my critical faculties as a literacy educator and as a doctoral student studying literacy in family settings had protected me from the anxiety that often accompanies the warnings from schools, literacy research, and parenting advice texts that as my daughter's "first and most important educator"[1] (Government of British Columbia, 2003; Ross, 1995), I am responsible for my child's schooling success and, more specifically, her quest to become a "fully literate" child.

I share the perspective of literacy as socially-situated practice (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000). The literacy practices that Maya and I share as daughter and mother are "embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices" (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000, p. 12). Indeed, one of these social goals is expressed in the statement described above that "parents are their first and most important educators." Yet this statement creates for me complex subject positions. I wanted to find ways to support Maya's literacy even if at that moment this did not feel particularly natural to either of us. I was tired and distracted; she was sitting in the back seat, hot and bored. Given my understanding of literacy as socially situated, the dynamics of this literacy event surprised and interested me. What might have compelled me to twist an innocuous conversation with my daughter into a contrived pedagogical experience? Why would I persist in this vein even when Maya resisted? Where does this press to

---

[1] This statement appears across a wide variety of texts to provide rationale for initiatives designed to involve parents more directly in their children's formal learning, usually in the context of supporting children's early literacy and brain development, parental involvement in their children's schools, and participation on school governing bodies.

relate to my daughter as a literacy teacher come from? These questions arise from an uncomfortable place where the dynamics of my private life intersect with the public ideal of a "good mother" (Ruddick, 2001). This good mother is found in the powerful cultural image of the smiling, calm, patient, attentive, and sympathetic caregiver. She is "involved" (Delhi, 1996), always teaching, guiding, helping out at the school or play group. She is an ideal against which tired and cranky mothers like myself measure ourselves, and forever find ourselves lacking.

This event in the car, and the questions it spawned about the place of the good mother in literacy advice, marked the beginning of this study. In the following section I elaborate upon the social and policy context that shaped literacy advice and mothering work during the study.

The context for this study

This study was written during 2000–2005, a period that witnessed an unprecedented production of advice texts focused on the literacy development of children. The focus on the family setting as a key site for literacy development has also coincided with expanded definitions of literacy more generally. These now include, as the Movement for Canadian Literacy has observed, "literacy, the universe and everything" (2005), whereby literacy is associated with all that is good and desirable in a young child: secure attachment, emotional and physical health, a long attention span, a love of story books, a large vocabulary, school readiness, academic and financial success, and even "happiness" (Gordon, 2003).

The ideas that parents are teachers and "home is the first school" have become accepted as statements of fact. Many provincial educational reforms are motivated by

research that suggests that parental involvement is the most significant factor affecting a child's success in school (Lofthouse, 1999). Much seems to be at stake for Canadian society in how well parents perform this role. Christensen, former Minister of Education in British Columia noted that "parents are essential partners in our education system and can inspire their children to new levels of achievement (2005, p. 1). This message crosses borders. Former United States First Lady and family literacy advocate Barbara Bush captured the emphasis placed upon parenting practices to achieve education policy goals in her statement, "Our success as a society depends not on what happens in the White House, but what happens inside your house" (Sears & Sears, 2002, p. 31).

Education reform initiatives aim to institutionalise parental involvement in schools and increase parents' accountability for their children's educational success[2]. This policy thrust as well as researchers' attention to children's literacy learning before formal schooling has given rise to the family literacy movement and to what Hutchison (2000) has termed the "growth industry" of parent education, particularly for supporting children's literacy. It is interesting to consider this trend alongside a phenomenon commentators have termed "hyper-mothering" (Warner, 2005). This is characterized by the increased pressure and expectations for mothers to raise literate, "successful" children (Sears & Sears, 2002), hold down productive jobs, support their communities, manage a clean and a spacious home in a "good" neighbourhood close to good schools, and not feel stressed while doing it "because stress is bad for your baby" (Canadian Institute for Child

[2] For example, in British Columbia in April 2002, the government mandated new school planning councils that require three member parents, a teacher, and a principal. These councils have expanded responsibilities including submitting school accountability reports advising on curriculum, setting funding goals, and monitoring academic progress. The Ontario government places the onus on parents (who can afford to do so) to remove their children from "failing" schools through vouchers to subsidize private schooling.

Health, 1997). While women have been protesting the "myth of the ideal mother" for more than fifty years (Hulbert, 2005), this myth continues to take new forms, and the shifting standards for the "good" mother can powerfully shape mothering experiences even when women protest and resist these standards. These ideals conflict with the material conditions for mothering expressed by mothers like Pat Guy (2000), who writes:

> It was a real fight, and I do mean literally, getting my boys off to school. There were three pairs of socks, shoes, three clean shirts, three pairs of pants. "What is today? Gym? Brush your teeth, let me brush your hair. Wash your face yet?" In the back of my mind, I would hear the answers to the question, "Why can't Johnny read?" (p. 24)

Pat Guy illustrates the cultural contradictions (Hays, 1996) between the high social expectations for appropriate child-raising and literacy achievement on one hand, and the everyday lives and material conditions that shape mothering on the other. However, as the findings of this thesis suggest, literacy advice texts exclude these situated experiences of mothering and instead promote the ideal of the good mother as a necessary precondition for raising the ideal literate child. "Ideal" mothering and "ideal" literacy practices are represented most commonly in the image of the "relaxing, warm and pleasurable" (Morrow, 1989, p. 23) event of a mother reading a story to her child who is sitting on her lap and wrapped in her arms. In this image, there is usually little sign of the other work that mothers engage in every day: the siblings who need diaper changes, the dishes in the sink, the dinner that needs to be cooked, or the laundry that needs to be done. When these everyday domestic realities are rendered visible, they are often maddeningly represented as further opportunities for mothers to stimulate their

children's literacy development, as suggested by ABC Canada: "Make every day a learning day. Ask your children to make a shopping list, read recipes together or help them make a calendar of their weekly activities" (ABC Canada Literacy Foundation, 2003).

While this advice is located in the domesticity of everyday life, these recommended literacy practices are a means to the ends of achieving school readiness, academic success, and appropriate brain development that are considered essential to achieving broader economic and social visions (Government of British Columbia, 2003). Within the iconic image of a mother-figure reading to a child, we can see the outlines of common discourses of mothering and literacy that rarely take into account women's lived experiences of mothering, the role of fathers in children's literacy learning, or the diversity of family structures and child-raising practices which give meaning and context to the literacies of everyday life. Indeed, like most aspects of women's domestic and child-raising work, literacy work in the home only becomes visible when things go wrong — when her child fails to learn to read by age five or seven (depending on the jurisdiction) or is deemed "at risk for reading failure" (Lyon, 1999) because the family lives in poverty or does not speak standard English as a first language (Burns, Griffin & Snow, 1998, p. 133). In these circumstances, mothers are asked to participate in family literacy interventions designed to teach them to carry out their domestic literacy work more adequately. Shirley Bond, former Minister of Advanced Education in the British Columbia Government, captures this in her observation that "[f]amily literacy programs prepare families to prepare their children for success in life — they address parents' own

literacy needs and their need to be able to help their children" (Shirley Bond, January 31, 2005).

For middle-class, English-speaking mothers such as myself, advice and reminders from popular magazines, schools, government ministries, and literacy organizations on how to carry out literacy work in the home is often considered an adequate form of intervention. Embedded in these curricular and policy thrusts is the assumption that parents have complete influence and control over their young children's literacy development and that parental involvement in children's literacy and formal education is a key lever for achieving social and economic equality. Yet the more that mothers' labour is offered up as the solution to social inequality, the more we need to question the assumptions on which such assertions are built.

The increased demands placed upon parents to support their children's literacy at home and to oversee the school system are presented as a way of "empowering" parents to be involved "beyond the bake sale" (Raham, 2002, p. 5). However, as this study suggests, demands upon parents' time, material resources, literacy and advocacy skills, and the inevitable privileging of the perspectives of those parents who have these resources and skills, are not fully considered in advice to parents or in educational policy reforms. In contrast, as Pat Guy's comment suggests, parents negotiate literacy advice from the everyday, often lonely struggles to conform to mothering discourses in the context of shrinking resources and services available to mothers, families, and single parent-led families in particular. In this way, "Johnny's reading", mothers' domestic literacy work, and society's social and economic visions come together in literacy advice and constitute key themes in this study.

Aims of the study

This study seeks to understand how the work of mothering is discursively implicated in ideals surrounding children's literacy acquisition. The study identifies in literacy advice the discursive formations that connect "ideal" mothering and "ideal" literacy practices in the home, and the strategies that help to keep these discourses in place. This builds on work of Griffith and Smith (1990; 1991; 2005) who identified a "mothering discourse" that organizes mothers' relationships to schools, and indeed mothers' own perceptions of their roles as their children's first and most important educators. The historical and institutional shifts that have shaped Griffith and Smith's concept of the mothering discourse is elaborated in Chapter Two, but Griffith and Smith summarize it thus: "In all its varieties, the mothering discourse has this in common — it requires the subordination of women's unpaid labour and the conditions of her life to the ill-defined needs of her children's development and of their schooling" (Griffith & Smith, 2005, p. 39).

In this study, it is these varieties of mothering discourses that are of interest. In the analysis of feminist literature on mothering and literacy in Chapter Three, discourses of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996), domestic pedagogy (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989), and the "normal" family seem to frame institutional ideals of literacy and of mothering. The thesis is concerned with identifying how these mothering discourses intersect with ideals surrounding the "mother as teacher of literacy" in ways that link the "ideal" mother with "ideal" forms of literacy. This involves analysis of how statements related to mothers' role in their children's literacy development become "true" and are reproduced as "normal," with implications for the forms of mothering and literacy that accrue status

and power. This thesis is concerned not only with describing these processes, but with considering their effects with respect to educational and gender inequalities.

A further aim of this study is to highlight women's literacy work in the home as socially and educationally important but often invisible as real work. While scholars have documented mothers' work in the service of schools and broader nation-building goals, there is little research that documents and highlights women's domestic literacy work in the home in the pre-school years. This work is implicitly and explicitly connected to the realization of the nation-building vision of a fully literate society[3] (ABC Canada, 2005; Government of British Columbia, 2005; Literacy Alberta, 2004). Indeed, as newspapers across Canada professed in 2005, research shows children have a better chance of becoming fully literate adults if reading is encouraged in the home (CanWest Global, 2005). This thesis' emphasis on women's domestic literacy work provides an opportunity to build on the existing research documenting women's work for schools, while it also attends to realms outside of schooling in which women have been called upon to carry out pedagogical work in support of a "fully literate" society and other shifting national visions of ideal children and ideal families.

Finally, this study aims to highlight the political and economic relationship between literacy research, literacy advice, and social policy. These inter-textual links are key to the production and reproduction of mothering discourses. The study thus attends to

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[3] The vision of a "fully literate society" is ubiquitous in policy documents, mission statements, conferences and funding strategies in Canadian and international education, business, and social planning institutions, in particular since the year 2000. The precise meaning attached to such a vision and the characteristics of such a society are rarely detailed. As some scholars have noted, in the past it has not been expected or required that each and every person in a society be "fully literate" in order for that society to achieve its social and economic goals, nor is there a common understanding of what fully literate means across diverse social and economic contexts (Puttman, 2000).

the often close-knit relationships among prominent parenting experts, the magazines for which they write, and their institutional and inter-personal alliances. Since the 1990s, it has also become important to attend to the relationships between the content of literacy advice and its publication and distribution by an increasingly concentrated group of multi-national corporations. This research also aims to highlight the ways in which research, teaching, and policy making also contribute to the reproduction of mothering discourses in literacy advice.

Research questions and methods

This thesis considers literacy advice to mothers from the mid-Nineteenth Century to 2000. The research questions are:

1. What discursive formations are associated with the "mother-as-teacher-of literacy"?
2. What discourse strategies are associated over time with the normalization of the mother-as-teacher of literacy?
3. What forms of literacy and of mothering are excluded within these discourses?
4. Who has gained power within the discourses of literacy and mothering?

I adopt in this research a critical approach to discourse analysis. This implies that I bring to the study a prior theory about my data. I believe that I will find in literacy advice texts insights into the "(re)production and challenge of dominance" (van Dijk, 2001, p. 300) in the gendered ideals of the "mother-as-teacher-of literacy." This *a priori* perspective is illustrated in the scenario with my daughter that became a catalyst for this research: Where does this literacy advice come from? What insights into the regulation of

mothering can a critical analysis of literacy advice provide? The approaches to critical discourse analysis adopted in this study are associated with Foucault's genealogical method and his concern with the ways in which power and knowledge come together in discourse. For Foucault, discourse analysis involved identifying discursive formations and the strategies by which statements identified with these formations become true and are circulated or excluded and rendered invisible or silenced. These discourses, as others have noted, "govern what can be said, thought and done within a field" (Luke, 2001 p. 2) as well as how texts "form the subjects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1977, p. 49). Understanding how certain statements become "true" involves attention to the history of power relationships. The genealogical method as used by Foucault thus attends to where ideas or statements come from. This is elaborated in Chapter Two.

A Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis coincides with an understanding of literacy as socially-situated practice. This perspective, and its implications for the study of both literacy and mothering in this thesis, is described below.

Conceptual framework

Literacy and mothering as socially-situated practices

Post-structural theories of language and literacy, including the field of inquiry known as the "new literacy studies," regard literacy as a sociological, as well as an educational issue. Central to this research is the conception of literacy as a socially situated practice rather than as an individual skill with a single meaning and definition. This position is built from Street's (1984) distinction between the autonomous and ideological models of literacy. Autonomous perspectives tend to regard literacy as an individual skill acquired through schooling and measurable through standard tests.

According to Street (2003), an ideological perspective of literacy "problematizes what counts as literacy at any time and place, asking whose literacies are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant" (p. 75). Like Foucauldian approaches to critical discourse analysis, this perspective is concerned with the connections between power and knowledge and how "the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being" (Street, 2003, p. 76). Another component of new literacy studies is the importance placed upon social history as a force in discursive formation, as well as the social and cultural reproduction of dominant literacies. As noted above, the genealogical component of this study aims to integrate this sensitivity to social history. The concept of habitus also contributes a historical lens to the study, but one that is expressed in the embodiment of everyday literacy and mothering practices.

Habitus as defined by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) involves a system of perception, thought, and action that becomes embodied or regarded as natural or habitual at the levels of a social group, family, and individual. Some forms of habitus are accorded more status than others. This difference in status can be internalized by both dominant and marginalized groups as natural and normal. Indeed, Stuart Wells (1997) argues that habitus is "how one's view of the world is influenced by the traditional distribution of power and status in society" (p. 422).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) recognized the domestic sphere as a vital site where habitus is implicated in social and educational reproduction. It is here that the implications of a literacy habitus are expressed in what Robbins (2004) has termed "domestic literacy work." According to Robbins, women's association with the domestic

sphere in patriarchal ideology produces the category of "domestic literacy" as the work of mothers that, while invisible as actual labour, is nevertheless central to the cultural reproduction of middle-class literacy practices as institutional ideals. As described above, discourses of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family shape what counts as ideal domestic literacy work, serving to re-affirm and reproduce middle-class literacy habitus as socially ideal. Yet as much as these discourses may regulate domestic literacy practices, they also provide opportunities for differently situated mothers to position themselves within mothering discourses in ways that help them to acquire or maintain their status. The concept of habitus as a lens for analyzing literacy advice is elaborated in Chapter Two.

It is this attention to the interplay between gender, text, and context that aligns studies in the vein of the new literacies to post-structural feminist studies of mothering. Mothering, like literacy, can be understood as both an institutionally-driven ideal and a socially-situated practice. Adrienne Rich (1978) distinguished between the *institution* of motherhood and the *experience* of mothering. Her distinction provided feminists with a conceptual tool to identify the often oppressive ideals of the good mother as communicated in the texts of social policy, advice, and popular culture (Arnup, 1996; Luke, 1996), while preserving and honouring the joys and pleasures that are also part of the everyday experiences of mothering.

Literacy advice, policy, and research: Inter-textual relationships

A study of literacy advice necessarily implies the study of literacy policy and research. The three strands are inter-textually and discursively linked. This study brings a critical and socio-historical perspective to "reading" literacy education research and

policy. According to Edmonston (2001), a functionalist perspective seeks to answer "what works" and tends to exclude consideration of the complex external factors that impact literacy education. Edmonston argues that "Critical analysis of literacy education research asks different questions: Where a policy or perspective comes from, why it is viable, and what the values embedded in that policy might be" (p. 621). Where literacy advice comes from is thus a central question in this study, one that is inter-textually connected to the origins and desires of literacy policy and research and their discursive shifts over time. These inter-textual relationships between policy, research, popular culture, and advice are difficult to tease apart, but are central to a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis, and central to understanding how some forms of mothering and literacy are circulated as "true" and "normal" while others are marginalized.

In this way, the study brings together the three inter-related conceptual strands of context, inter-textuality, and discourse that Maybin (2000) has cited as important to understanding the ways in which institutional power "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touch their bodies and inserts itself in their actions and attitudes their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, 1980, cited in Maybin, 2000, p. 208). The conceptual lenses introduced above, and their articulation with the analytic methods adopted in this study, are elaborated in Chapter Two.

Data sources

Three sets of data were used in this thesis: primary documents that include best-selling child-raising manuals, popular parenting magazines, and family literacy promotional materials produced during the period under study. While child-raising manuals written by Brazelton (1974; 1989), Leach (1978; 1988; 1997), and Spock (1946;

1957; 1968; 1977; 1992; 1998) are not dedicated to reading per se, they remain widely read by parents, and, because new editions appear regularly, they provide a means for tracing insights into shifts in mainstream views about parents' roles in literacy. Secondary sources include policy documents and theoretical and philosophical works that frame and contextualize the primary documents as evidence of shifting trends in reading research, the project of schooling, parent-school relationships, and changing views of what counts as literacy.

For example, reports of provincial commissions of education proved particularly useful as sources that articulate ideals surrounding children's literacy and parents' role in schooling that were current at a given time. These reports usually involve submissions from a variety of dominant institutions as well as contributions from parents and communities, and, because they tend to emerge every two decades or so, provide a useful lens into continuity and change shaping literacy advice discourses. Tertiary sources included parents' reactions to, and experiences of, literacy advice. These are explored as counter-discourses through the analysis of on-line discussions, letters to the editors of newspapers and magazines, and auto-biographical writing done in literacy classes when these have been found. These sources are particularly relevant in the 1990s and 2000s when the Internet provided new sources for not only providing literacy advice to parents, but also gauging parents' resistance to, and negotiation of, that advice.

Chapters Four to Seven feature the analysis of literacy advice to mothers. Throughout these chapters, I often quote long extracts from the advice texts. In a thesis concerned with exploring the relatively new project of analyzing literacy advice to mothers, the frequent inclusion of extracts from advice texts helps to make the basis for

this analysis more explicit to the reader. It also allows the reader to draw her or his own interpretations from the data, and consider it along with the interpretations and arguments laid out in this thesis.

While the thesis is concerned with literacy advice to mothers, the scope of advice texts selected and the themes under study within the texts includes child-raising topics that contributes to the construction of the "mother-as-teacher" in broader terms. Topics such as language development, women's organization of children's and domestic time and space, and preparing for and supporting schooling, were included in the advice texts analyzed where these were deemed central practices for supporting children's literacy development. The reason for this inclusion was both pragmatic and strategic. The vast majority of advice texts that refer to literacy are actually concerned primarily with children's reading rather than writing, and, as I argue, promoting children's reading ability has itself become increasingly embedded in general child-raising practices. Indeed, it is a finding of this thesis that advice to mothers about literacy is rarely only about their children's reading and writing development — it is also fundamentally about the regulation of mothering practices.

Significance of the study

Advice to mothers supporting their children's literacy development represents a key strategy on the part of educational and governmental institutions to address persistent gaps in literacy achievement across socio-economic groups. However, findings of this study suggest that dominant advice discourses may in fact contribute to persistent gaps in achievement by privileging notions of ideal families and ideal literacies, while ignoring

the material conditions of real families' lives and the literacy practices embedded in them.

This study also opens avenues to consider family literacy programs and policies not just as innovative strategies for promoting academic success. They may also be considered as one of many maternal education campaigns in recent North American social history aimed at achieving desired social reforms. In this case, the reforms are in support of neo-liberal policies of parental responsibility for their children's schooling success (David, 1998).

Third, in interpreting advice literature as gendered practices of power rather than as representations of institutional truths, the study prompts researchers and practitioners working in the field of early literacy development and parental involvement in schools to reflect critically upon the discourses of mothering and of domestic literacy that shape their research designs and data interpretation. In recommending closer relationships between home and school literacies or the need to bolster out-of school literacy practices, it is possible to overlook the implications of these reforms for the work of mothering and thus unwittingly perpetuate mothering discourses. Indeed, if these ideas are not critically examined, they may be reproduced in research and educational practices in ways that may blind us to new and more useful perspectives. The significance of this study, in the words of Edmonston, is the provision of a historical and critical analysis of literacy advice that will encourage educators, researchers and policy makers to "consider where something has come from and why it is here — indeed reading more broadly [which involves attending to] social relations that bring a phenomenon to fruition in a culture" (Edmonston, 2001, p. 620).

While feminist scholars provided ample evidence to show how mothering work is invisible yet vital to the work of schools and to cultural and social reproduction (Reay, D, 1998), that research often does not adequately consider literacy as an aspect of this work. Critical and ethnographic literacy research has contributed useful critiques of family literacy policies on the basis of their reliance upon modernist concepts of the "traditional" family (Luke and Luke, 2001) and value school forms of literacy over the literacies in homes and community settings (Pitt, 2000). Mace (1998) made a substantial contribution to this line of research in calling attention to the myths surrounding mothers' positioning as their child's first and most important teacher. Yet research associated with the new literacy studies has not adequately attended to the gendering of literacy practices both historically and within the domestic sphere, nor fully attended to the implications of mothers' domestic literacy work for the social and cultural reproduction of academic advantage. But deepening our understanding of these processes has become particularly important as children's early literacy knowledge acquires pride of place as a determinant for long-term scholastic success (Hertzman, 1999).

This thesis thus contributes a gendered analysis of the assumptions upon which literacy and schooling policies in North America are founded and their implications for mothering work. Without this lens, policies can continue to build upon and reproduce inequalities, not just in the domestic work expected of differently situated mothers, but in the economic choices that mothers face as they negotiate responsibilities for their children's literacy and learning with the demands of paid work outside the home. As children's literacy success becomes associated with their long-term academic achievement, these responsibilities increase and take on new urgency. Finally, in

mapping a stronger understanding of the discourses that legitimize institutional practices and public policies related to mothering and literacy, this study provides a basis for further research documenting women's lived experiences as their child's first and most important educators. It thus begins to address an area of feminist research on gender and education largely overlooked until now.

Scope and limitations

The interest and focus of the study is the discursive strategies that normalize and connect ideal mothering to ideal literacy. The genealogy of the ideal of the mother as teacher of literacy explored in the study informs the analysis of literacy advice to mothers in the Twentieth Century. Because the focus of this study is literacy advice discourses as they are produced and reproduced in texts, this thesis also does not describe the rich forms of literacy that take place in homes and community settings, or the diverse ways in which women, fathers, caregivers, and families, including children themselves, may or may not take up mainstream literacy advice. However, as described in Chapter Two, where possible, the study documents the ways in which parents may negotiate literacy advice texts in their written and oral interactions with popular magazines, computer listserv discussions, public forums, and in their writing in adult literacy classes.

Organization of the thesis

Chapter Two elaborates upon the research methods and analytic lenses of post-structural feminist theory and new literacy studies that inform this study, and considers the ways in which these come together in a Foucauldian-inspired approach to critical discourse analysis. Chapter Three explores research and practice trends in the field of literacy studies and feminist research on mothering that informs a framework and method

for analyzing literacy advice discourses. Chapter Four presents a genealogy of the concept of the "mother as teacher of literacy." The purpose of this chapter is to foreground the analysis of literacy advice texts in the remainder of the thesis by exploring the Foucauldian-inspired question — what is the history of contemporary literacy advice discourses?

Chapter Five begins the analysis of contemporary advice texts, focusing mainly on the years 1950 to 1970, with a brief but instructive review of literacy advice in the early- to middle-Twentieth Century. This chapter considers the discursive strategies that normalized the sensitive, stay-at-home mother as a necessary precondition for children's success as readers. It is here that the ideals of intensive mothering become more systematically cemented into literacy advice. This chapter also documents the evolving role of mothers as para-professional reading teachers who supported, but never intervened, in the school teachers' role as reading expert.

Chapter Six explores literacy advice in the 1970s to 1980s, a period which marks a notable shift and break in literacy advice discourses. In education policy and advice at this time, the need for extensive services for families appears more present than advice and policy about extensive mothering. This is a situation which would change rather abruptly in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Interestingly, it is only during the 1980s that the term *literacy* itself enters advice texts as an object of considerable media and policy attention in the context of the "literacy crisis" and the arrival of the "Information Age." In this study, the emphasis in the analysis is on the ways in which the perceived literacy crisis was linked to concerns surrounding changes in the ideal nuclear family and women's participation in the outside labour force. Such advice recruited earlier discursive

constructs of intensive mothering to create family literacy advice and programming built around "normal families" and gendered divisions of labour.

Chapter Seven considers literacy advice to mothers in the 1990s and early 2000s against the backdrop of neo-liberal and neo-conservative social and economic reforms and the burgeoning family literacy movement. Of particular interest in this chapter is the uniformity of advice across a very broad range of texts. Here the theme of domestic literacy as a performative practice — a powerful social code — is crystalized, as increasing attention is paid in advice to the privileging of reading storybooks to children as a requirement for academic success, rather than as a culturally-embedded, meaning making practice. A second theme in this chapter is the surveillance of low income and minority mothers' literacy and parenting practices as children's literacy knowledge is equated with potential "risks" and financial costs.

Chapter Eight discusses the major themes that arise in addressing the questions guiding the research. It considers the implications of the research findings for current literacy education policy and practices, pointing to new alternative discourses and social practices that hold promise for embracing diverse forms of mothering and literacy practices within institutional and social settings.

CHAPTER II: RESEARCHING LITERACY AND MOTHERING AS DISCOURSE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

A text is always produced in social settings where
a great deal more than language is present.

Gee, Michaels & O'Connor, 1992.

This chapter describes the research methods and conceptual framework adopted in this study. I begin by describing the core tenets of critical discourse analysis and the influence of Foucault's theories of discourse upon this study. I then consider the contributions of post-structural feminist theory and new literacy studies to critical discourse analysis in general, and to the analysis of literacy advice to mothers in particular. Third, I describe my own social location as a researcher and its impacts on the data analysis and interpretation. This situatedness also informs a conceptual link that I propose between the study of literacy and the study of mothering as socially-situated practices. Finally, I bring these diverse components of the research together by describing the concepts and analytic tools adopted in this study, and the steps I followed in carrying it out.

Critical discourse analysis

Discourse is commonly understood as language-in-use and reflective of social relations beyond the unit of a sentence or phrase. Texts constitute the data for discourse analysis and are seen as artifacts of particular patterns of language-in-use, whether oral, written, or signed (Gee et al., 1992). What makes discourse analysis "critical" is the illumination of the ways in which unequal power relations are produced and naturalized in discourse (Lemke, 1995). A critical approach to discourse analysis explores texts not

as truths but as discourses that act in the world in ways that both define and distribute power. Such approaches are concerned not just with what texts say but also with what texts do. Drawing attention to texts as discourses is thus one way of problematizing and perhaps re-configuring truths about mothering and literacy that have the effect of marginalizing some literacy and mothering practices and privileging others.

In the contemporary state of critical discourse analysis, theory, and method, researchers need to make their own way in their analytical decision-making (Lemke, 1995; Mills, 1997). There is no common approach to discourse analysis. Like many forms of qualitative research, it is interpretive, and the quality of the research may be judged on the explicitness of the approach adopted and on the strengths of its arguments rather than on a set of pre-determined criteria. Foucault referred to the conceptual tools he developed as a tool box and invited scholars to use those tools in ways that were most useful for providing insights into power/knowledge connections (Foucault, 1978, cited in Mills, 2003). However, as Mills (2003) argues, Foucault's work cannot "simply be used in any particular way" (p. 7). The stances that discourse analysts take as they interview texts must necessarily be adapted to a variety of concerns, including the topic adopted, the social locations from which they analyse texts, and the aims of the research. The necessity to be reflexive and innovative in the use of tools does not preclude the need in discourse analysis for consistent, systematic, and explicit analytic strategies (van Dijk, 1985). The remainder of this chapter describes how such strategies were applied in this research.

A history of the present: Genealogical approaches to analyzing literacy advice discourses

Although Foucault did not articulate a method for his approach to discourse analysis, he did outline the main strategies and concepts associated with a genealogical approach to it (Foucault, 1972; 1978; 1984). Like other forms of critical discourse analysis, a genealogy seeks to reveal the ways in which power circulates in discourses. However, in its concern for discursive continuity and discontinuity, a genealogy is also a historical method, pursuing a history of the present. In his most well known genealogical works[4], Foucault concentrated his efforts on showing how ideas and practices become "regimes of truth." He detailed as well the strategies that were used to keep these truth regimes in place over time. Foucault was particularly interested in discursive discontinuities — the ruptures and breaks in dominant discourses that reveal them as social constructions. Other critical discourse analysts have seized upon this notion of discontinuity and developed strategies such as multi-vocality to understand how discourses change as well as how they stay in place (Fairclough, 1995; Mills, 2003). Multi-vocality entails analyzing texts with attention to the different "voices" that have contributed to the meaning of the text — not just what the text says and what the author who wrote it means but the ideas and practices the text aims to support and to counter. It is this attention to the processes of discursive change that links to a broader interest among many proponents of critical discourse analysis and to its potential for contributing to positive social change. In this sense, critical discourse analysis is political work. Indeed, Foucault believed that analysis of texts as discourses offers "keys to the relations

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[4] See for example, Foucault, M. (1989) *A history of sexuality*. London: Random House

of power, domination and conflict within which discourses emerge and function, and hence provide material for an analysis of discourse which may be both tactical and political and therefore strategic" (Foucault, 1980, p. 134).

A genealogical approach to critical discourse analysis begins with a concept or issue of contemporary concern and traces it back through its various constructions over time. As Gale (2001) explained, a genealogy is concerned with understanding how a particular concept or belief comes to be perceived as a truth or a problem in the first place (p. 385). Carabine (2001) went further in outlining the specific concerns of genealogy: "[The method] describes the procedures, practices, apparatuses and institutions involved in the production of discourses and knowledge, and their power effects" (Carabine, 2001, p. 276). As Cannella (1997) described it, genealogy is both "a perspective and a method in which knowledge is viewed as rooted in power relations" (p. 18). The focus of analysis in a genealogy is how power/knowledge link up to produce discourses, rather than providing an exhaustive account of the progress of history as a plan unfolding, or an account of what really happened. Similarly, the aim in this study is not to provide an exhaustive account of the historical construction of the mother-as-teacher-of literacy, but rather to generate more complex understandings of the discursive relationships between mothering and literacy that can inform and illuminate a critique of the class and gender inequalities embedded in contemporary literacy advice to mothers. The concepts that follow here have proven useful in achieving the aims of the study.

The discursive formation

As Lemke (1995) pointed out, an essential feature of critical discourse analysis is a concern for connecting local events and processes to broader social relations. In

Foucault's work, the discursive formation provides this conceptual link. For Foucault, a discourse or discourse formation could be recognized by the regularity among seemingly unconnected groups of statements and the rules that govern this regularity. As he explained:

> [W]henever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformation), we will say ... that we are dealing with a discursive formation.... The conditions to which the elements of this division are subjected we shall call the rules of formation. (Foucault, 1972, p. 38)

Taking into consideration the ways in which Foucault's ideas about discourse shifted throughout his life, Mills (1997) summarized Foucault's concept of discourse as a "set of sanctioned statements that have institutional force — a profound influence on how individuals act and think" (Mills, 1997, p. 62). Thus, a discourse formation connects the text to the social by connecting statements to broader world views as well as to other statements within and across texts, time, and place. For example, the regularity of the statement "[m]others are their children's first and most important educators," found across a broad range of texts, indicates a discursive formation. How this discourse relates to other statements, and indeed other mothering discourses (Griffith & Smith, 1993; 2005), and its continuities and discontinuities within and across texts, is a key area of inquiry in this study.

Discursive strategies

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault identified a set of strategies by which a discourse "constitutes its object" (Foucault, 1972, p. 39). These strategies normalize certain subjectivities and exclude others. Strategies of normalization and exclusion may be recognized as comparing, ranking, classifying, hierarchizing, and dividing (Foucault, 1977). I attend to these strategies in the research questions with a particular focus on the ways in which discourse strategies normalize middle-class mothering and literacy practices by excluding identities and subjectivities that fall outside this norm. In this analysis, I am influenced by the work of Gleason (1999) who documented the normalizing strategies of psychology in Canadian family life, and by Cannella (1997), who adopted Foucault's genealogical approach to "problematize the notion of 'childhood' as a pre-determined human condition, and to examine how our constructions of the 'child' serve to limit and devalue the multiple ways in which we may learn to know children" (p. 24). Implicit in the attention to discourse strategies is a concern for their effects upon how we come to know our world and act within it.

Discursive effects

The goal of the Foucauldian approach to critical discourse analysis undertaken in this study was to understand the discursive strategies that make statements such as "parents are their children's first and most important educators" true, and to situate these statements within a broader social and historical context. It is thus important to consider who attains power through discourses associated with literacy advice and the implications of this power for the reproduction of gender inequality as well as inequality of educational opportunities for children, particularly with respect to literacy attainment. It

is in the effects of discourse where power and knowledge come together that the critical element to the approach becomes most visible. Attending to the power effects of discourse involves asking: Who benefits from this discourse? Who is left out and what is forgotten? What are the effects of this? Foucault, as cited in Mills (1997), argued that discourses are not just instruments of power, but may also be effects of power.

> Discourse is not only an instrument of regulation but a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and reproduces power, it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault, 1978, cited in Mills, 1997)

It is in undertaking an analysis of the discourses of the strategies and effects of literacy advice that some of the work of thwarting these discourses is achieved. The main site of this work, however, is in the ways in which women, men, mothers and fathers, children, and educators mediate and resist these discourses. This is a core concern for post structural feminists who build on Foucault's concepts of discourse and his problematization of the subject to illuminate the connections between gender, patriarchy, and inequality.

Analytic lenses

Post-structural feminism

In his many historical investigations, Foucault did not foreground or directly problematize gender relations or women's experiences. Nevertheless, his approaches to discourse have opened up areas for feminists to disturb the construct of the "essential"

woman and theorize subjectivities in ways that reveal gender as a social construct. For example, as Fox (1996) argued, social constructivism has emerged as a dominant approach to the study of motherhood. This approach, in many ways influenced by Foucault's concepts of discursive structures and power/knowledge, assumes that images of the good mother are not true but rather social constructions that are shaped by patriarchal relations of power that naturalize these images across a variety of settings. However, many feminist scholars, while recognizing the benefits of post-structural approaches to their work, argue that the focus on relations of power in texts/discourse obscures the material realities of women's lives, and, ironically, can be overly deterministic. As Mariana Valverde (1991) observed, "Acknowledging the usefulness of discourse analysis and other literary forms of analysis for probing social, political, and historical processes does not require us to conclude that social and economic relations are created ex nihilo words" (p. 35). Comacchio (2000) captured this critique from the perspective of historians of the family:

> There is a certain hint of determinism in over-focusing on what is constructed, perhaps taking away from the creativity of the subjects and that all-important agency to which social historians are committed. We would all do well to keep using these valuable tools of historical analysis — only not as one big Foucauldian hammer, applied as though everything were intrinsically meant to be hammered. (p. 218)

Smith (1999), while building upon Foucault's concepts of discourse, similarly criticized his work for displacing the female subject as "passively cowed by texts" (p. 84), rather than as a knower and actor, actively engaged in mediating discourses. In their

latest work, which explores in detail the relationships between mothering and schooling, Griffith and Smith (2005) explained:

> We use the term discourse somewhat as Foucault does, though the notion of discourse that we work with here shifts from discourse conceived simply as forms of signification or meaning to emphasize discourse as the local practices of translocally organized social relations ... people participating actively and embodied in a conversation mediated by written and printed materials. (2005, p. 34)

Along these lines, the event that opens this thesis, in which I attempt to turn an innocuous game with my daughter into a pedagogic activity, is what Griffith and Smith (2005) would name as a moment in the practice of the discourse of mothering. A key aspect of this moment, and one that is obscured in discourse analysis, is the agency of my daughter, Maya, who chooses to opt out of the game, and my own agency in choosing to explore the meaning of the moment. And so while we may not "cower" to mothering discourses, they do shape our relationship as mother and daughter, and indeed our respective identities as a mother orienting her daughter toward school literacy, and as a daughter wanting to make her own choices about how we spend our time together.

Thus, a common concern surrounding Foucault's work within feminist theory is that the over-extension of social constructivist approaches has led to greater attention to the representations of motherhood than to the lived experiences of mothering, and the ways in which mothering discourses are negotiated in everyday life by women, men and children. One response to this problem can be found in what O'Reilly (2003) identifies as a distinction between the institution of *motherhood* and the experiences of *mothering*. As

noted earlier, this distinction was introduced by Adrienne Rich in her ground-breaking treatise *Of Woman Born* (1976). For Rich, the experience of mothering refers to the multiple subjectivities associated with mothering. The institution of motherhood is characterized by dominant discourses and social practices of how "normal" mothers and families should feel and behave and is accompanied by social policies that assume and reproduce these discourses.

Motherhood as *experience* and motherhood as *institution* are not mutually exclusive; each shapes and reinforces the other in the context of daily life. This distinction attends to the ways in which discourses are constituted, as well as constitute, social relations, and offers a useful heuristic device to scholars of advice to mothers such as Arnup (1996) to "examine and perhaps criticize particular aspects of the institution of motherhood without devaluing the joy that the experience of motherhood brings to many women" (Arnup, 1996, p. 5).

Mothering and literacy as socially-situated practices

The concept of situated practices, briefly introduced in the introductory chapter, offers another response to the risk of privileging institutional representations of motherhood in discourse analysis. As described earlier, the view of literacy as socially situated practice draws on the understanding of this concept as put forward by Barton, Hamilton and Ivanik (2000). They argued:

> Practices are shaped by social rules which regulate the use and distribution of texts, prescribing who may produce and have access to them. They straddle the distinction between the social and individual worlds, and literacy practices are more usefully understood as existing in the relations

> between people, within groups, and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals (p. 8)

It is from this attention to interplay between institutional and local uses of literacy that the concept of habitus comes into play as shaping the social rules surrounding whose literacy practices are considered more valuable. Habitus, a "way of being" that encompasses people's belief systems and ways of thinking about the world, is also expressed in the ways people use literacy in their everyday lives. Discourses may indeed shape the forms of habitus that are privileged, yet habitus can also be a force of resistance against dominant discourses and indeed a lens for highlighting the local "everyday-ness" of literacy and indeed, of mothering. This is particularly true if a definition of habitus includes Stuart Wells' (1997) notion that habitus can be shaped and formed (or transformed) in the context of social relationships. The following description by Farrell, Luke, Shore and Waring (1995), illustrated the perspective of literacy as socially-situated practice, and alluded to habitus in their reference to issues of identity, power, and access. One may substitute references to mothering for references to literacy to achieve a similar understanding of mothering as a set of socially-situated practices:

> Literacies, and literacy education, are by definition always local and always particular, always working in concert with issues of identity, power and access in particular institutions, communities and culture....It is in these local sites that particular literacy practices come to 'count' and 'matter', taking on value and power in local fields of exchange. (Farrell, Luke, Shore & Waring, 1995, p. 1)

The idea that some literacies "count" or are valued more than others is key to the concept of literacy as socially-situated practices rather than a universal skill. Similarly, mothering can be seen as a situated practice, rooted in the habitus of mothering that shapes "what counts" as good mothering and the forms of mothering that are possible and appropriate in diverse social and cultural contexts. In this way, mothering practices, like literacy practices, are connected to issues of "identity, power and access to particular institutions, communities and cultures" (Farrell, Luke, Shore & Waring, p. 1)

The goal in connecting literacy and mothering as socially-situated practices is not to support a view that mothering is naturally linked to literacy, or literacy to mothering, but to recognize that discourses of literacy advice implicitly make this link. The work of the good mother is implicit in the production of an ideal literate child. Bringing together a view of literacy and mothering as inter-connected socially situated practices allows for an analysis that retains the focus on institutional discourses of literacy advice to mothers, while avoiding essentializing all women as universally affected by, oppressed, or "cowed" by these discourses. As Hill Collins (1994) argued, representing mothers either as "good," "bad," "oppressed," or more or less oppressed than other mothers, will not serve the important research interests of women:

> Theorizing about motherhood will not be helped by supplanting one group's theory for another; for example by claiming that women of colour's experiences are more valid than those of white, middle class women. Varying placement in systems of privilege, whether race, class, sexuality, or age, generates divergent experiences with motherhood;

> therefore, examination of motherhood and mother-as-subject from multiple perspectives should uncover rich textures of difference. (p. 62)

In recognizing the "rich textures of difference" among mothering and literacy experiences, a socially-situated perspective makes space in the analysis of literacy advice discourses for the pleasure many women derive from reading to their children and supporting their literacy, while attending to the power effects of literacy advice discourses in reproducing gender and educational inequalities. This recognition of difference also allows, from a Foucauldian perspective, for a view of literacy advice as not only an oppressive form of power, but a productive one as well. Mothers may benefit from literacy advice, albeit in different ways, at different times, depending upon their diverse social locations. Indeed, as Mills (1997) pointed out, "problem pages" in advice magazines suggest that women take part in, and negotiate, mothering discourses, and part of negotiating a mothering discourse is finding a place for ourselves within the "reading community" (Mills, 1997, p. 92) of a particular magazine, book, website, or parent discussion group. I now turn to the analytic tools employed in this study to attend to the implications of a socially-situated perspective of mothering and literacy.

Analytic tools

The analytic tools described below can be seen as bridges between theory and practice, where the work of mediating the false dichotomy between institution and experience, and text and reality takes place.

Intertextuality

As Griffith and Smith (2005) pointed out, discourses are not just statements; they are the products of relationships and interchanges among researchers, public institutions, popular media, and texts of popular culture. Inter-textuality refers to the relationships among texts. Kristeva introduced the term "inter-textuality" in 1984 to popularize in Europe the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. A basic tenet of this concept is that no text is unique. It is a product of, and refers to (intentionally or not), other texts, and these references, these inter-relationships among texts, govern their meaning in that "any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 35). Bakhtin (1981) raised this principle in his concept of dialogism when he pointed out that when we talk or write we use language and phrases that have been used before in different contexts; these utterances are never entirely our own. Foucault's concept of discourse, as Lemke (1995) argued, may be interpreted as a "general theory of inter-textuality for the purposes of history" (p. 29) in that Foucault's concept of discourse formation is grounded in evidence of regularity of statements across seemingly unrelated texts.

In this study, attending to the inter-textual relationships between child and family literacy research, policy desires, public institutions, and the targeted audiences for literacy advice provided insights into the political economy of this advice. The paths along which literacy research becomes literacy advice was thus an important consideration in this thesis, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s when a vast increase in literacy advice texts available to mothers in print and in images was paralleled by an uniformity in their recommendations. Another aspect of inter-textuality is the relationship among those who produce, distribute, and consume texts. One comes to an understanding

of texts as discursive formations, and to an understanding of how these discourses change (Fairclough, 2001), by attending to the diverse locations of the voices within these inter-textual "conversations."

Multi-vocality

According to Phillips and Jorgenson (2002), "the strategy of multi-vocality consists of the delineation of different voices or discursive logics within a text" (p. 151). The strategy of multi-vocality brings out for analysis the links between inter-textual conversations and discourse formations, but also, importantly, changes in discourse formations.

A multi-vocal strategy asks of texts: Who are the different voices in the text? What characterizes these voices? What meanings do these voices bring to the text? How do these voices and silences shape the discourse? This strategy is particularly fitting in the analysis of parenting advice texts. As Mills (1997) pointed out, because advice texts for parents are meant to advocate particular practices, we can assume they are, at least in part, written in response to a perception or a reality that parents do not conform to these practices. These parents constitute a "voice" that shapes literacy advice discourses, even when they do not dominate it. For example, a common statement of literacy advice is "[i]t is important to make quality time to read to your children everyday. It only takes fifteen minutes of your time for an impact that will last a life time" (Trelease, 1982, p. 34). Parents who do not or cannot make time to read to their kids shape advice that emphasizes "how little time it takes," thus introducing a discursive conflict in the ideal that home storybook reading is a natural part of everyday life, embedded in domestic routines.

This attention to "official" but also implicit voices within and between texts, and their clashes and contradictions, is central to understanding the ways in which discourses construct ideal mothers and ideal literacy practices but also how discourses are mediated and changed through everyday mothering and literacy practices. However, in practice, analysing texts from a multi-vocal perspective proved much easier when I was working with contemporary advice texts and could draw on my experience of the daily tensions and practices surrounding mothering and literacy in playgrounds, daycares, schools, newspapers, and various other social and political dialogues. Without this contextual knowledge, it was much more difficult to attend to mothers as embodied subjects and to the inter-textual relationships in advice texts of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. To compensate for this it was necessary, as Foucault observed (1977, 1984), to read deeply and broadly across a range of texts to appreciate the place of advice in the lives of mothers who were the intended audience, and of those who were not. While other forms of knowledge such as empathy and sympathy also shaped this analysis, my interpretations were nevertheless limited to the analysis of the texts that I did include and to the forms of knowledge that textual analyses can contribute. Indeed, as Mechling (1975) reminded historians, advice texts say much more about the literacy ideals of the society that produced advice texts than of the literacy practices of the women, men, and children who were the explicit and implicit audiences for these texts. This point is elaborated later in this chapter.

Comparison

For this study, texts were selected according to the criteria outlined below and were compared on the basis of the following questions: What are the differences and

similarities across these texts? What are the consequences of this? Which understanding of the world is taken for granted and which are not recognized? (Phillip & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 149). The comparisons were completed across and within texts created in a similar time period as well as over the decades covered in the study.

Substitution: from parent to mother

One tool for analyzing discourse from a feminist perspective in this thesis is to substitute the term "mother" for "parent", or "mother" for "father" and vice versa, where these terms appear in advice texts. This strategy was used by Woollett and Phoenix (1996) in their feminist analysis of child development textbooks in which they found that the interchangeable use of the terms "parent" and "mother" in many literacy research and advice texts, and the accompaniment of these texts with images of mothers reading to children, suggest that in spite of the use of the ubiquitous term "parent" these texts are indeed directed to mothers. This finding has important implications for analysis and interpretation in the present study. Sometimes the intended audience for literacy advice is located through the analysis of inter-textual features of advice pamphlets, promotional materials, child-raising manuals, and so on. The advice can ask "parents" to read to their children everyday, but the accompanying image is one of a mother and child reading a book together, suggesting the advice is directed to mothers. These images were not included in the text of this study even though they provided important clues to the intended audience for the text. But most often, the placement of a text in a magazine subscribed to mainly by women, or in child-raising texts directed to mothers, also provided evidence that the advice was directed to mothers.

However, a layer of analysis in this study did attend to the strategic use of the terms "mother", "father", and "parent" in every advice text, since a shift in use can indicate a broader discursive shift in literacy advice. For example, in the analysis of nineteenth-century texts in this study, it would seem that fathers in many cases were deemed important and active in the literacy of their children. However, by the 1950s, even though the generic term "parent" was used more frequently, the representation of the father as an important agent in children's literacy development all but disappeared, only to reappear in a very different context, and within a different set of discourse strategies, in the 1990s. The conclusions of Woollett and Phoenix (1996) seem important to keep in mind when substituting "mother" for "parent" or "father" in this analysis. They pointed out that, "the apparent gender blindness in the use of the word 'parent' appears to be disingenuous, as it serves to maintain traditional gendered divisions of labour between mothers and fathers" (1996, p. 82).

Social location and reading identities

One implication of a socially-situated perspective of literacy and mothering is to locate the researcher, and the researched, as "embodied" subjects. This can take place, as described earlier, through the method of multi-vocal analysis, attending to possible subject positions across gender, culture, and class. But it also refers to the ways in which my own situated experiences as a mother shaped my analysis and interpretation of literacy advice texts.

While the social location of the researcher is considered an important feature of and interpretive lens in qualitative research methodologies, this issue is somewhat overlooked in discourse analysis research (Rogers, Malanchuruvil-Berkes, Mosley, Huie

& O'Garra, 2005). There is a general feeling that because textual analysis does not involve "human subjects," the political relationship between researcher and researched falls away. However, while this relationship may be abstracted through the distance between and within texts, time, and space, it is nonetheless salient in shaping research interpretations — after all, it is a foundation of discourse analysis that texts are political, and the casting I make of the writers and readers of advice texts is no less so.

While writing this thesis, I gave birth to my second child and my oldest child started Kindergarten. My own stance as I analyzed advice texts was shaped not only by the research interests that emerged from my experiences with Maya that I describe in the introduction, but my own desires as a mother as I experience moments in the practice of the discourse of mothering. I want to do a good job, to raise happy, "successful" children who do well in school, who are well liked and secure, whose language develops normally, and whose "early brain" is duly stimulated. My stance as a reader of advice texts was shaped by this desire (as well as self-doubt and guilt as I dedicated considerable time to writing this thesis) as much as it was by skepticism and critique. These ambivalent feelings shaped my understanding of advice texts as constitutive as well as constituted by everyday mothering and literacy practices. In this way, I shared with Peyton Young (2000) the tension as my personal and academic lives merged (p. 332). While I engage throughout this thesis in a critique of mothering discourses that promote social inequality by normalizing and privileging "what counts" as good mothering and appropriate literacy practices, I also found myself participating in these same mothering discourses. I worried about my daughter's report card, compared with parents the learning experiences and the performance of other schools, moved my daughter to what I

though was a better school, even though it meant more parent participation and certainly more driving. I researched the best pre-schools and daycare in the city for my son and pay the extra fees so he can attend these. These practices promote educational inequality in a context in which education for children has become a market commodity. But like Peyton Young (2000) who found herself promoting masculinist discourses even as she encouraged boys to challenge them through critical literacy pedagogies, I too found myself caught in the contradictions between the intent of critical discourse analysis, which is to reveal and challenge social inequalities, and the "living" of discourses as socially situated mothering and literacy practices which are shaped as much by social context and my personal and family history as they are by texts. I return to the issues of social location in critical discourse analysis in Chapter Eight. Table 1 summarizes the key concepts and tools adopted in this study.

Table 1. Analytic Framework: Concepts of Discourse Analysis, Analytic Lenses and Analytic Tools

Concepts in Discourse Analysis	
Discursive formation	Patterns of regularity between objects, types of statements, concepts, or thematic choices. For example, "where one can find a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations)" Foucault, 1972, p. 38).
Discursive strategies	Discourses work to normalize certain subjectivities and exclude others. Strategies of normalization and exclusion may be recognized as comparing, ranking, hierarchizing and dividing (Foucault, 1995).
Discursive effects	This is where power/knowledge come together. The effects of discourse are concerned with who gains power through discourses and the implications of this for the reproduction of unequal relations of power. Attending to the power effects of discourse in this study involves asking who benefits from mothering discourses in literacy advice, who or what is left out or marginalized in literacy advice? What are the possible implications of this?
Analytic lenses	
Feminist post-structural theories of mothering	Mothering is seen as a socially constructed practice, shaped by the dominant patriarchal system of social organization. But women do not experience this system in the same way, there is no "universal" or "essential" subject that is Mother. This tension is captured, and can be productively analysed by distinguishing between the institution of motherhood, and the experience of mothering (Rich, 1976; Arnup, 1996; O'Reilly, 2003).
Mothering and literacy as socially situated practices	This links mothering and literacy as two related social practices. Mothers (as well a fathers, caregivers, and children) may be seen to mediate institutionalized ideals of "what counts" as good mothering, and "ideal' literacy from their local cultural and material contexts, including the "habitus" that shapes everyday mothering and literacy practices.

Table 1 (continued). Analytic Framework: Concepts of Discourse Analysis, Analytic Lenses and Analytic Tools

Analytic tools	
Inter-textuality	Inter-textuality refers to the relationships among texts. No text, including literacy advice texts, is unique. It is a product of, and refers to (intentionally or not), texts that it follows, precedes, and lies alongside of. The inter-textual relationships between research, policy and advice provide insights into strategies of exclusion and normalization in literacy advice.
Multivocality	A multi-vocal strategy asks of texts, who are the different voices in the text? What characterizes these voices? What meanings do these voices bring to the text? How do these voices and silences shape the discourse? Attending to these questions helps to provide insights into how discourses change, and to how advice is resisted.
Comparison	Comparisons in advice were made across and within texts created in a similar time period, as well as over the decades covered in the study. Questions guiding comparison were: What are the differences and similarities across these texts? What are the consequences of this? Which understanding of the world is taken for granted and which are not recognized? (Phillip & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 149).
Substitution	Emerging from a feminist perspective, the term *mother* was substituted for *parent* or *father* and vice versa, where these terms appear in advice texts. This strategy provided insights into silences about who does literacy work in the home, and changing gender roles over time.

A genealogical approach to literacy advice to mothers: steps in analysis

In carrying out this study, I followed the "Guide to doing Foucauldian genealogical discourse analysis" provided by Carabine (2001). I describe below the steps in this analysis and the ways in which they were adapted and carried out in the present study. As Carabine points out, a genealogical investigation is not a linear process. The processes of collecting; analysing, and interpreting data were bound tightly together in spurts of insight and months of ruminating over ideas. While I tried to select texts that were, or are, widely distributed it was often the obscure advice texts that signaled an important theme to explore, and thus a new path of inquiry. As was mentioned earlier, mothering two young children while writing this thesis informed the analysis in many ways. As the writer of this study who is "also a construct of discourse" (Griffith & Smith, 2005, p. 15), I had access to literacy advice of all kinds, solicited and otherwise, as my son was born and my daughter entered Kindergarten. I describe briefly below, and in more detail in the discussion of the study in Chapter Eight, the ways in which these subjectivities shaped my analysis.

Select your topic

As stated in the opening paragraph to this study in Chapter One, my topic arose from my lived experience as a mother, surprising myself as I acted upon literacy advice I had barely been conscious of reading or hearing. This event shaped the topic and the data sources that would inform it. While this thesis is primarily concerned with discourses that construct mothers as literacy teachers, the scope of the advice texts selected, and the themes under study within the texts, necessarily included those that contributed to the construction of the "mother-as-teacher" in broader terms. The reason for this broader

focus is both pragmatic and strategic. To reiterate, the vast majority of advice texts that refer to literacy are actually concerned primarily with children's reading, and as the thesis argues, supporting children's reading has become increasingly embedded in general child-raising practices associated with ideal mothering. For this reason, child-raising topics such as language development, women's organization of children's (and domestic) time and space for learning, and preparing for and supporting schooling were included in the analysis as texts that related to literacy. Indeed, it is a finding of this thesis that advice to mothers about literacy is rarely only about their children's reading and writing development. This advice is fundamentally about the regulation of mothering, and the normalization of the unreachable ideal of the "good mother."

This study emphasizes advice to Canadian mothers. However, due to the close linguistic, economic, and cultural ties Canada has had with the United States and Great Britain, the cross-border flow of texts, and the increasingly global nature of literacy advice and research in the 1980s and 1990s, "Canadian" advice is difficult to distinguish from advice from other Western, English speaking, industrialized countries. While for the most part the analysis relies upon commercially produced literacy advice, it also includes more obscure texts that were published outside the realm of formal public policy and published advice. As Foucault has argued, often these more obscure texts provide new or fresh insights into the origins and strategies of discourse (Mills, 2003).

Getting to know the data

I read and re-read literacy advice texts as I collected them, often searching out data that had inter-textual relationships to those already collected. I greatly under-estimated the time it would take, indeed the time that needs to be spent, to get to know

data in a way that makes it possible to identify themes and begin an analysis. Finding regularity across statements necessarily required a deep familiarity with the patterns of those statements across diverse texts. This required an immersion in the textual world of literacy advice, to the extent that I found myself analyzing the discourse of everyday artifacts: community centre children's programs, notices on a bulletin board for reading tutors, the notices my children brought home from school and daycare. In this way "knowing the data" became more than gaining familiarity with the general content of given texts; it was also a process of linking the data with my own life world, and wondering how much it was shaping my own mothering, and literacy, practices.

Identify themes

The process of identifying themes was embedded in the reading and re-reading of advice. Here the strategy of comparison proved useful. As more data were collected, it became easier to identify categories and "objects" of the discourse. These objects of discourse referred to how mothers and literacy were referred to in texts, how often they were referred to, and what concerns emerged in that context. In a pilot analysis of literacy advice to mothers published in the 1990s, I identified several themes. For example:

- That mothers are teachers of their children, in a pedagogic sense, was presented as common sense.
- Mothers' roles as "their child's first teacher" was not considered work, but rather rendered invisible by embedding literacy in "everyday routines" associated with women's work.
- Certain disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1995) were at work in literacy advice texts. For example, the regulation of domestic time and space, and of women and children's bodies in the performance of "ideal" reading practices in the home.

- Story book reading was privileged over other literacy practices.
- The "habitus" of the ideal Anglo-Saxon middle-class mother was privileged. These "ideal mothers" were connected to the "ideal children" they were to raise through the performance of ideal literacy practices, in particular story book reading.
- There was, however, complete invisibility of the different material conditions in which North American women do the work of mothering and in which children are raised.

These themes prompted another question: If I am able to discern patterns across a wide variety of seemingly unrelated literacy advice texts and policy statements, what common discursive formations and strategies do these texts share? Where does this advice come from? Attempting to answer these questions involved looking for evidence of inter-relationships among discourses, and shaped the decision to investigate literacy advice discourses from a historical perspective.

Look for evidence of inter-relationship among discourses

The above questions prompted an examination of the existing scholarship on child-raising advice and mothering (presented in Chapter Three) as well as an analysis of literacy advice to mothers in the Nineteenth Century (presented in Chapter Four). These investigations involved both inter-textual and intra-textual analyses as texts were compared to others across time, and within similar time periods, across different genres, and against statements within a single text. Through this analysis, the themes identified in the pilot study were organized into three main categories, identified as dominant discursive formations associated with literacy advice. These are: intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the "normal" family. The features of these discourses and

categories for analysis are defined in the context of the analysis of child-raising advice in Chapter Three.

Identify the discursive strategies that are deployed

This step refers to attending to how the discourses of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family are kept in place and circulated through literacy advice. Here, I looked for ways in which both mothering practices and literacy practices were compared, distinguished, and/or divided. This analysis provided insights into the forms of mothering and literacy that are normalized, and those that are excluded.

Look for absences and silences

The strategies of substitution described earlier proved useful in identifying issues, ideas, and social contexts that were unaccounted for in advice texts. I also looked for inherent contradictions in advice which often suggested silences.

Look for resistances and counter-discourses

The analytic strategy of multi-vocality was useful in identifying resistance and counter-discourses in advice. For example, much literacy advice from the 1950s onward encouraged families to spurn TV, movies and other pursuits deemed to interfere with literacy, to make more time for the more culturally desirable practice of family story reading. The persistence of discourses of literacy that emphasize family reading suggests that indeed this may not have been the central practice of the ideal family it was deemed to be. This also suggests the difficulty many mothers and families have in inhabiting these discourses, a point made by Flint (1993) in her history titled *The Woman Reader.* Flint showed that in the Nineteenth Century, women's reading was considered dangerous,

as it disrupted the discourses of morality and femininity that idealized the compliant wife and mother who had no need for learning beyond fulfilling the needs of her family. And yet the large volume of advice warning against the dangers of women's reading suggests that the practice was in fact widespread and desirable to women. Women not only negotiated a place for themselves within the dominant discourses of femininity, but also actively resisted these discourses in choosing to be readers and writers. Thus, attending to the practices that advice texts attempt to counter, as well as what they explicitly encourage, provides insights to the ways in which mothers, fathers, and children negotiate "ideal" literacy and "ideal" mothering.

Another strategy to attend to the ways in which discourses are resisted or countered, was to include in the analysis texts outside of the mainstream of popular culture or commercial publishing. Writing by women in community writing programs, discussion groups on the Internet, and "moments in the practice of mothering discourses" that took place during the period of data collection, are included in the analysis because they often suggest the less visible but important ways that women resist and counter literacy advice discourses.

Identify the effects of discourse

As suggested earlier, this step refers to analyzing the implications of discourses in terms of how power and knowledge are valued and circulated: What are the effects of literacy advice discourses for "what counts" as literacy and "good" mothering? Who benefits and who is excluded? Here, discourses are viewed as instruments of power, but also effects of power, capable of shifting and challenging relationships of power. This attention to discursive effects led me to consider the ways in which literacy advice

discourses shape, and are shaped by, social and educational policy, literacy research, and the design of family literacy programs. These are considered in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Situating the analysis in the broader discursive context

As Phillips and Jorgenson (2002) put it, the study of discourse is "three dimensional" in the sense that it "connects texts to discourses, locating them in a historical and social context, by which we refer to particular actors, relationships and practices that characterize the situation under study" (p. 70). Situating discourse analysis within a broader oeuvre, or terrain, is a central component of a Foucauldian approach. Questions guiding such analysis include the following: What are the power/knowledge networks of the period in question? What were important or "trendy" concerns in social and educational policy and in popular culture? How did this shape the content of literacy advice texts? I provide a description of the context in which advice texts and policy documents were produced in the opening of each chapter. As I discuss in Chapter Eight, it is challenging to describe a context unless one is actually living it, and even then, such a description can only be partial. There are limitations in the information that is available, and that I selected to include, and this shaped my description of the discursive context in a given time and place. I attempted to mitigate this problem by drawing not only upon primary sources to contextualize literacy advice discourses, but also to triangulate these with scholarly secondary sources.

Be aware of the limitations of the research, your data, and sources

The data used in this study represent but one small window into a diverse and complex set of practices and experiences. As mentioned earlier, Mechling (1995)

highlighted the need for skepticism in what the data arising from analyses of child-raising advice texts can reveal about mothering practices. He argued that there is evidence of large discrepancies between mothering practices and the advice they receive (p. 44), and indeed "no persuasive evidence to suggest that official advice affects the parents' actual behaviour" (p. 45). Advice to parents says much more about the people and institutions that generated advice than about the people who may read it. While this creates difficulties for historians wishing to reconstruct parenting practices of the past through child-raising advice texts, it does not impede an investigation of child-raising advice as discourses of dominance that shape "what counts" as literacy and mothering in particular historical and social contexts, or in light of the discussion of multi-vocality, how advice texts may reflect trends in mothering, if only in their attempts to counter them.

In other areas of this study, skepticism over the explanatory potential of the data precipitated the pursuit of the question that kept coming up as I began to appreciate the regularity and uniformity of literacy advice in contemporary texts: where does this advice come from? While this study is able to answer this question in new ways, based upon new sources of evidence, these answers remain partial and tentative in the face of the non-discursive breadth of mothering experience that could not form part of the data.

Conclusion

This study is not concerned with the development of the "mother as teacher of literacy" as a teleological process, unfolding over time, but in the interplay of knowledge, relations of power, and social contexts that shape literacy advice discourses and the strategies and effects associated with them. I have tried to use conceptual and analytic tools lightly, as footprints tracking the discursive strategies and effects of literacy advice

to mothers, rather than as heavy boots "stamping" arguments into place. In this way, this approach to genealogical analysis attempts to shape an argument and at the same time allow literacy advice to speak directly to their readers and for readers to bring to these texts their own subjectivities and interpretations to the data. Chapter Three consists of an analysis of feminist research on mothering, schooling, and child-raising, and of literacy research related to women and families; attends to the connections and tensions between these bodies of research; and concludes by identifying discursive formations and strategies that suggest a promising framework for the analysis of literacy advice in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER III: THROUGH A LITERACY LENS: FEMINIST AND CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MOTHERING AND LITERACY

This chapter analyses feminist research on child-raising advice, mothering, and the relationships between mothering and schooling through a "literacy lens." The aim in this analysis is to look for insights into the discursive strategies linking mothering to teaching and how these insights may inform an analysis of literacy advice in particular. The chapter begins with an analysis of socio-historical and feminist studies of child-raising advice texts. It moves to consider the growing scholarship by feminist sociologists and psychologists on the relationships between mothering and children's schooling in light of social theories of literacy, which focus on the social construction of mothers and of literacy, within family literacy and early literacy programming and policies. The chapter concludes with a summary of the major discursive categories generated through this analysis and their implication for the analysis of literacy advice in the remainder of the study.

Child-raising advice to mothers: insights into mothering discourses

Arnup (1996) asserted that in contrast to common assumptions that changes in mothering advice are linked to scientific progress and new research findings, advice to mothers and motherhood itself is "a socially constructed and changing phenomenon" (p. 10). In constructing her argument, Arnup pointed out that early twentieth-century advice to mothers to toilet train infants from as early as a few months old reflected the primacy of moral and physical discipline and hygiene in vogue at the time, rather than the physical or intellectual readiness of infants to begin toilet training. Similarly, the discouragement of breastfeeding in

North America during the post war era can be linked to a common faith in technological and synthetic approaches to human endeavors. That breastfeeding is currently regarded as essential to normal child development and mother-child bonding is but one example of the changing nature of advice to women. Bringing similar attention to the continuities, but also discontinuities, in literacy advice to mothers promises similar insights in the social construction of literacy advice. To understand the place of child-raising advice in women's mothering work during the inter-war and post-war years in Canada, Arnup asked, "Why do women turn to experts for advice on prenatal and infant childcare?" (1996, p. 14). She found that contrary to the dominant image of the "natural," maternal figure, many women in post war industrialized societies simply had not spent a lot of time around young babies and children. As one mother said, "I was so dumb when it came to children" (Arnup, 1996, p. 124).

Arnup noted that ideas about appropriate mothering and childcare changed dramatically in the post-war years and many women doubted their own abilities to meet new and changing standards. Arnup also found that rapid urbanization contributed to the rise of the "child rearing expert." Many women no longer consulted their own mothers, as they may have in the past, either because they did not live close to them or because expectations and standards for child-raising had changed so fundamentally from one generation to the next that their mothers' insights could no longer be trusted. In fact, seeking out "folk wisdom" was actively frowned upon by medical and child development experts. "Do not try out fancy theories learned over the back fence" (Arnup, 1996, p. 126), warned the Department of National Health and Welfare of Canada in 1949.

Moreover, as Arnup poignantly observed, women sought out advice and professional services to break the isolation and loneliness they experienced raising young children in the "private domain" of the domestic sphere.

Arnup's explanations for the reasons why many mothers sought out child-raising advice (and why some resisted this advice) lend new insights into the reasons often cited for parents' reported preference to participate in family literacy programs designed to meet the literacy needs of children and parents simultaneously. Family literacy researchers and promoters often portray interest in family literacy programming as a result of mothers' natural desires to help their kids, and "give them the best they can." While these are certainly likely motivations, additional motives may relate to the fact that just as standards for child-raising have changed, so too have the standards for children's literacy knowledge in the years before and during school. In the face of extensive and sometimes contradictory advice from experts, it is not surprising that parents perceive themselves as lacking. Moreover, family literacy programs also provide opportunities for social connection and social support for parenting, something very appealing to break the isolation of raising children alone in the home.

The rise of psychology as a field of study and practice in the Twentieth Century has also contributed to parents' self-doubt, as it created and maintained standards and categories for children's development against which children and mothers would be judged as "normal" or deviant. Gleason (1999) analysed psychology's influences on Canadian families since the Second World War. She suggested that psychology's preoccupation with the development of "normal" personalities in children can be traced to wider political and economic concerns of the 1950s:

> Threats to the solidarity of the family were said to be everywhere: mothers' paid employment, marriage breakdown, divorce, and juvenile delinquency. Concern about these threats, whether based on perception or scientific fact, in turn fuelled a more general anxiety over the threat of Russian communism and atomic annihilation at the height of the Cold War. (Gleason, 1999, p. 7)

Gleason's study, and other feminist histories of the family (see for example, Comacchio, 1993; 1999), contributed deeper appreciation for the diversity of family life and mothering experiences in Canadian history by attending to families, and individuals within families, as embodied subjects. This entailed attention to discursive strategies and multi-vocality, asking of psychological and medical texts: What versions of family life are normalized? How is this normalization accomplished? Who is included/excluded from these definitions of "normal"? What is the effect of this discourse on families' lived experience and what evidence is there for the ways that readers negotiate/resist these texts? Interrogating texts in this way allowed for the examination of multiple subjectivities embedded in the unitary construct of "the family". This multi-vocal approach to the analysis of psychological discourses in Gleason's study makes it possible to talk not just about "family" in a generic (and often hegemonic) sense, but to consider the diverse experiences of many kinds of families, and the often conflicting relationships and experiences among individuals in them. For example, Gleason shows that female-headed Mennonite families, African-Canadian families and First Nations families were constructed by psychology as "outside the norm" of the traditional Canadian family because patriarchal structures in the form of "the head of the household" were not

present, or because women worked outside the home, shared parenting, and so on. In this way, discourses of the normal family could be located in the broader discursive contexts of patriarchy and neo-colonialism that had the effect of legitimizing state intervention in, and regulation of, "abnormal" families, as well as the monitoring of families that were deemed "normal."

Gleason (1999) also argued that one of the discursive effects of psychology is the regulation of mothering. She drew on Foucault's concept of "technologies of the self" to show that such regulation was not only effected through external social controls and state interventions, but also through the ways in which mothers regulated their own practices as they mediated discourses of "normalcy." Here Gleason (1999) pointed out that, "regulation is not a form of complete social control, but rather like a net; while it may shape experience, it does not exercise total control" (p. 8). This echoes Smith's view that women are not "passively cowed by texts." Although mothering discourses may "organize" women's relationships to schools, they do not determine them.

While Gleason was concerned with psychology's normalization of the "ideal" Canadian mother and family in the post-war era, Comacchio (1993) focused on the role of the medical profession in early twentieth-century Canada in supplanting the informal support networks and strategies women used to find and share the information they needed to help them to safely birth and raise their children. Comacchio similarly drew on Foucauldian concepts of discourse to document the role of the medical profession in the Canadian governments' efforts to modernize motherhood, a process she described as the campaign for "scientific motherhood." Comacchio was particularly interested in the role of maternal education in this process. Her sources included policy documents,

correspondence, magazine articles, and scholarly work at the time. She found that one of the key strategies of the campaign for a more scientific approach to motherhood was to construct mothers as para-professionals, assistants to medical doctors in ensuring the healthy development of the nation's children. Comacchio cited an article in *MacLean*'s magazine in 1920 describing this strategy: "The professional mother of the advanced type stands to the physician in a relation akin to that of a nurse, not asserting personal opinions opposed to his more extensive knowledge, but trained so thoroughly that she can work in harmony with him" (Comstock in Comacchio, 1993, p. 93). This required a concerted effort to educate mothers, though there was a distinction drawn between the educational needs of middle-class and working-class mothers. Comacchio found:

> Physicians charged that ignorance was endemic among Canadian mothers, and that working class mothers and those of immigrant origin were especially ignorant. They were determined that these 'poor unfortunates' be uplifted from the mire of ignorance and outmoded custom that they saw as the root of familial and societal disarray. But as a necessary corollary to their efforts for working class mothers, child welfare campaigners had to persuade middle class mothers to take a greater interest in "cultivating" their own children in order to preserve and bolster "better stock". (1993, p. 13)

It is worthwhile, in this study of literacy advice, to attend to the parallels that may exist between the ideal para-professional relationship between mothers and their children's doctors, and the para-professional ideal of mothers as "teachers in the home" that is articulated in family literacy and school parental involvement policies. In her

influential book the *Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, Hays (1996) used the term "intensive mothering" to describe a form of mothering that has developed in the West over the past two centuries as the normal and natural way to mother. She defined "intensive mothering" as the ideology that holds that "proper" or "correct" mothering requires "not only large quantities of money but also professional-level skills and copious amounts of physical, moral, mental and emotional energy on the part of the individual mother" (Hays, 1996, p. 4). Hays argued that this dominant form of mothering is socially constructed. She cited Margaret Mead, who asserted that there is no support for the theory of "a natural connection between conditions of human gestation and delivery and appropriate cultural practices. ...[T]he establishment of permanent nurturing ties between a woman and the child she bears...is dependent upon cultural patterning" (Mead, 1962, cited in Hays, 1996, p. 20). Hays focused her analysis of child-raising advice on texts directed to middle-class mothers, arguing that it is these ideals that often shape and direct the educational interventions designed for low income mothers. She found that across the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,

> [F]urther pieces were added to what has become a fully elaborated vision of intensive mothering...more and more mothers adopt ever greater portions of this model. The history of ideals about child rearing in the United States is not, as some would have it, a series of "pendulum swings" but rather a story of the increasing intensification of child rearing. (Hays, 1996, p. 22)

Hays believed that the ideology of intensive mothering is intimately related to the cultural contradiction that characterizes motherhood in the late Twentieth and early

Twenty-first Centuries. She argued that the logic of late capitalist economic systems that value women's availability to the public sphere of the work force conflicts with the situated, diverse, and time-dependent nature of mothering associated with the "private" sphere of the home. Mothers are increasingly pulled between the conflicting demands of these two spheres, even as the norm for "what counts" as appropriate mothering has become increasingly intense. Andrea O'Reilly drew on the distinction between the "institution" of intensive motherhood and the everyday work of mothering in this way:

> The discourse of intensive mothering becomes oppressive not because children have needs, but because we, as a culture, dictate that only the biological mother is capable of fulfilling them, that the children's needs must always come before those of the mother, and that children's needs must be responded to around the clock with extensive time, money energy…I believe it is these dictates that make motherhood oppressive to women, not the work of mothering per se. (O'Reilly, 2004, p. 2)

Taken together, these studies suggest that mothering, and advice to mothers, is socially and culturally constituted. While advice may at times offer comfort, support, and solace to mothers looking for affirmation, it is also predicated on the belief, shared perhaps by mothers themselves, that mothers can never be quite good enough. In light of Hays' compelling arguments, it seems important to consider in the present study the implications of the discourse of intensive mothering for literacy advice. This is perhaps best explored in the context of feminist scholarship on the relationships between mothering and literacy.

The feminization of literacy: mothering, schooling, and pedagogy

As outlined in the introduction, feminist scholars have noted the "feminization of education" and its implication for women's equality and children's learning. Recent scholarship considers women's relationships with educational institutions from a variety of angles, including the gendered biases in institutional discourses of mothering and schooling (David, 1998; Dehli, 1994; Standing, 1999), the deconstruction of mothering as pedagogic work (Polakow, 1993; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989), and ethnographic and historical accounts that complicate the ideal of a harmonious relationship between women's literacy practices and the educational outcomes of her children (Horsman, 1990; Luttrell, 1997; Rockhill, 1991). More recently, scholars have drawn attention to the gendered biases embedded in family literacy programming and policies (Mace, 1998; Hutchison, 2000; Pitt, 2000). These diverse perspectives on the links between mothering and literacy are considered in this final section of the chapter, for the insights this research brings to a discursive framework for analyzing literacy advice.

Mothers and schools

The dependence of universal public schooling upon women's domestic and pedagogic labour is well documented as a historical process with its roots in capitalism and industrialization. For example, Dehli (1994) argued that the "feminization of pedagogy" has its roots in the institutional relationships between schooling, mothering, state formation, and the emerging consumer market for children and middle-class families. In the early Twentieth Century in Canada, women were recruited as Kindergarten teachers because of their "essential capacities for mothering and particularly on their unlimited capacity for empathy and love" (p. 201). The discourses of

this Froebelian "pedagogy of love" and the naturalization of women, whether or not they were biological mothers, as best suited to provide this ideal form of pedagogy, spilled over into social welfare, public health, and the consumer market in ways that regulated, albeit using different strategies, the mothering of working-class and middle-class women. As Delhi (1994) described:

> Kindergartens comprised a discourse that was linked into state educational bureaucracies to middle-class social reformers and to voluntary women's organizations. At the same time, this discourse organized and articulated particular positions for women — primarily as maternal teacher of the very young, and attributed a range of meanings and characteristic to the category "woman" — loving, empathetic, patient, nurturing, self-sacrificing passive, virtuous and moral — all of which distinguished "her". (Delhi, 1994, p. 206)

The "pedagogy of love" made different pedagogic positions available to women, depending upon their social location as working-class or middle-class mothers, new immigrants, or mothers who worked outside of the home. For example, Dehli showed how the Kindergarten movement opened up new avenues for the moral regulation of working-class mothers in particular. The moral structuring of love and pedagogy as united in the "good" mother shaped not only Kindergarten ideals but the expectations for good mothering in "public institutions and private venues, through the schools, charitable and philanthropic organizations, and through the family" (Dehli, 1994, p. 202). Moreover, the dissemination of the ideals of the "pedagogy of love" through consumer

market products suggests the commodification of the ideal of the "good mother" as a theme to attend to in literacy advice.

It is through this history that contemporary relationships between mothers and schools can be understood. Griffith and Smith (1991; 2005) took this up in the context of their investigation into the "ruling relations" that govern schools' dependence upon mothering work. In their 1991 study, the authors interviewed mothers about their experiences interacting with their children's schools. Of interest in these interviews was not only their content — what the mothers reported as their experiences with schools — but the insights into the ways in which the "mothering discourse" (Griffith & Smith, 1991) governed the design of the interview questions and the interactions between the researchers and subjects during the interviews. According to the authors, the mothering discourse "sets up parameters for 'normal' child development and the parenting required to develop and maintain that normalcy. It is an organization of relations beyond the local settings of our interviews, ourselves as interviewers and the particular women we talked to" (p. 83). The authors thus interpreted the content of the interviews in the context of this mothering discourse:

> The invidious comparisons among mothers, our own recognition of ourselves as defective mothers (by virtue of our being sole-support mothers), the curious moral structuring for the child's behaviour in the school, unsupported by corresponding control, are moments in the practice of a discourse through which the educational roles of mothers has been and still is coordinated with that of the school. (Griffith & Smith, p. 86)

There are material implications for the coordination of mothering with the activities of the school. Griffith and Smith argued that "schools take for granted middle-class family knowledge, time and resources" (p. 93). This assumption has consequences for the academic success (or lack there-of) of non-mainstream children. For example, lone mothers working full-time face scheduling difficulties (and other class and cultural barriers) that make advocating on behalf of their children for better or alternative teachers and schooling options almost impossible, even when such activities are deemed an integral role and responsibility of mothers to ensure their children's academic success. This also leads to assumptions by many teachers and administrators about the interests and motivations of parents, and the support they provide their children.

Further reflections on their research led Smith (1993) to introduce the concept of SNAF (The Standard North American Family) as an ideological code that permeated the research described above, as well as other research on the family and education. Using the analogy of a genetic code, Smith argued that an ideological code "is a schema that replicates its organization in multiple and various sites" (1993, p. 51). SNAF, in its privileging of the model of the two-parent, heterosexual, nuclear family, is so embedded in Western cultural models, so normalized, that researchers do not notice the ways in which this code orders their research designs, shapes the interpretations they lend to their data, and the policy implications they draw. SNAF is in operation when we speak of "single mothers," "lone fathers" or "alternate families," and thus compare these families to a "norm" that rarely exists. According to Smith, SNAF,

> was and is actively fed by research and thinking produced by psychologists and specialists in child development and is popularly

> disseminated in women's magazines, television magazines and other popular media. An important aspect of SNAF is its influence in "managing" women's relations to their children's schooling and enlisting their work and thought in support of the public education system. (Smith, 1993, p. 54)

Smith's claims are supported by the work of Nakagawa (2000), who explored the discursive construction of the "involved parent" and analyzed the discourses of contractual agreements between parents and schools that came into vogue in the 1990s. She argued that a parental involvement discourse "creates particular representations of parents; these representations are intimately connected to larger ideological debates about public-school funding, school curriculum, and the rights of children" (p. 444). These debates revolve largely around the increasing obligations of families to schools, particularly in the context of diminishing educational resources. As Nakagawa argued, these obligations are shouldered mainly by mothers, whose own work and personal needs are placed in conflict with the ever-increasing needs of schools, and of the "ideal" child who is supported scholastically in the home.

Interest in the ways in which SNAF permeates public policy discourse led Standing (1999) to explore how mothering work in schools is experienced in women's everyday lives. Standing's research is a good example of how the "normal family" is one strand of a mothering discourse that can be brought to bear on contemporary policy analysis. She conducted open-ended interviews with 28 low income and lone mothers to deconstruct the gendered assumptions inherent in Great Britain's Blair Government initiatives surrounding parental involvement in British schools. According to Standing,

parental involvement, as it is defined by educational policy and the schools in that country,

> [I]nvolves a range of pedagogical tasks which articulate to the school…parental involvement means helping with homework, helping in the classroom as assistants, reading with your child, taking part in the activities and outings, and doing "extra-curricular" activities. It entails providing time, space and equipment (books, computers, etc.) for children to work at home, and supporting the school in various ways-attending meetings and school events as well as supporting the philosophy of the school. (Standing, 1999, p. 2)

Standing argued that "forms of parental involvement expected of mothers in the 1990s in the United Kingdom presumed the traditional nuclear family, with a stay-at-home wife and mother and breadwinner father" (1999, p. 2). The mothers she interviewed articulated stances toward their children's schooling that ranged from social action and "taking on the school" to resistance in the form of "active non-participation." These stances differed markedly from the parent involvement roles defined in school policies that expected parents to monitor their children's school with respect to spending and governance, keep up with the latest research on children's learning, provide academic support to their children inside and outside of school hours, and support the work of the teacher.

Wendy Luttrell, in her ethnographic study of working-class women's identities and schooling, also found that a "mothering discourse" shaped the narratives of women's own schooling experiences. She reported on interviews with women in her literacy class

in this way: "The women's stories illustrate the extent to which they measured themselves and their mothers according to what Griffith and Smith would call the intersecting discourses of mothering and schooling" (p. 92).

Luttrell also identified in her interviews intense emotion, including ambivalence and anger, as "the women's experiences in school were subjectively tied to their mothers' feelings and actions toward teachers" (Luttrell, 1997, 97). This maternal involvement took on three forms: the uninvolved, the school "back-ups," and the antagonists, and each had its consequences for how women felt they were treated by teachers, and their overall academic success. Luttrell noted that even while narrating unique events and circumstances, the interviews were remarkably similar in that none of the women mentioned their fathers' role as significant in their schooling experiences, and "in their descriptions of marginality, exclusion, or resistance at school, the women looked to their mothers for protection and comfort; and it was their mothers whom they tried not to blame for the schooling disappointments" (1997, p. 97). So connected to schooling is mothering work, that it is often difficult to tease them apart. Yet the research reviewed above suggests that teasing apart the mothering-schooling relationship is central to understanding strands of academic achievement and inequality, and this requires a feminist perspective that places gender at the centre of an analysis of school parental involvement policies.

While these studies illuminate the intersection between mothering and schooling as a dominant theme contextualizing the present research, it is also important to consider the ways in which institutional discourses of mothering and pedagogy may play out in the domestic sphere. Indeed, the divide between "public" and "private" is more ideal than

reality, and the domestic sphere is an important, if poorly theorized, site, where the social relations that govern mothering discourses are played out. Walkerdine and Lucey's (1989) *Democracy in the Kitchen* is a classic study that illustrates this point. Their deconstruction of a literacy study that normalizes middle-class mothers' pedagogic strategies touched on themes close to the present research, and merits a detailed analysis.

Walkerdine is a critical psychologist and linguist based in the United Kingdom. Her research focuses on the construction of gender identities and the regulation of girls and women through scientific discourse, and in particular, pedagogical and psychological discourses. In *Mastery of Reason* (1988), she analyzed educational and psychological research that reproduced the construct of the "sensitive" mother and the "the nature of the child." She argued that these contributed to the pathology attributed to working-class families, and the regulation of women and girls in schools and other social institutions. In *Democracy in the Kitchen* (1989), Walkerdine and Lucey drew on the concepts of *"sensitive mothers"* and *regulation* to conduct a feminist analysis of transcripts of a home-school language study carried out by Tizard and Hughes in 1984. They identified a number of dividing strategies that Tizard and Hughes used to normalize the ideal of middle-class domestic pedagogy, and distinguish it from the pedagogic practices of "working-class" mothers and daughters.

Tizard and Hughes wanted to explore how middle-class and working-class homes prepared children for school learning. In particular, they documented the role of mothers in children's language and cognitive development. They drew on a sample composed of fifteen stay-at-home working-class mothers and their daughters and fifteen middle-class mothers and daughters. Tizard and Hughes audio-taped interactions at home and at

school and came to the conclusion that mothers were more "sensitive" to the needs of children than were teachers, and that working-class families were "equal but different" (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989, p. 6).

At issue for Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) both of working-class backgrounds, was the theorizing that underpinned the make-up of Tizard and Hughes' sample and the lack of attention in their original analysis to the ways in which the very different material conditions lived by each set of families shaped the meanings and forms of language interactions that were documented. Walkerdine and Lucey weaved their own class and gender subjectivities into their analysis. They argued:

> The construction of the sample creates the fiction of a possibility of a working class-middle class comparison by occupational group, for the purposes of predicting what will lead to educational success. Secondly, a simple cause-and-effect model then maps middle class practices and concludes that every difference in the working class is a pathology to be corrected, and if this were corrected, the system of equal opportunities would work. (Walkerdine & Lucey, p. 42)

This sampling and its effects on Tizard's and Hughes' research conclusions can also be interpreted as a power effect of the dividing strategies of literacy and mothering discourses: working-class mothers and their daughters were identified and positioned in relation to the "normal" mothering and literacy practices of middle-class mothers and their daughters. This positioning signals the ways in which gender and pedagogy are implicated in literacy research, with consequences for the reproduction of mothering

discourses in the conclusions that are drawn, the polices adopted and the advice that emanates from such research.

A key theme in Tizard and Hughes' transcripts, and one that Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) identified as the lynch pin of the interpretive framework for development psychology and pedagogy, was attachment theory and its construct of the "sensitive mother." Hallmarks of the "sensitive mother," argued Walkerdine and Lucey, are her middle-class habitus and the linguistic practices of negotiation and choice she employs when interacting with her children. Such practices, they argued, not only mask the power that adults have over children, but also reflect a material context in which, unlike in many working-class homes, there *are* choices to be made about which straw one drinks from or whether to have another helping of food. The working-class mothers documented by Tizard and Hughes did not offer their daughters many choices; they used language more directly and made their power visible: "Close that door again and I'll give you a smack!" (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989, p. 24). This language was presented in the original analysis as insensitive and counter to child development "needs."

Yet Walkerdine and Lucey wondered why the inevitable and obvious conflict between children and their mothers, evident in both the working-class and middle-class transcripts, must be "driven underground" (p. 119), and indeed why the patriarchal relationships that often characterize mother-child relationships in the confines of the home were equally invisible, as were the fathers in this study. The illusion of harmony and peace in the family, an illusion thought essential to the creation of harmony and peace in society, was presented as a middle-class achievement because the language practices of the middle-class mothers tended to obfuscate or deflect conflict rather than

dealing with it head on. This contributed, Walkerdine and Lucey argued, to the normalization of the middle-class family and its association with sensitivity, harmony, and developmentally and pedagogically appropriate parenting practices.

Walkerdine and Lucey linked these interpretations to the larger political context for the privileging of middle-class parenting styles. They argued that creating an illusion of freedom, choice, and control in children is vital to the workings of a liberal democracy. As future citizens, children need to live this illusion if governance is to be successful. Working-class mothers are thus "a threat to this modern, bourgeois order" (p. 41), and need to be regulated through parent education, advice, monitoring and intervention.

The project of re-interpreting and contrasting transcripts of working-class and middle-class families placed Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) in a familiar, yet difficult, position for feminist researchers. There was a risk of essentializing and perhaps overstating the differences between the experiences of working-class and middle-class mothers. The authors attempted to address this issue by visiting the families five years after Tizard and Hughes' study was completed. They found that the income gap between the working-class and middle-class families had widened significantly, but even more distressing was that the achievement gap in school between the two groups was even wider. There was little correlation between the academic achievement of girls judged by Tizard and Hughes to have "sensitive" mothers and those that did not. Indeed, two of the daughters of the "insensitive" mothers were doing better than average in school, while daughters of "sensitive" mothers struggled. The distinguishing factor seemed to be teacher's attitudes and expectations. The higher the teacher's academic expectations, the more successful were the girls. In general, though, working-class girls faired far more

poorly than their middle-class counterparts. The ambitions of working-class girls far outstripped the educational and career possibilities open to them.

Walkerdine and Lucey's' (1989) and Walkerdine's (1994) identification of the working-class mother as both a relay of democratic ideals and thus a subject of regulation, suggests the need to attend to these dividing strategies in analyzing literacy advice to mothers. In addition, Walkerdine and Lucey named the many pedagogic tasks of the "sensitive mother" as indicative of a discourse of domestic pedagogy, which they define as the normalization of gendered divisions of labour by linking children's learning to domestic tasks usually associated with women's work. Along with the "normal family" and the "intensive mother", "domestic pedagogy," or perhaps more specifically domestic literacy, suggests a powerful mothering discourse that warrants exploration in the context of literacy advice to mothers.

Polakow (1993) is a critical psychologist who documented the relationship between the socially-constructed nature of motherhood and the institutionalization of poverty among single mothers. She also deconstructs assumptions surrounding mothers' pedagogical roles through a feminist critique of the tenets of attachment theory. Yet her work reminds feminist scholars of the dangers of dismissing state interventions in mothering practices as "regulatory" and "oppressive." She argued that these interventions nevertheless provide a framework for poor women in particular to gain access to material resources and social supports for their children that they would otherwise not have.

In a series of mini-case studies in which she observed poor children in pre-schools and schools, Polakow paid particular attention to the policy discourses that shaped the educational experiences of poor black children in the United States in the late 1980s. She

drew attention to the economic metaphors used to rationalize budget allocations for pre-schools for "at risk" children, noting that "investing" in children, so they won't become economic burdens, seemed to be a more convincing argument for providing pleasant and caring environments for children than their existential or humanitarian "worth" (1993, pp. 101–102). She noted that early intervention programs such as the High Scope/Perry Pre-school model were touted as valuable more for their role in diminishing crime rates than for the social and emotional benefits to children and their families. In this way, Polakow argued, poor children are not entitled to quality education, they must wait to be classified and deemed sufficiently "at risk" in order to qualify for compensatory education.

In five portraits of children in public schools, Polakow drew much the same conclusions as Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) regarding the link between the structure of schooling for low income children and their social futures, showing how "early tracking, sorting and classifying, scape-goating and marginalization" (p. 148), in addition to a very rigid and structured curriculum, characterize schooling experiences of poor children. Some teachers linked children's difficulties in school with their deviant family life with statements such as "These kids just don't live a normal family life — there's drug dealing and constant crisis and their mothers are all on welfare" (p. 132). Other teachers were strong advocates and supporters of the children they taught, showing love, compassion, and faith in their ability to succeed. However, the overriding experience of these young children was that expectations for their academic success were low and their academic and behavioural problems were almost always attributed to the parenting of their single mothers and a "lack of male role model" than to the experience of poverty itself.

In a critique of post-structural discourse analyses, Polakow argued that while studies in this vein may be successful in revealing the workings of the state in regulating mothers, they may also lack an appreciation for social context and "the existential tissue of poor women's lives" (Polakow, 1993, p. 104). Citing family historian Linda Gordon, Polakow (1993) argued, "while social welfare intervention was a regulatory form of control, it also gave poor women forms of access to regulatory power over men who abused them and abandoned their families" (1993, p. 29). Polakow thus raised an epistemological and ethical dimension to the critique of the regulation of mothers in modern psychology and pedagogy. While these institutional regulatory regimes may oppress mothers and reproduce gender inequalities, they may also provide services that immediately benefit women. Indeed, as Dehli has suggested, women are positioned in different ways within such institutional discourses, and may benefit or be repressed by them depending on their social location and their immediate situation. The ways in which women negotiate institutional discourses through the socially-situated practices of mothering and literacy are taken up in feminist perspectives of women's literacy, described in the next section.

Literacy in women's lives: social practice perspectives

Feminist educators have documented the powerful and conflicting role of literacy in the lives of women, particularly low income and minority women who were never really meant to seek literacy for themselves. In interviews and through participant observations, Horsman (1990) documented how women struggled for space in their family lives and classrooms to learn literacy and use language in ways that transported them beyond "the everyday" and their roles and responsibilities as mothers, wives, and

workers. This work challenged the view that women experience their roles and responsibilities for mentoring their children's literacy, and running the home, as harmonious and natural. Moreover, in her provocative article "Literacy as Threat/Desire," Rockhill (1991) documented the sometimes violent conflicts women in her study experienced as their families, employers, and husbands opposed the shifting power dynamics that resulted when women decided to improve their literacy skills. Conflict in relations arose when these wives and mothers connected with other women, grew in confidence, and discovered new literacy practices that conflicted with their roles as wives and mothers. Women's struggles to participate in literacy classes is perhaps an extension of, and resistance to, the long history of efforts to regulate, professionalize, and organize mothering in ways that meet a range of social, economic, and political objectives other than women's rights to what Mace called "literacy for themselves" (Mace, 1998).

Mace's (1998) study aimed to bring feminist and socio-historical lenses to the topic of family literacy. She used an innovative combination of archival analysis and in-depth oral history interviews to problematize gendered and functionalist explanations for the "causes" of low literacy, such as the "intergenerational cycle of illiteracy" (Sticht and McDonald, 1992), which grew in popularity in the 1990s. This concept holds that illiterate — or the currently more-acceptable term "low literate" — mothers are a risk because they raise illiterate children:

> The myth that illiterate mothers cause illiterate children has subtly gained ground. The historical evidence, however, poses a challenge to this causal fallacy. Mothers alone, whether literate or not, do not cause their children to grow up illiterate; on the contrary, an adult population of fully

> functioning members of a literate society includes some who are the progeny of illiterate parents. (Mace, 1998, p. 5)

Mace asked adults who were raised in England in the early and middle periods of the Twentieth Century to write to her about what they remembered of the place of literacy in their mothers' lives. She conducted follow-up interviews with some of these contributors, and her analysis led to insights about literacy as a socially situated practice, illustrated in this instance through mothers' multiple experiences of time:

> The capacity for reading to take us away from the here and now is one [dimension of time]; the struggle for women to capture the time do that; in the context of other timetables is a second; and the way in which life changes in a lifetime may bring us to different uses of literacy, is a third. (Mace, 1998, p. 34)

The multiple notions of time that Mace used to capture the shifting relationships between mothering and literacy over the life course problematizes the causal links that are often made between mothers' literacy activities in the home and children's academic outcomes. Across history, mothers with "little time" for literacy have raised literate children. If mothers are currently expected to make time to read to children daily, support the literacy development of their children in the years before school, and attend to the constant upgrading of their own literacy skills, this prompts a consideration of the underlying social, economic, and political shifts that have taken place that have brought us to such "truths." Mace spoke to this increase in expectations placed on mothers:

> The evidence of the literacy problem in industrialized countries with mass schooling systems has revealed that schools cannot alone meet this need.

> Families must therefore be recruited to do their bit, too. This is where the spotlight falls on the mother. She it is who must ensure that the young child arrives at school ready for school literacy, and preferably already literate. (Mace, 1998, p. 5)

Researchers such as Sticht (1995; 2000) have argued that while it may be true that "illiterate" mothers raised literate children in previous generations, such a situation is no longer possible in the current "knowledge economy" in which literacy skills are essential for work and for meaningful social participation, and there is growing demand for workers to continue to develop new and different literacy skills throughout their lives. Advocating the dictum, "teach the mother to reach the child," Sticht argued that maternal education is the key to helping children to get an early start on literacy skills, and to sustaining their success through their schooling years. He suggested that the education of low income and new immigrant mothers is of particular importance, since the reading skills of low SES and minority children continue to fall behind their middle-class counterparts (Sticht, 2000).

Deborah Brandt (1999) challenged these popular beliefs through historical research linking literacy to the processes of economic change in the United States. She conducted life history interviews with over eighty people from three generations in a farming community in Wisconsin. While her research did not directly focus on the relationships between mothering and children's literacy, the life experiences of those interviewed challenged the policy emphasis upon literacy as an individual cognitive skill influenced primarily by mothering practices and family structure. Brandt argued that "unrelenting economic change has become the key motivator for schools, parents, states

and communities to raise expectations for literacy achievement" (p. 374), but that missing from this equation is the fact that individuals from communities that are increasingly economically and socially marginalized, such as rural farming communities, experience a concomitant devaluation in the identities and literacies they bring to schooling and work environments.

Of particular value in Brandt's study was her intergenerational focus, which allowed the processes of social and economic change as they related to the valuing of literacy skills, to emerge more distinctly as the experiences of one generation was contrasted with those of another. Brandt teased out from her interviews the analytical concept of the *literacy sponsor* to track connections between individuals and the broader social forces that shaped their literacy opportunities and practices. Sponsors "appeared all over people's memories of how they learned to write and read, in their memories of people, commercial products, public facilities, religious organizations and other institutional and work settings" (Brandt, 1999, p. 376). These sponsors were not only or always mothers.

Brandt thus complicated the primacy accorded to the role of mothers and family structures in shaping individual children's literacy trajectories. Brandt linked the significance of her research findings to the teaching of literacy in schools, though her conclusions may also be extended to emergent and family literacy programs that emphasize "early intervention" as a preventative measure for low literacy:

> Downsizing, migration, welfare cutbacks, commercial development, transportation, consolidation or technological innovations do not merely form the background buzz of contemporary life. These changes, where

> they occur, can wipe out as well as create access to supports for literacy learning. They can also inflate or deflate the value of existing forms of literacy in the lives of students. Any of these changes can have implications for the status of literacy practices in school and for the ways students might interact with literacy lessons. (Brandt, 1999, p. 391)

Through their diverse research lenses, the studies reviewed in this chapter contribute to shaping a distinction between, in the first instance, the institutional ideals that link mothering and literacy, and in the second instance, perspectives of literacy and mothering as socially situated practices, located within a particular time and place, and connected to broader social relations. This review provides a basis for constructing a discursive framework for analyzing literacy advice to mothers. This chapter concludes with a description of the features of such a framework.

Towards a discursive framework for analyzing literacy advice to mothers

The themes developed in this chapter suggest a broad basis from which to embark on a more focused analysis of the discursive relationships between mothering and literacy. Bringing together children's literacy and the regulation of mothering suggests the need to move beyond the notion of a unitary mothering discourse for the purposes of this research. When applied to the relationship between mothering and children's literacy, the mothering discourse can perhaps be more usefully described as three inter-related but distinct discourses of *intensive mothering*, *domestic pedagogy* and the *normal family*. The diverse strands of scholarship reviewed in this chapter suggest that these are distinctive discourse formations because they have different institutional affiliations and different effects. They often conflict with and contradict one another; there are different strategies

associated with them that reflect their affiliations to competing institutions of the family, school, and state. While considering these discourses separately is more cumbersome, it also promises a richer and more textured conceptual framework to analyze the interplay between mothering and literacy, both as situated experience and institutional truth. The definition of these discourses for the purposes of this study is provided below.

Intensive mothering

The discourse of intensive mothering is linked across diverse institutions including health care and child development. It normalizes forms of mothering that place children at the centre of women's attention and energies, assumes that mothering work should be constant, time intensive, and materially expensive, and dependent upon professional level expertise and knowledge which needs to be continuously updated. Of interest in this thesis is if and how literacy advice normalizes practices associated with intensive mothering as preconditions for children's literacy acquisition. For the purposes of coding data, the discourse of intensive mothering is considered to be in play if advice recommends constant attention between an individual mother and child as a pre-condition for literacy acquisition, and when advice assumes and promotes culturally-bound concepts of maternal sensitivity and attachment as pre-conditions for literacy. The discourse of intensive mothering will also be in evidence if advice advocates and assumes that mothers possess para-professional knowledge of literacy and reading, and advocates the dedication of significant material resources and mothers' time to children's literacy acquisition.

Domestic pedagogy

The discourse of intensive mothering slides alongside that of *domestic pedagogy,* which coalesces around groups of statements that normalize literacy as an extension of women's domestic work. Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) defined "domestic pedagogy" as the work of teaching children that is intertwined with what is assumed to be women's "everyday" domestic work in the home. This work is constructed as "natural" and thus not requiring "extra time," with the effect that it is invisible as actual work. For the purposes of coding the data, the discourse of domestic pedagogy will be identified in advice that embeds literacy activities in domestic tasks associated with women's work, and if images of literacy in the home depict it as a mother-child interaction, or a mothers' responsibility, but does not acknowledge or provide rationale for this.

The normal family

The discourse of the *normal family* is linked to Smith's (1993) concept of SNAF, but is also evidenced in the work of Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) and Gleason (1999). The *normal family* privileges middle-class, English-speaking families, as the ideal environment for children's literacy acquisition. The discourse often positions low income and new immigrant families as "at risk," or as in need of social and educational intervention so they can more closely approximate the ideals associated with a normal family. The discourse of the normal family intersects with discourses of *intensive mothering* and *domestic pedagogy*, though it can also exist independently of them. Indeed although the children from "single parent families" are often deemed at risk for literacy failure, the parents who raise the children, most often mothers, are not exempt from the ideals of intensive mothering and domestic literacy. In coding the data, the discourse of

the normal family will be in evidence if advice assumes and reproduces the "habitus" of the heterosexual, nuclear family; if it privileges middle-class, English-speaking families or compares forms of mothering and families that had the effects of judgment, division or exclusion.

Table 2 summarizes these discursive categories and proposes a discursive framework for analyzing literacy advice to mothers. The column on the right specifies statements associated with each discourse, which were used to code advice.

Table 2. A Discursive Framework for the Analysis of Literacy Advice

Intensive mothering	Intensive mothering normalizes the view that *children's needs must come before the needs of their mothers* and other adults, or that *children's and mother's needs are the same*. It assumes that children need *constant* care and attention, and mothers are ultimately responsible for the quality and outcomes of this care. Intensive mothering holds that mothers require *professional level knowledge* and expertise in all aspects of child-raising to be good mothers. This knowledge needs to be *reviewed and updated regularly*. Intensive mothering demands "*sensitive mothers*" dedicated to attachment parenting. In short, intensive mothering requires "not only large quantities of money but also *professional-level skills* and copious amounts of *physical, moral, mental and emotional energy* on the part of the individual mother" (Hays, 1996, p. 4).
Domestic pedagogy	Domestic pedagogy links *children's literacy development to women's "everyday" domestic work* in the home, such as supporting children's reading through *recipes, shopping, making lists and so on*. This domestic literacy work is constructed as "natural" and thus *not requiring "extra time."* It normalizes *gendered divisions of labour* and renders the cultural reproductive work of mothers *invisible*. It recruits psychological constructs of the *sensitive mother* by which ideal domestic literacy practices are geared toward mother-child *bonding*.
The normal family	The discourse of the *normal family* normalizes the ideal family within patriarchal terms: *Two parent, heterosexual, nuclear family* with *women's roles geared toward child raising and household responsibilities*, and men's roles geared toward the pursuit of a public career. It privileges the *habitus* of *middle-class, English-speaking* families and *excludes*, through dividing and comparing strategies, the diverse child-raising and literacy practices associated with individual family histories and diverse cultural, ethnic and socio-economic groups.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed research that has critically shaped the discursive structures and themes surrounding literacy and mothering that are explored in this study. Taken together, these studies draw attention to the relationships between maternal education and social reform, as evidenced in the reliance upon mothering work to achieve the desired goals of state formation and nation-building through universal public education. The "pedagogy of love" that was deemed to come so naturally to women, was shown to be linked to broader mothering discourse that positioned women as passive observers and managers of their children's unfolding development, within the context of sensitive mothering and the normal family. We also saw how psychology, in its quest to define and reproduce "normalcy" facilitated the spreading of mothering discourses beyond the confines of schooling into homes, welfare agencies, child care centres and, importantly, the market place of educational and parenting products. And yet the reliance upon women's work for nation-building goals was not unique to education. The medical profession also relied upon mothers as "para-professionals" to doctors and psychologists to carry out their health regimes in the homes and communities. Women work for schools, but they also work for social reform enterprises of many kinds.

This review also emphasized the importance of attending to the ways in which women have been differently positioned within mothering discourses. Family structures and socio-economic and cultural groups that fell outside the "ideal" middle-class, Anglo-Saxon family were subjected to different and more intense forms of moral regulation and intervention, as a "threat" to the social order. But middle-class mothers were positioned in mothering discourses as key agents in the reproduction of the cultural and social ideals

they represent, in ways that also mask their diverse experiences of women as mothers. Chapter Four constitutes the first chapter of data analysis. It pursues the question that emerged from my own "moment in the practice of mothering," that day in the care with my daughter, and which evolved further in the pilot analysis of contemporary literacy advice described in Chapter Two. Where does literacy advice come from? In pursuing this question from a genealogical perspective, Chapter Four deepens some of the themes identified in the present chapter. These include the structuring of pedagogy as a form of moral regulation, the biologic essentialism that naturalized women's bodies as natural supporters of children's literacy, and the increasing identification of the ideal home, with the ideals of the Kindergarten classroom. That chapter also opens up new areas for exploration, including the different positions available to women within literacy advice discourses and the conflicting discourses of literacy as essential, but also dangerous, to the ideals of domesticity.

CHAPTER IV: MOTHERING DISCOURSES IN LITERACY ADVICE TO VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN MOTHERS

They let us learn to work, to dance or sing,
Or any such trivial thing,
Which to their profit may increase or pleasure bring.
But they refuse to let us know
What sacred sciences doth impart
Or the mysteriousness of art.
In learning's pleasing paths denied to go,
From knowledge banished, and their schools,
We seem designed alone for useful fools...

"The Emulation: A Pindric Ode,"
Author Unknown,
(London, 1683 in Goreau, 1984)

This chapter analyzes literacy advice to mothers in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, with the purpose of locating contemporary forms of literacy advice to mothers within a broader socio-historical framework. To weave the many threads of this topic together as cohesively as possible, I have structured this chapter in the form of a genealogy, tracing the shifting meanings and roles ascribed to mothers as "their child's first and most important educators" in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, with a particular emphasis on mothers' roles as educators of literacy. My decision to adopt a genealogical approach to analyzing literacy advice in the Nineteenth Century arises out of a question that persisted as I familiarized myself with data of literacy advice to mothers from 1990 to 2004: From what set of beliefs or desires does this advice come from? More specifically, what is the history of contemporary literacy advice to mothers? Pursuing this question promises insights into the ways in which the habitus associated with the ideal "mother as teacher of literacy" is historically situated.

While the discourse of the mother-as-teacher of literacy offers a promising starting point from which to progress to a deeper analysis of strategies and techniques this discourse employs (Carabine, 2001), it seemed important to first understand the power/knowledge relationships that have produced literacy advice over time. In other words how have present discourses of literacy advice to mothers become true? What meanings have these discourses taken on over time? What insights can a genealogical investigation offer to inform an analysis of literacy advice texts from 1950–2004? These questions guide this genealogy.

Nietzsche described genealogy as a "history of the present." It entails beginning with a concept or issue of contemporary concern and tracing back through its various constructions over time. As Gale (2001) explained, a genealogy is concerned with understanding how a particular concept or belief comes to be perceived as a "truth" or a "problem" in the first place (p. 385). As described in Chapter Two, the genealogical approach is associated with Foucault who used it in his *History of Sexuality* (1978). That study has come to be regarded as a classic example of a discourse analytic approach to historical meaning-making, wherein Foucault sought to reveal the social conflicts and power relations that produced notions of sexuality, and indeed the regulation of sexuality over time. Foucault borrowed the term *genealogy* from Nietzsche, and came to link the genealogical approach to his original "archeological" method of "excavating" historical shifts in language use to reveal the power and interests that underpin them.

A genealogy is not concerned with uncovering the truth or discovering "what really happened." It is a surface, rather than an in-depth investigation, one interested in how power/knowledge link up to produce discourses, rather than in providing an

exhaustive account of the progress of history as a "plan unfolding." Similarly, my aim in this chapter is not to provide an exhaustive account of the historical construction of mothers-as-teachers (although such a study would certainly fill a gap in the literature on mothering and education), but rather to conduct a surface reading of advice texts in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries in order to generate more refined categories and more complex understandings of the power/knowledge/discourse relationship as they relate to contemporary literacy advice discourses.

My point of entry into this investigation is the discursive categories suggested by the historiography of child-raising advice presented in Chapter Three. I position a literacy lens at the centre of discourses of *intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy,* and the *normal family* to explore what insights into literacy advice this can reveal. The data for this chapter are drawn from advice texts written for mothers in Britain, the United States, and Canada, in the Victorian and early Edwardian eras.

An important source for the advice literature consulted was the database of collected works of Victorian advice published by Adam Matthews (1996) entitled *Women and Victorian Values, 1837-1910: Advice Books, Manuals and Journals for Women.* I searched for references within these texts to "education," "reading," and "young children." A second strategy to identify advice texts to include in the analysis was to integrate a literacy lens into existing histories of child-raising advice to mothers conducted by Ehrenreich and English (1978) and Hardyment (1995). From these histories, I identified authors and texts that were widely read and deemed influential to the formation of social ideals surrounding ideal mothering. I then sought out the original versions of these texts and analyzed them for references to mothers and fathers roles in

supporting children's literacy development. Although the bulk of the advice was directed to mothers, particularly through magazines in the last half of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, advice to fathers for supporting their children's reading did exist and offered important insights into the discursive shifts in that advice as gendered divisions of labour became increasingly entrenched by the Twentieth Century.

The analysis cuts a large swath through a vast and intricate body of literature. Its interpretations are therefore confined to the texts that were included in the analysis, which, while representative of advice literature in general, could not include all the examples within the waves of domestic advice literature that appeared in Victorian society on both sides of the Atlantic in the Nineteenth Century.

Before embarking on the analysis, a few comments on nineteenth-century meanings and uses of the term literacy are warranted. What did it mean to be "literate" in early Victorian culture? The term *literacy* is not used in Victorian advice texts; in fact it did not appear until the 1980s in popular child-raising manuals. It was the practice of *reading*, and not that of *literacy* per se, that was of most concern to Victorian social commentators and writers of advice texts. On the rare occasions when advice was offered to promote (or regulate) children's writing, the term *spelling* was most often used, and *reading* and *spelling* were the dominant terms used to refer to what would later be termed *literacy*.

As Graff (1979) pointed out, and the literacy advice in these texts suggest, official discourses surrounding the social uses of literacy emphasized ritual and morality, rather than emancipation or intellectual growth. According to Graff, the emphasis on the "performance" of particular literacy practices as markers of culture and social status

meant that "[t]he level of literacy, in fact, could be quite low: a proper understanding of the words was not in itself essential. Literacy, however nominal, signified in theory the observance of an ordained and approved social code" (Graff, 1979, p. 24).

Literacy advice must also be located in the broader themes of nineteenth-century advice literature. Flint (1993) observed that "many Victorians wrote of reading as an activity as natural, as essential, as eating, supplying the food of the mind" (1993, p. 50). While there was considerable advice to parents for supporting and regulating children's reading, often literacy advice was interspersed with, and at times embedded in, the attainment of other more pressing social ideals. These included instilling Christian moral values in children, preparing women for their status and influence as mothers, maintaining social status, pleasing husbands, and managing servants. Particular emphasis was placed on easing women's pain and suffering in the almost inevitable event that at least one of their children died in infancy. These tracts are heart-wrenching and full of pathos, and are themselves powerful forms of literacy designed to comfort mothers and provide a cultural frame for bearing what their writers recognized as excruciating suffering. It is thus important to read this literacy advice against the backdrop of other mothering preoccupations, with an appreciation for the ways in which official literacy discourses inter-twine with and organize the literacies of everyday living.

The role of mothers as managers of domestic literacy was a dominant theme in advice. This term was originally used by Robbins (2004) to denote mothers' roles in promoting children's literacy in the domestic sphere, as a function of the "everyday" work of socializing children into the meanings and uses of print, which was distinct from more direct or formal reading instruction. The term "domestic literacy" is adopted in this

study to capture the "everydayness" of mothers' literacy work. Reinforcing Graff's work, another theme in this advice was the connection between the moral structuring of literacy and competing views about how should children learn to read. The belief that women's and children's literacy practices were potentially 'dangerous" is a third, and perhaps most prevalent, theme in the advice analysed.

The Nineteenth Century was characterized by significant social and economic shifts that may more accurately be linked to the important processes of industrialization, immigration, and the rise of universal public schooling than with any specific date or time. Consequently, the analysis is divided into two parts to capture and compare the distinct social and historical contexts for literacy advice in the first decades of the Nineteenth Century, to those of the later Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. Table 3 summarizes the intersection between these mothering discourses and literacy advice themes.

Table 3: Discourses and Themes in Literacy Advice to Victorian and Edwardian Mothers

Themes across advice discourses	**Intensive mothering**	**Domestic pedagogy**	**The normal family**
Mothers as domestic literacy managers	Mothers' influence on children's characters is profound. This character may be judged in large part by children's reading practices. Victorian mothers of the bourgeoisie were to display untiring patience with respect to their children's questions and their presence in the home was essential to upholding literacy values of the Christian home.	Literacy is embedded in women's everyday work in the home. For artisan or "cottage" mothers this work emerged from their "everyday living" but would become oriented to schooling in advice later in the nineteenth century. For mothers of the bourgeoisie, this work involved monitoring the work of nurses, nannies, and governesses, and modeling appropriate literacy behaviours.	Family reading bonds the family and creates domestic bliss and the cultivation of Christian values. This ideal is dependent upon gendered divisions of literacy work. Ideally, it was mothers' role to see to everyday learning. Fathers were "special guests," reading to the family at the end of his day.
Moral structuring of literacy: Teaching children to read and write	Children learn to read by being read the Bible and scriptures often and repetitively. They also learn from their siblings, nurses, nannies and others in the household. Emphasis on reading as a performative ritual, not an intellectual pursuit.	Reading was directly taught through games and lessons with the alphabet in homes of upper classes, and through modeling upper class practices for "cottage" mothers and families. Requires leisure time for upper class mothers and 'no extra time' for 'cottage' mothers.	Children in bourgeois Victorian home learn to read "as naturally as they learn to eat." This ideal family setting provides appropriate reading materials and leisure to read to and with children often."Pauper" families could not and should not teach their children themselves.
Dangerous practices: Women's and children's literacy	Women's reading interests and practices should prepare them for, but not detract them from, duties of wife and mother.	Reading the Bible, and other "approved texts" was an essential part of daily life, marking routines and cycles of family and social time that also required monitoring and regulation.	Women readers posed dangers to the ideals of the Christian family. Debate over how much literacy was enough to model domestic literacy, but too much to take mother away from her roles as wife and mother

Part One: Literacy advice to early Victorian mothers

Victorian literacy advice has its own genealogy, which merits brief elaboration. Images of the mother as teacher of literacy are ingrained in Christian social history and Western thought. Raising children to participate in the literate culture of Christianity was entwined with the role of the mother/Madonna as nurturer. As Mace (1998) observed, "[I]n Christian morality, literacy is something taught as precious, necessary and important" (p. 175). Images abound in the fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Italian Masters of the Madonna reading to the Christ Child. We may recognize this iconic image of the Madonna, reading to her son as she cradles him on his lap, in contemporary family literacy images described in Chapter One. Manguel (1996) pointed out that in these medieval family literacy images, we do not often see women or children writing. It was the reading of "The Word" that was important, and the remnants of this message can be traced in contemporary family literacy advice which all but ignores mothers and children as writers.

However, while patriarchal social systems in the West have historically promoted women in the conflated roles of nurturing and teaching children, these discourses were equally distrustful of the impact literacy could have on the "purity" of both the Word and of women as suitable wives and mothers. Manguel (1996), cited in Mace (1998), observed that "traditionally, in Christian iconography, the book or scroll belonged to the male deity, to either God the Father or triumphant Christ, the new Adam, in whose name the word was made flesh" (Mace, 1998, p. 175). It was not until the Fourteenth Century, according to Manguel, that the Madonna was portrayed as literate and able to pass

literacy on to her son (or as Mace, (1998), wondered, perhaps she is learning literacy from her Son?). This suggested the occupation of a conflicted space for the Christian Medieval mother. It was important that she be literate enough to raise children as faithful subjects of the Church (and hence able to read the Bible) but not to use literacy practices to pursue or claim knowledge for herself. It is the association of these idealized maternal images with literacy that has provided Western culture with an early vocabulary for articulating ideal family literacy practices.[5] Indeed, in the conflation of mothering with womanhood, there is little sense in contemporary or archaic images of family literacy that women's literacy practices could be distinct from their mothering roles.

Another point of tension in the role of mother-as-teacher-of-literacy arose in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, with the concern for mothers' abilities to raise and educate boy children. Manguel (1996) noted that in early modern Europe, mothers of the aristocracy, or more accurately their nurses, were responsible for teaching children the letters of the alphabet at a very young age. Male teachers were hired to teach boys as soon as they were out of the nursery because clerics were concerned that boys in particular be educated away from their mothers, who were considered unsuitable

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[5] Such are the associations among Christian ideals of literacy and the mother as nurturer that Thurer (1994) speculates that Mother Goose, the fabled transmitter of the stories of Western culture, is derived from the image of the Virgin Mary, or her mother, St. Anne. She writes, "[This] lovely image of a seated, benign maternal figure reading to children grouped at her feet took on a life of its own in the eighteenth century persona of Mother Goose. Somehow, the popular collection of fairy tales by the previous century's Charles Perrault came to be ascribed to this saintly figure....While we do not know Mother Goose's precise identity, we may reasonably speculate that she is a variant of the Virgin Mary (or, more likely, Mary's mother, St. Anne), yet another sacrificial mother figure" (Thurer, 1994, p.194-195). Other historians attribute the identity of Mother Goose to Charlemagne's mother, Queen Bertha of France, who died in 773. According to one version of this theory, "Bertha was supposedly called 'Goose Footed Bertha' because her feet reminded her subjects of those of a goose. She is portrayed in French legends sitting at a spinning wheel telling stories to children as she spun" (Nana's pages, 2004).

intellectual and moral role models (Manguel, 1996). Here emerged a tension between mothers' roles in initiating children into the teachings of the Church through their domestic literacy work, and the primacy accorded to male dominated institutions to prepare boy children for the public world. While contemporary literacy teaching roles ascribed to mothers extended to both boys and girls, concerns over "whether a woman can raise a man" (Ehrenreich & English, 1978, p. 192) persist, as evidenced in current assertions among educators and social commentators that boys raised by women are "at risk" for literacy failure because they lack male role models (*Vancouver Sun*, 2003, R5).

In early modern Europe, the Enlightenment brought a renewed focus on the education of children as future citizens of emerging nation-states. Luke (1989) showed how this nation-building project coincided with the rise of print, and Protestantism in Europe, in ways that produced a "discourse of childhood" that was deeply embedded in Christian Protestant moral values and the rise of capitalism. Mothering discourses must therefore be read in the context of this discourse on childhood, as the two are interconnected. While nation-building and Christianity were themes in the discourse of childhood, literacy advice drew upon emerging pedagogic ideals expressed in Locke's *Some thoughts concerning education* (1692) and Rousseau's *Emile* (1701). Their philosophies on appropriate means to educate children were thus among the first of many to implicate (via their followers who popularized their views through advice texts) new pedagogical roles for mothers. According to Hulbert (2003), the "stern father figure of the Lockean "nurture is what counts" school, the other gentler Rousseauian proponent of "letting nature take its course" would come to characterize the two opposing points of a pendulum of child-raising advice for centuries to come" (p. 9). Evidence of this

pendulum, as well as the patriarchal intersections between these educational philosophies, are found in Lockean and Rousseau-inspired advice texts in the Victorian era, a topic to which we now turn.

Mothers as domestic literacy managers in the early to middle Nineteenth Century

> "Parents may wonder to taste the spring bitter
> when they themselves have spoiled the fountain."
> (Buffum, 1826, p. 18)

Buffum drew on this Lockean dictum as a basis for his advice to mothers in *Hints for the Improvement of Early Education.* He established mothers as those naturally responsible for their children's moral education, a practice embedded in the performance of intensive mothering. He exhorted:

> No human being has so much power to preserve this primeval image of heaven in the soul as the mother. Peculiarly susceptible of religious emotion herself, she can communicate it more effectually than any other instructer (sic). The lessons she teaches will never be forgotten. ...[T]he prayers, that are said around her knees, will be instinctively murmured by the lips of extreme age. (p. 121)

In *Letters to Mothers*, Sigourney (1838) similarly invoked Locke's notion of *Tabula Rasa* to warn: "Amid this happiness, who can refrain from trembling at the thought, that every action, every word, even every modification of voice or feature, may impress on the mental tablet of the pupil, traces that shall exist forever" (p. 34). While such advice had no doubt the intent of regulating mothers' interactions with their children in a society concerned with moral purity and perfection, mothers of all classes enjoyed

heightened status amidst the public interest in the "science and art" of early education (Buffum, 1826. p. 5). Indeed, the mother-as-teacher was now conferred, at least within the domestic sphere, with "the highest of powers":

> What a scope for your exertions, to render your representative, an honour to its parentage, and a blessing to its country. You have gained an increase of power. The influence which is most truly valuable, is that of mind over mind. How entire and perfect is this dominion, over the unformed character of your infant. Write what you will, upon the print-less tablet, with your wand of love. (Sigourney, 1838, p. 12)

These Lockean concepts resonated in Victorian social mores and gender ideals. For example, Victorian bio-medical theories held that women were by virtue of their biological constitution more emotional, and thus intellectually and emotionally closer to the minds of children. This underpinned the ideal of the mother as teacher of literacy as an innocent and benign Madonna-like figure. Kate Flint (1993) suggested a close relationship between bio-medical theories of gender and reading advice to Victorian women:

> If woman's natural biological function is presumed to be that of childbearing and rearing, of the inculcation of moral beliefs along with physical nurturing, with the ensuing presumption that she is thus especially constructed by nature so as to have a close, intuitive relationship with her offspring, then such instincts as sympathetic imagination, and a ready capacity to identify with the experience of others,

> are unalterable facts about her mental operations, and hence, by extension, about her processes of reading. (Flint, 1993, p. 57)

For many advisors, it was the "cottage" and artisan life, rather than the homes of bourgeoisie, that provided the ideal learning environment for children. This was perhaps because it was believed that women in the cottage economies who worked in the home could be more directly engaged in the education of their children on an everyday basis. They were less likely to be distracted by the demands of society visiting, and did not have nurses or governesses to mediate and perform their pedagogic duties. Moreover, the spatial constraints of a small cottage made it a necessity for "old and young to learn together" (Martineau, 1848, p. 193). This idealization of the artisan mother-as-teacher produced literacy advice for these women that was less concerned with promoting reading, and more concerned with how to "open their children's faculties." Harriet Martineau, a social reformer and scholar of American democracy, argued that in many homes "both mother and father work very hard, particularly in American homes where there were no nurses, servants and the like, formal instruction in letters cannot be possible" (Martineau, 1848, p. 193). She thus developed the idea that what counts as "educated" varied from circumstance to setting, and must necessarily be broader than "book learning." She told the story of children who did not have access to schooling and whose parents could not read, nor had the time to teach them letters and numbers, but who were, nevertheless, very "educated":

> They knew every tree in the forest, and every bird, and every weed. They knew the habits of domestic animals. They could tell at a glance how many scores of pigeons there were in a flock, when clouds of these birds

> came sailing towards them…they could give their minds earnestly to what they were about; and ponder and plan, and imagine, and contrive. Their faculties were awake. (p. 127)

Indeed, Martineau felt strongly that books were but one path to learning and children's happiness was more important than their book learning. Given that literacy rates in Britain in the 1840s and 1850s hovered between 40% and 50% (Vincent, 2000), it was necessary to promote domestic learning that was not print based. William Cobbett (1830) similarly expressed ambivalence about the importance of books in children's lives and maintained the importance of happiness. Yet, the fact that commentators felt the need to remind parents of these priorities suggests the importance that was placed on children's literacy abilities. Indeed, Cobbett dedicated significant space to children's reading in his advice to fathers. In the tradition of advisors drawing on their own experiences to provide advice, Cobbett described his approach to encouraging children to read in his own home:

> I never *ordered* a child of mine, son or daughter, *to look into a book*, in my life…I never, and nobody else ever, taught any one of them to read, write, or any thing else, except in *conversation*. ...I accomplished my purpose *indirectly*. A large, strong table, in the middle of the room, their mother sitting at her work, the baby, if big enough, set up in a high chair. Here were ink-stands, pens, pencils, India rubber, and paper, all in abundance, and every one scrabbled about as he or she pleased. There were prints of animals of all sorts; books treating of them: others treating of gardening, of flowers, of husbandry, of hunting, coursing, shooting,

> fishing, planting, and, in short, of every thing, with regard to which *we had something to do*. One would be trying to imitate a bit of my writing, another *drawing* the pictures of some of our dogs or horses, a third poking over *Bewick's Quadrupeds* and picking out what he said about them. ...What need had we of *schools*? What need of *teachers*? What need of *scolding* and *force*, to induce children to read, write, and love books? [emphases in text] (Cobbett, 1830, sec. 289–293)

This description is interesting in its attention to children's choices of the kinds of literacy practices they chose to engage in, and the diverse forms of literacy that took place around this table. Indeed, the silence surrounding the mothers' role, and the portrayal of Cobbett's own benign presence, suggests a view of domestic literacy that contrasted with the more strict gender roles surrounding domestic literacy management suggested in advice later in the century. In *Mothers' Magazine* in 1857, the ideal was that fathers' influence over their children's instruction was restricted to one of support for the mother, with the rationale that the domestic sphere was "constantly" inhabited by the mother, and fathers were often away from home and thus not suitable to the everydayness of teaching children to read.

> The direct influence of the father is felt in the family occasionally, that of the mother, constantly. Because fathers rely on mothers to appropriately instruct children, he is encouraged to aid her in the discipline and instruction of the children, when he is at home, and in this way, find himself richly repaid in the over-flowings of filial affections. (*Mothers' Magazine*, 1857, p. 42)

In this way, mothers' influences upon her children's literacy derived not from her experiences and intelligence (nor her ability to read) but her "sensible" maternal instincts. It was the sensible mother who naturally cultivated her children's learning in the home on a daily basis, rather than the father, as "special guest" to family reading and learning, who was most often singled out for advice on stimulating children's intellectual "faculties." The sensible mother appeared in the *Mothers' Magazine* in an article by an unknown author who described the ideal domestic literacy work of "Mrs. S" who "lived in the authors' village many years ago." Mrs. S. puts to practice with her own seven children the educational values she learned from her years as a nurse to an upstanding family of the bourgeoisie. The author went on, "She could neither read or write herself and so often had she reason to regret this that she was doubly anxious to have her children well taught" (p. 139). Mrs. S was a "poor, industrious woman" who sent her boys to school beyond the primary years, monitored their school homework, sent her daughters to school long enough to learn to read and write, and then took over their teaching at home. She ensured that her children attended school regularly and promptly, and even when it involved sacrificing her need for their labour, promoted her boys' need for higher learning (*Mothers' Magazine*, 1858, p. 138–139).

In the 1850s and 1860s, *Mothers' Magazine* increasingly featured stories that described ideal domestic literacy practices. They also began to offer "hints to parents" and "hints to mothers" who could not teach their children at home themselves. Such texts recognized the increasing number of women who worked outside the home, and the growing number of children who attended formal schooling on a regular basis (Flint, 1993; Green, 2001; Vincent, 2000). This advice emphasized the importance of punctual

and regular attendance at infant and normal school,[6] the mothers' role in monitoring of homework and inquiring of children what they learned at school, as well as the importance of reinforcing at home the lessons learned in school (*Mothers' Magazine,* 1862, p. 215). In this way, the gendered ideals of literacy and pedagogic roles in the home were predicated on a long standing belief that performing such practices could further social equality: "The children of rich and poor have, or may have, about equal advantages under the care of sensible parents" (Martineau, 1848, p. 189).

Thus, while advice may well have been intended to create a perception that poor and wealthy mothers alike were capable of appropriately educating their children, the discursive effect was also to mask the important material differences that structured women's mothering roles and families' time and uses for literacy. In fact, the content of literacy advice can be traced along rigid class divisions. For while artisan or "cottage" mothers could be "good enough" teachers if they were sensible, this sensibility was defined and embodied in the habitus of upper-class literacy practices that were best acquired through domestic service in these homes.

Moreover, for many mostly male commentators, including chaplains, school inspectors, and parliamentarians, support for "pauper education" was a means to regulate access to and the content of education for "pauper children" who, in the words of one school inspector, had "become a burthen [sic] on the community in the ranks of 'hereditary pauperism'" (Edwards, 1857. p. 122). Not unlike the contemporary family

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[6] As early as 1848, Martineau (p. 216–218), strongly advised mothers not to send their children to infant school unless absolutely necessary, suggesting a thread of advice that stigmatized women who worked outside the home, at the same time as providing them with advice with how best to support schooling.

literacy concept of "intergenerational illiteracy" (Nickse, 1990), in "hereditary pauperism", poor parents were considered inappropriate role models and mentors for their children's literacy and learning because of their "innate" ignorance and poverty which they passed on to their children. It was the State, in the form of institutions such as work houses, "pauper schools," and the like, that was to intervene to restore their morality and protect other social classes from their influences. While poor mothers were considered inappropriate models of their children's literacy, and "cottage" mothers could accomplish enough with some hand made toys and games, advice to upper-class mothers for managing their children's literacy required (at least ideally) more intense and direct intervention.

The majority of literate women were in the upper classes and this is recognized in literacy advice that emphasized more intense approaches to supporting children's learning. Indeed, upper-class mothers were often advised to attend to their children's questions and needs immediately, lest a moment for teaching or learning should pass.

> How many times, when the inward teacher has called us to our closet, where a spiritual table was spread a rich feast provided for us have we replied, "When I have finished what I am doing;" but the feast is removed, our High Priest is left the sacred chamber...and we return to our worldly occupations unblest-unfed. (*Mothers' Magazine*, 1857, p. 154)

Child (1831) was a compassionate social reformer and active and vocal abolitionist. Her advice, like many of her contemporaries, came from the belief that the ideals of domesticity, embodied in the habitus of the upper-classes, could promote a more

peaceful and just world. Yet from a multi-vocal perspective, Child's advice suggested that the ideal of "constant" teaching may have indeed proved more annoying than natural:

> I am aware that these habits of inquiry are at times very troublesome; for no one, however patient, can be always ready to answer the multitude of questions a child is disposed to ask. But it must be remembered that all good things are accompanied by inconveniences. The care of children requires a great many sacrifices, and a great deal of self-denial; but the woman who is not willing to sacrifice a good deal in such a cause, does not deserve to be a mother. (p. 15–16)

While literacy roles for mothers seemed indeed conflicted and wrapped up in concerns for children's moral and religious upbringing, it is important to recognize that the rather intensive forms of mothering prescribed in texts were directed to upper class women who hired nurses to attend to the everyday care of children and the running of the household. Indeed, opportunities to impart instruction appeared when mothers visited their children's nurseries, "or when their little ones are permitted to visit them" (*Mothers' Magazine*, 1862, p. 124). For these mothers, advice for managing their children's literacy involved, in large measure, monitoring and regulating the women who performed mothering and literacy work in their children's nurseries. In the pattern of anonymous women advisors who drew on their own experiences to offer advice for the benefit of others, one author wrote in 1838 "The Nursery Maid: Her Duties and How to Perform Them," for the benefit of girls from poor families and those who trained them in upper-class standards for caring for young children. These girls were advised to allow the children's mother to choose which books she should read to the children, and perhaps as

an acknowledgement that a nursery maid may not be able to read, suggested they "repeat the stories" in the books provided. Yet, reading to children seemed a minor part of the work of a nursery maid and was mentioned in but a few lines of the book. By contrast, in the *Nursery Governess*, (1845) literacy advice to would-be governesses was provided in a story in which "Mary Manners" is assisted by her mentor in preparing her belongings to take her new employment. The mentor helps Mary to carefully choose suitable books, counseling her that teaching is much like the work of a mother hen and accomplished through books that were the "food of the mind":

> You and I, you know, have often watched the delicate way in which the hen feeds her chickens, how she breaks the crumbs, and how she teaches them to scratch the ground, and seek in the little morsels suited to them; and lets them run when they are weary, and calls them again when ready, to give them a little more; and how she gathers her brood to rest, giving time to digest the food under her fostering wing." (Author Unknown, 1845, p. 55)

As Green (2001) suggested in her analysis of the cultural conflicts that were associated with educating Victorian women, the pressure to bring about changes to the abysmal state of education for women in the 1840s and 1850s was prompted in large measure by the shortage of women capable of providing the educational services families required.

> The customary occupation of such women, that of being governesses, was destined to make them fail in the dual task of earning a living while maintaining their appropriate role as reproducers of the domestic ideal.

> Their inadequate education made them ill-fitted to teach others and it also left them ill-fitted to earn their living in any other way. (Green, 2001, p. 11)

The fact that literacy advice included strategies for managing the domestic literacy of other people's children suggests how women were differently positioned in literacy advice discourses according to strict regimes of social class. The position of the governess as domestic literacy manager was regulated by her employer, and by the standards set by the moral ideals embedded in domestic literacy instruction.

The emphasis placed upon literacy as part of the work of the domestic sphere suggests the importance of reading such advice with attention to the socially situated meanings and uses for literacy in different domestic settings, as well as historical construction of a literacy habitus as indivisible from the ideals of intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy. In this way, advice not only promoted literacy, but also promoted gendered divisions of labour within emerging ideals of the "normal family." It is insightful to bring these lenses to the themes in advice concerned with why and how children should learn to read.

The moral structuring of literacy: Teaching children to read and write

In the section above, it was argued that women became increasingly responsible for supporting children's literacy in the context of their everyday work of mothering. This domestic literacy work was part of the cultural reproductive work of mothering and intimately connected to the habitus of the "ideal" family in which women's labour was dedicated to the domestic sphere. In the first decades of the Nineteenth Century, this domestic literacy work was distinct from the work of formally teaching children to read.

While mothers may very well assume this role, there was indeed great variety in advice for if and how children should be formally taught to read, and who should best take on this role. Lydia Child (1831) displayed insights into the processes of cognitive apprenticeship, and the important role that siblings and other adults play in children's literacy practices that would not gain the full appreciation of reading researchers until far into the Twentieth Century[7]

> As soon as it is possible to convey instruction by toys, it is well to choose such as will be useful. The letters of the alphabet on pieces of bone are excellent for this purpose. I have known a child of six years old teach a baby-brother to read quite well, merely by playing with ivory letters. ...[I]n this, indeed in all other respects, an infant's progress is abundantly more rapid, if taught by a brother, or sister, nearly his own age. The reason is their little minds are in much the same state as their pupil's; they are therefore less liable than ourselves to miscalculate his strength or force him beyond his speed. (Child, 1931, p. 54)

In the following excerpt, Child suggested that while mothers should be concerned with their children's literacy knowledge, it was not considered appropriate to display this by pressuring a child:

> In all that related to developing the intellect, very young children should not be hurried or made to attend unwillingly. When they are playing with

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[7] For example, see Gregory, Long, and Volk (2004). *Many paths to literacy: Young children learning with siblings, grandparents, peers and communities.* London: Taylor & Francis.

> their letters, and you are at leisure, take pains to tell them the name of each as often as they ask; but do not urge them. When the large letters are learned, give them the small ones. When both are mastered, place the letters together in a small word like CAT; point to the letters, name them and pronounce cat distinctly. After a few lessons, the child will know what letters to place together in order to spell CAT. ...Do not try to force his attention to his letters, when he is weary, fretful and sleepy, or impatient to be doing something else. (Child, 1831, p. 53)

Buffum took on a more austere tone, recommending that reading in the home be structured as "lessons" within finite boundaries of time and space "from which there is no escape" (p. 98). His advice underscored the ritualistic attributes invested in literacy, and its potential for regulating children's behaviour.

> Let it be an object to give them employments which they cannot evade — from which there are no means of escaping; something to be done, and not merely to be learnt. For instance, it will be better to set them so many lines to write, rather than to learn by heart. ...children will also learn more readily when their lessons are regulated by established rules. If a child is uncertain how much to read, he will probably murmur when the portion is shewn (sic) to him. Rather let it be fixed, that, to read so much, to spell so many words, so many times, is to be the regular business of every day. (Buffum, 1826, p. 98)

Conversely, and as mentioned earlier, Martineau was careful to emphasize that a mothers' priority should be her child's happiness, and not her or his ability to read,

because "the happier a child is, the cleverer he will be" (Martineau, 1848, p. 221). Indeed, Martineau reminded parents that children's reading abilities is "no sign yet of a superior intellect...it is simply a natural appetite for that provision of ideas and images which should, at this season, be laid in for the exercise of the higher faculties which have yet to come into use" (p. 225). In other words, there was more important intellectual work to attend to in the early years than reading, and children would take to reading easily enough if opportunity was provided. Her advice was more concerned with moderating the "excesses" of too much reading, than with a concern that children may not learn to read.

Sometimes advice on desired literacy practices was directed to mothers through their children. In an article titled, "Paying off Mother" (*Mothers' Magazine*, 1858), "little Alexander" was told that one way he could repay mother for her habit of "reading to him a good deal and a long time out of the Bible and Sabbath school book, and thus teaching him to read himself" (p. 64), was by "loving Jesus Christ and his work" (p. 64). In alluding to the likelihood that their mothers will die before they have reached adulthood, this advice linked reading to children to a future in heaven, in which "parents and children may meet together around the throne of the lamb" (p. 64). While the religious goals of reading to children were made clear, it was implied that children learn to read by being read to often, and for long periods.

Although raising children who could read was deemed a necessary practice of Christian mothering, mothers were extolled not to force their children to learn or to display children's abilities. This, argued Buffum, was a reflection of the "self love" of mothers and teachers, who "do not like that other children should read and write better than ours" (p. 100). Victorian society recognized the early years of children's lives as

vital to the formation of character. There was, however, much ambivalence over the form and purpose for "early training." As an author in *Mothers' Magazine* (1859) warned, "When I speak of early training, I refer not to *intellectual* but to *moral* training" (p. 88).

The achievement of high moral ideals was embedded in recommended family literacy practices, governed by space, time, and gender roles. In an article titled "Family and Social Reading" in *Mothers' Magazine* (March, 1848), domestic reading or "social reading" among family and friends was recommended to promote family bonds. The absence of social reading in the home was identified as the source of domestic strife.

> The benefits of social reading are manifold. Pleasures shared with others are increased by the partnership. A book is tenfold a book, when read in the company of beloved friends by the ruddy fire, on a wintry evening: and when our domestic pleasures are bathed in domestic affection. ...Among a thousand means of making home attractive — What is more pleasing? What more rational? What more tributary to the fund of daily talk? What more exclusive of scandal and chatter? He would be a benefactor indeed, who should devise a plan for redeeming our evenings, and rallying the young men who scatter to clubs and taverns, and brawling assemblies. ...Families which are in a state of mutual repulsion have no evening together over books or music. (pp. 77–78)

Again, inhabitants of "the house of the poor man" were advised that in practicing similar forms of family social reading, they could rise to the status of the upper classes.

> I beg leave to add, this is a pleasure for *the poor man's house*, and for this I love it. The poor man, if educated, is one day placed almost on a level

> with the prince, in respect to the best part of literary wealth. Let him ponder the suggestion, and enjoy the privilege. [emphases in original] (*Mothers' Magazine,* 1848, p. 98)

Literacy advice to parents written in the first half of the Nineteenth Century presented considerable diversity in the paths to literacy a child could follow and much contestation over the timing, purposes, and methods for literacy instruction that should define this path. In the Rousseau-inspired advice of Martineau and Cobbett, reading and writing were represented as desirable, but not central aspects of domestic learning. This reflected the place of literacy in social life in early nineteenth-century Britain and North America. Indeed, Vincent (1989) argued that although literacy would become more widespread as the Nineteenth Century progressed, it also "had to compete for the child's limited time with a wide range of skills which had equal or greater priority" (p. 56). Vincent cited Cobbett, who, in another of his works, observed that it was possible to "earn a great deal of money, and bring up families very well, without ever knowing how to read" (Cobbett, 1831, in Vincent, 1989, p. 59).

Later in the Nineteenth Century, the growing influence of industrialization upon gender divisions of labour in the domestic sphere, as well as the effects of universal schooling and a growing social reform movement, provided a context for literacy advice that was not only more prominent in child-raising advice texts, but was more precise and prescriptive in the roles and responsibilities mothers should assume in promoting reading. This advice is considered in part two of this chapter.

Part Two: The angel in the house and school: New domestic literacy roles for mothers

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself...
And if he once, by shame oppress'd
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast
And seems to think the sin was hers (Patmore, 1854)

This excerpt from the infamous poem the *Angel in the House* captured a set of patriarchal discourses surrounding women's emotional frailty that legitimated women's assigned responsibility for the emotions and nurturing of others. These responsibilities were recruited for new kinds of literacy practices required by mothers and children with the rapid processes of industrialization, the spread of literacy and the rise of public schooling, with the passing of the Education Act in Britain in 1870, and in Canada between the years 1871 and 1942 (Axelrod, 1997, p. 36).[8]Although written in 1854, the *Angel in the House* entered public consciousness as a maternal ideal on both sides of the Atlantic in the last decades of the Nineteenth Century.

Domestic literacy management in the middle to late Nineteenth Century

The late 1870s and 1880s marked the emergence of the child as the raw material for nation building, and a shift in the focus of literacy as a tool for the attainment of spiritual perfection to a tool for social reform and new forms of moral regulation (Graff, 1979). This provided the impetus for a second wave of advice literature, which descended

[8] According to Axelrod (1999) Newfoundland and Quebec did not bring in compulsory school legislation until 1942, although Quebec had one of the highest participation rates in public schooling in the country by 1900.

upon North American homes in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Comacchio (1993) ascribed the increase in the publication of advice texts to the panic in Canada and the United States for the preservation of Anglo-Saxon values in the context of rapid social change:

> At the end of the Nineteenth Century, worried observers feared that industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, if left unregulated, might disrupt their comfortable neighbourhoods, and that they would be powerless to protect their Canadian families from what they invariably saw as negative influences. Fears about social degeneration were inflamed by the mass arrival of immigrant families, their high birth rate relative to the decreasing size of Canadian families, and continuing high infant mortality rates. Since women's roles and identities were rooted in family, the movement of women into paid labour was also shaking society at its core. Perhaps more frightening than the real, material difficulties faced by many Canadian families of this time, therefore, was this sense of foreboding about the collapse of cherished institutions and relations, including the family itself. (p. 48)

The rise of public schooling implied subtle but steady shifts in literacy advice to mothers, from a focus on domestic literacy management for the purposes of children's moral education and character development to a focus on domestic literacy management in support of school literacy. In a comment signaling a shift from the view of mothers as "natural teachers," Charlotte Mason (1878), an icon of the contemporary Christian home schooling movement in North America, articulated growing concern for the abilities of

mothers to adequately teach their children: "The children are the property of the nation, to be brought up for the nation as is best for the nation, and not according to some whim of the individual parent" (p. 35). As Comacchio (1993) noted, "the developing view was that 'society' should decide the standards for effective parenting and a proper home life" (p. 53).

Ideal domestic literacy management roles for the "new century" emerged in the image of the fictitious Gertrude, a creation of early nineteenth-century Italian philosopher Pestalozzi. His *Leonard and Gertrude* (1781) and *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* (1801) were reprinted and circulated in 1985 and 1894 respectively. It combined reverence of the Madonna, such as that expressed by Buffum (1826) and Sigourney (1838), with domestic and political ideals of "race development" and nationhood that appealed to Darwinist race theorists and social reformers. Pestalozzi emphasized "doing and seeing" as a necessary part of children's learning, with "Nature" the source of experience upon which to build children's knowledge and awareness. A principle underpinning this naturalized perspective of learning was that "the development of the individual follows that of the race." (Pestalozzi, 1894, p. xi)

Pestalozzi's ideas held important implications for evolving ideals of intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy. Children required much more "hands on" attention and instruction, and parents were consequently to constantly look for opportunities for learning in the "natural" setting of everyday life. This domestic literacy work was important not only for the development of the individual child, but, from Pestalozzi's perspective, for solving the problems of an unjust and exploitative world. When he wrote *Leonard and Gertrude* in 1781 (translated and published in the United States in 1885), it

was to illustrate "how the world might be regenerated through education; the mother, Gertrude, being the chief teacher" (1885, p. xviii). He outlined a method for mothers to teach children to talk, which, in close reading, seems more a curriculum for teaching literacy. It involved careful and precise instructions to mothers on how to teach sounds, then words, then sentences.

These painstakingly detailed directions to mothers emerged from Pestalozzi's concern for the "gap that has arisen in the maze we call human culture," through the inability of the "lowest classes" to speak, which he understood as the ability to make oneself understood to (and understood by) the ruling classes (Pestalozzi, 1885, p. 112–113). For example, according to Pestalozzi, "[the Indians'] lack of 'proper' speech...breed[s] a degraded race of men as sacrifices to their idols" (p. 112). In this way, his instructions in the proper use of "literate language" were also a means of distinguishing upper class families from "the lower classes" (p. 112–113). Here, domestic pedagogy served as a bridge between the sanctity of the domestic sphere and the legitimization of class and race supremacy. As has been noted earlier in this chapter, this suggests again that advice to mothers for teaching literacy to their children had the object not only to teaching children to read and write, but also to legitimize and maintain social class privilege and race supremacy discourses.

Pestalozzi's ideas found new life and purpose in the work of Froebel, a student of his. As discussed in Chapter Three, Froebel's influence upon the creation of the contemporary kindergarten movement is well documented (Dehli, 1994; Griffith, 1995; Griffith & Smith, 1990). His ideas about children's learning were, like Pestalozzi's, embedded in the normalization of traditional gendered divisions of labour associated with

the "normal family" as well as intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy. A leader in the popularization of Froebel's ideas was American, Andrea Hofer Proudfoot, editor of the *Kindergarten Magazine* and author of *A Mother's Ideals* (1897), an advice manual for mothers that popularized the work of Froebel within the context of the burgeoning maternal feminist movement. Proudfoot called for Froebel's ideals of the "new family" and the Kindergarten to become part of mothering practices and the everyday routines and relationships in homes:

> [In his work] we get a glimpse of ideal family life in the Kindergarten, and if we have nothing better to build up to in our homes, we can make no mistake in aiming at that. Let us visit the kindergarten and learn its simplest lessons and emulate them in our homes. (Proudfoot, 1897, p. 135)

These "lessons" included modeling and monitoring children's literacy and learning in the home, in ways that were largely dependent on the resources and consumer practices of the emerging middle-class culture and household organization. This included "airy playrooms full of well chosen and durable toys that are close to the library, large kitchens, carefully selected domestic help and lots of windows" (Proudfoot, 1897, p. 32).

This image of the ideal home is instructive for the discursive construction of the normal family and for domestic pedagogy. That the cultural and pedagogic reference point for the ideal early-twentieth-century mother as literacy teacher was rooted in the image of *Gertrude,* a woman who never actually existed, is a telling example of the ways in which power/knowledge works in these discourses to "form the subjects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972). The roles of mothers as mentors and monitors of their children's literacy over the Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Centuries seemed to change in

the expectations placed upon them, and the broadening scope of their roles, but not in the discursive structures that underpinned the common-sense notion that women were best suited to this work, though in need of close monitoring themselves.

Froebel's pedagogic movement began to take hold of key social institutions including schools, nurseries, and public health systems. However, Brehony (2000) argued that this movement was not unified, and different schools of Froebelian thought produced different kinds of advice about what and how children should learn to read.[9] For example, in "Common Sense in the Nursery" (1895), Marion Harland reflected on the "precocious child," who emerged at the time amidst the perceived increase in nervous conditions among children attributed to their intense scrutiny and stimulation.

> Teach a quick-witted, nervous infant little that is not really necessary for him to know until he is five or six years old. He will gain nothing and you well may lose all, by the forcing process. Should his life be spared, he will not be the better scholar at five and twenty for having read fluently at three...lay the foundation of bodily health broad and firmly before beginning to build the superstructure of mental endowments. (Harland, 1895, p. 72)

Other skeptics of the pedagogic movement focused not on mothers' pedagogic behaviours but on the possibility that children's literary practices may not coincide with parents' or society's ideals:

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[9] For perspectives on a variety of education movements led by middle-class Victorian women, including the Froebelian movement, see: Hirsch, M. & Hilton, M. (2000). *Practical visionaries: Women, education and social progress, 1790–1930.* London: Pearson Books.

> Some children are very backward in a love of reading, which may mean merely that their own vivid imagination is enough for them, and that they tell themselves stories far more brilliant and congenial than any every written or printed. Other children fall victim to the magic words, and love Hiawatha or the Psalms; whilst a third class care only for stories about little boys called Bobby and little girls called Margery. (Mortem, in Hardyment, 1995, p. 147)

This commentary not only creates space for children's agency in how they may take up literacy practices, but from a multi-vocal perspective also suggests that there was increasing attention and concern to not only what children read, but also if and how children made reading part of their childhood experience. Whether they promoted or cautioned against teaching children to read at an early age, these varied opinions and advice texts suggest intense interest and preoccupation with the topic on the part of educators, social commentators, and perhaps also parents.

The views of the popular Ellen Key, a Swedish social commentator and social reformer who was a vocal supporter of women's suffrage, opponent of child labour, and other "evils of industrialization," were a flashpoint for the conflict emerging between the ideals of schooling and the ideals of domesticity and maternalism. Key was an influential voice on both sides of the Atlantic against the movement toward state crèches and Kindergarten, which she regarded as a threat to European culture and rights of children in the "children's century" (Key, 1909). She called for a renewed focus on domestic pedagogy, but not to prepare children for school but rather to protect them from it.

> My first dream is that the kindergarten and the primary school will be everywhere replaced by instruction in the home. ...[W]hat I regard as a great misfortune is the increasing inclination to look upon the crèche, the kindergarten and the school as the ideal scheme of education. (1909, p. 233)

In Key's ideal new century, "the children will be taken from the school, the street, the factory and restored to the home. The mother will be given back from work outside, or from social life, to the children" (p. 164). For Key, Kindergartens could be available only to children from unfortunate circumstances and whose mothers, for reasons of "weak will or depression" (1909, p. 234), could not educate her children herself. She advised that from the first years of life children should have a well-chosen library of suitable books for each age, rather than the "many worthless children's books" and costly toys (p. 168), but that otherwise, children should be left to their own imaginings, given a substantial amount of independence, and taught to do much for themselves. These "new homes" for the "new century" required a women's movement that embraced the power of motherhood to change the world. Such mothers would be educated in the latest pedagogical theories and child-raising tenets, such as "an understanding of heredity, race hygiene, child hygiene and child psychology" (Key, 1912, p. 121).

The moral structuring of literacy: Advice for teaching children to read in the late Nineteenth Century

In late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literacy advice, domestic literacy as an everyday practice associated with morality and character building became linked

with, and almost indistinguishable from, advice for promoting reading as a pedagogic task linked to supporting the work of schools. Prominent psychologists such as G. Stanley Hall and Edmund Huey complained about the physically and intellectually harmful methods used to teach children to read in the school. Their perspectives later found support in the historical scholarship of Graff (1979) and Vincent (2000), who argued that schools sought to render reading and writing difficult and unfamiliar, so the institution could gain the credibility and status among parents that was required to justify removing children from their domestic economies. Rather than learning literacy through living, children would learn literacy to live (Vincent, 2000, p. 23–26) and parents' roles were ideally to support, but not to supplant, that project. Mothers' responsibilities shifted to the ambiguous ones of providing a home context that facilitated children's learning in school, rather than, in the image of the "cottage mother and father," teaching their children the literacies of their material survival and cultural continuity.

Psychology put its stamp on the discursive construction of the *normal family* and its links to children's reading abilities. G. Stanley Hall was widely touted as the "father of educational psychology" and the leader of the Child Study movement that involved middle-class mothers in documenting the developmental progress of their own children (Dehli, 1994; Hulbert, 2003). He dedicated considerable attention in his research and advice writing to the reading practices of children, particularly of adolescents:

> Of course the pupils must write, and write well, just as they must read, and read much; that English suffers from insisting upon this double long circuit too early and cultivates it to excess, devitalizes school language and

makes it a little unreal, like other affectations of adult ways. (Hall, 1904, p. 21)

Hall's psychological theories linked biology with social organization in ways that implicated women's bodies in "natural" relationships between the home, school, and church as part of a divine unity: "...we shall never know the true key to her nature until we understand, how the nest and cradle are larger wombs; the home, a larger nest; the tribe, state, church and school, larger homes and irradiations from it" (Hall, 1904, p. 2). Like Dewey and Huey (1909), Hall criticized the emphasis schools placed on teaching through pencil and paper tasks and not through the "ear," feeling that eyes could deteriorate and ears lose their receptive faculties without "moral and objective work, more stories, narratives, and even vivid readings" (Hall, 1904, p. 21). He analysed the normalcy of children through their stated reading preferences and the amount they read, careful to divide and compare boys to girls in ways that both assumed and reinforced theories of biologic essentialism that held that sex differences in boys and girls' were natural and consistent across cultures, and that boys' and girls' reading practices differed as a result of their biological differences. In spite of his warnings about excesses in reading which lead to "burn out of their fires wickedly early" (p. 29), Hall nevertheless recommended domestic literacy practices embedded in the culture of the middle-class home, that would be reproduced in literacy advice for the next century:

> Every youth should have his or her own library, which, however small, should be select. To seal some knowledge of their content with the delightful sense of ownership helps to preserve the apparatus of culture,

> keeps green early memories, or makes one of the best tangible mementoes of parental care and love. (Hall, 1904, p. 29)

Edmund Huey, a philosopher and psychologist and colleague of John Dewey, built on the ideals of progressive education and the growing importance placed on reading in shaping children's childhood experiences. The *Psychology of Reading* (1909) was a breakthrough in research at the time, grounded in painstaking observation of the detriments to children's bodies of the highly disciplined and repetitive lessons that structured formal literacy instruction in schools. However, his research findings suggesting the need for child-centred teaching methods were as embedded in the habitus of Anglo-Saxon, middle-class domesticity as they were empirical. He cited the domestic literacy management skills of a "Mrs. E.W. Scripture," as emblematic of appropriate reading pedagogy in the home. These practices involved labeling household objects, decorating the walls with posters and written descriptions, answering children's questions about the print in their environment (without drawing undo attention to the letters and syllables), and providing letter blocks to play with (1909, pp. 315–318). In this way, argued Huey, children would learn their letters, and learn to read many words with much less pain and suffering than they experience with the phonics methods in school that devoid print of its meaning in children's worlds:

> There are many natural ways in which the child may become familiar with letters, words and a good many phrases and sentences with their meaning. The child will be busy all day long, and this is a sort of business that he likes, for part of the time; and if the mother will only help him a little in these ways, and play with him, he will accumulate a storage of

words larger than the school would teach him in the same time, and they are apt to be better learned and more useful ones. (p. 317)

Huey's pedagogic advice culminated with the warning that there is "too much" of books in the age and that bright children would not need them if mothers followed his methods for reading and intellectual development. His ultimate thesis, that "the secret of it all lies in parents' reading aloud to and with the child" (p. 332), constituted the reference point for the study of mother-child story book reading practices, and the home as a "natural" environment for learning to read, that came to dominate reading research and family literacy advice in the last quarter of the Twentieth Century (Durkin, 1966; Chall, 1983; Heath, 1983; Sulzby & Teale, 1984). This observation, however, was based on the normalization of intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy in ways associated ideal reading practices with the habitus of the Anglo-Saxon, middle-class, "good mother." Hall's (1904) and Huey's (1909) influential treatises on "natural" reading practices could only be taken up in the context of a North American society in which motherhood and all things associated with the domestic sphere had come to take on a "sacred quality" (Light & Parr, 1983, p. 109), and in which gendered divisions of labour associated with the normal family, made women discursively, if not realistically, available to be the teachers in the home.

While Huey's careful observations and theories contributed to the scientific bases for child-centred reading instruction, the advice that emerged from his research positioned mothers at the centre of this domestic literacy role, effectively narrowing the "many paths to literacy" (Gregory, Long & Volk, 2005) that were available to children outside of direct mother-child interaction. Sutherland (1976) showed how the lives of the

majority of women and children in Canada at the turn of the century bore little resemblance to these idealized domestic literacy settings, whether oriented to a Froebelian Kindergarten home or Key's "natural" Rousseauian one. Many women worked long hours in factories, as domestic workers, waitresses, and wet nurses — in 1916, 175, 000 women in Ontario were wage earners (Light and Parr, 1983). Many children worked on their family or foster family farms, or as labourers. The connections between their '"living and their literacy" (Vincent, 2000) likely did not conform in any real way to the ideals set out in the advice texts and emerging psychological research and advice.

The fact that Huey's advice was so similar to that of Child (1831) and Martineau (1848), and was modeled in the mothering work of "Mrs. Scripture," raises questions about the extent to which women's experiential knowledge of children's literacy acquisition constituted a basis for, rather than a break from, scientific theorizing on this much debated topic. At the same time as literacy work in the home was naturalized as women's work, the fruits of which have undoubtedly produced considerable knowledge among many mothers about how children learn to read and write, mothers were also positioned as ignorant of the processes of children's literacy acquisition and in need of expert advice. Another effect of these literacy advice discourses, which will be pursued in Chapter Five, was that advice also represented children as passive actors, absent of literacy identities of their own, who fell without conflict under the influence of their parents.

The advice reviewed above is powerful and persuasive in its critique of the "constant training' of children in schools that commentators felt dulled children's

imaginations and rendered reading a meaningless chore. However, its attention to the domestic sphere as an alternate ideal for more natural and pleasurable learning implied the need for "constant training" of mothers, if they were to occupy desired positions in the discourses of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family, upon which their children's reading success relied. This supports the insights of Weiss (1977) who observed that advice for directing the behaviour of children is really advice for directing mothering practices. Given the social importance placed on children's reading, and hence mothers' domestic literacy practices, it is not surprising that both children's and women's literacy practices could be considered dangerous. This theme crossed the Nineteenth Century, and by way of a summary to this chapter is considered next.

Dangerous practices: Women's and children's literacy in the later Nineteenth Century

> Perhaps, this is the most important question with which a virtuous and godly mother is concerned, in training up her offspring — what shall they read? (*Mothers' Magazine*, 1862, p. 145)

Victorian literacy advice discourses implied a direct connection between women's literacy practices and those of their children. The duties ascribed to mothers as their children's moral instructors, and prevailing beliefs about the effects of reading on women's reproductive capacities, contributed to advice texts aimed at regulating women's and children's access to reading materials. However, "corrupting" reading practices railed against in such advice suggests that it was rarely heeded, though perhaps succeeded in creating a mystique and sense of danger surrounding reading too much of the "wrong" sorts of texts.

Children who read too much were considered nervous or lazy in that they read to avoid doing real work; those who did not read were potentially evil and suspect. Women of the upper classes who did not read could not be good mothers, but mothers who read too much could be seen to be selfish or neglectful of their responsibilities to their husband and children. Recommended reading practices were tied to gender roles and expectations, both for boys and girls, as well as women. For girls and women, reading was considered beneficial to the extent it contributed to the well-being of their families and children. Boys' reading practices were to be monitored for their appropriateness in preparing them for public roles, and for curbing excesses and misbehaviour. Child (1831) likened moderate reading of well-chosen books as indicative of a good character and proper feminine behaviour: "A real love of reading is the greatest blessing education can bestow, particularly upon a woman" (p. 80). She observed that reading will "help a woman to pass long periods of illness and infirmity" (p. 81) as well as dissuade her from the habits of gossip and an interest in fashion. Most importantly, however, "reading everyday increases the points of sympathy with an intelligent husband, and it gives a mother materials for furnishing the minds of her children" (p. 86). Child recommended that children read a few "good" works many times instead of reading the latest novels, for the "necessity of fierce excitement in reading is a sort of intellectual intemperance, and like bodily intoxication, it produces weakness and delirium" (p. 93).

Sigourney (1838) was more distrustful of the growing habit of book reading among the growing middle classes in America. Although she maintained that "a taste for reading is an indication of mental health, and a claim on gratitude" (p. 45), she wondered if books were not a replacement for "real" thinking:

> This is emphatically the age of book making and miscellaneous reading. Profound thought is becoming obsolete. ...[W]ould it not be better for most of us if we read less? 'Nothing', says Douglas Stewart, has such a tendency to weaken, not only the power of invention, but the intellectual powers in general, as extensive reading, without reflection. Mere reading books, oppresses, enfeebles, and is with many, a substitute for thinking. (p. 67)

Martineau's views contrasted rather sharply with the prevailing concern surrounding women's and children's reading practices. For households that possessed books, she argued against censoring children's texts "with pencils and scissors" or fretting about the time children spent reading, observing that children, like adults, would grow in and out of the reading habit as their lives changed, and what they didn't understand of the passions in books they would discard rather than be unduly influenced (Martineau, 1848, pp. 86–88). Such views were not shared in the *Mothers' Magazine*, although this popular magazine often cited her *Home Education* in other places. With reference to the debate over the regulation of children's reading practices, one commentator exclaimed: "They tell us the proper way is to allow them to read what they please ... Mistaken guides! They know not what they do" (*Mothers' Magazine*, 1861, p. 145). In the 1872 American magazine *The Little Corporal,* an article titled "What Does Johnny Read?" admonished a proud father who boasted that his Johnny "read everything he could get his hands on":

> And we should like to say to Johnny's father and mother, do not rest satisfied while your boy "reads every thing." It is a direful day for you if

> you have neglected to direct and cultivate his taste until he has come to be a mere devourer of stories of wild, improbable adventure and exciting fiction, which is poured out like a flood for the destruction of our boys; but even yet you can do something to counteract the evil if you are willing to work for it — by taking your child into the fields of art, of history and of science, which may be made as charming to the unfolding mind as regions of romance. (*The Little Corporal*, 1872, p. 34)

The relationship between literacy advice and the gender essentialism that underpinned Victorian and Edwardian philosophy and science has proven to be a strong discursive thread throughout this analysis of literacy advice to mothers. Lady Schultz, in her 1895 address to the National Council of Women of Canada titled "How to provide good reading for children," pitched her speech to a sympathetic middle-class audience as she articulated the continued close association Victorians made between reading as an embodied practice, and a moral social code. This is expressed in metaphors of books as food, or poison for the soul: "For there is no greater agency in the world in building up or destroying character than the books read; it is, to a great extent, the pabulum on which the mind is fed" (Shultz, 1895, p. 3). Her warnings of the consequences of correct reading practices alluded to Biblical images of doom and disease:

> And I urge upon the parents, at the same time, to be as vigilant in guarding what their children shall read as though the child was to pass through a plague-stricken country and could only escape by the most watchful care of the mother or guardian. (Schultz, 1895, p. 11)

Conclusions: literacy advice and mothering discourses in nineteenth-century advice texts

As Galbraith (1997) has noted, much can be learned about ideals of childhood held by a society, through their beliefs about children as readers. This chapter suggests that similar insights may be gained about the ideals for mothering through beliefs about women as readers. The discursive themes connecting mothering and literacy in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries reflect the observations of the "Emulation" poem that opened this chapter. Women's access to literacy and to formal education has long been contingent upon its usefulness to others, or the perceived threats it creates for those who fear they "decay" of cherished, patriarchal institutions. Yet as continuous a theme as this represents in literacy advice to mothers, equally prevalent is women's resistance to these contingencies. As persuasive, impassioned, trendy, or popular as literacy advice texts to mothers may have been, they did not tell the whole story of women's literacy practices or educational interests. Indeed, much could be understood of women's literacy practices through the social trends that advice texts did not acknowledge, or that they actively sought to suppress. For example, the persistent concern over what and how much mothers read and the possible implications of this for their roles as mothers suggests that mothers who could read, read frequently for leisure, for themselves.

The analysis of literacy advice in this chapter was by no means exhaustive, but it nevertheless provided some concrete insights into the questions that guided this chapter, in particular: Where does contemporary literacy advice come from? It also begins to shed light on the questions that guide the present study: What discursive formations are

associated with the "mother-as-teacher-of literacy"? What discourse strategies are associated with the normalization of the "mother-as-teacher of literacy" over time? What forms of literacy and of mothering are excluded within these discourses? Who has gained power within the discourses of literacy and mothering?

The analysis of literacy advice in this chapter suggests that images of mothers reading to children, with exhortations on the crucial link between this practice and children's success in life, did not just appear with the family literacy movement in the 1980s, or with the re-discovery among reading researchers that children learn much about literacy before they start school. Rather, this genealogy of the "mother as teacher of literacy" suggests that literacy advice represents an intersection between shifting ideals of the "good mother" and the ideal literate child, and the discourses of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family. These discursive formations privileged within the context of the "cult of domesticity" the moral duties of mothers to raise Christian children; this task was indivisible from teaching children to read the Bible and scriptures. The idea that the domestic literacy management roles for upper-class mothers required constant attention, patience, and dedication can be linked to the formation of intensive mothering as a middle-class ideal, and the elevation of the domestic sphere as the natural place for this mothering work to occur.

It is here that mothers' roles in domestic literacy management can be interpreted as social and cultural reproduction work, as much as it was "literacy" work. Through the lenses of habitus, and social and cultural reproduction, it is possible to interpret the different class positioning of mothers in this nineteenth-century advice as a function of the power attributed to literacy, or at least the power attributed to the performance of

literacy practices associated with middle-class habitus, in maintaining class privilege. Literacy advice proceeded on the assumption that by emulating the habitus of the upper-classes in Victorian society, "cottage" and pauper classes could overcome poverty. Here is an early indication of the power that would come to be attributed to the performance of idealized literacy practices, such as story book reading, in erasing social class inequalities. This is evidenced in the advice in *Mothers' Magazine* that with respect to family reading, the home of the poor family should "ponder the suggestion, and enjoy the privilege" (1848). Yet as a literacy practice in its own right, domestic advice worked to maintain social class privilege. In this way, the dividing strategies used to differentiate domestic literacy tasks of upper class, cottage, and "pauper" families, served as both a promise of social mobility but also as a reinforcement of social distance: "how we are different to they" (Robbins, 2004, p. 82).

The aim to maintain social class privilege was also achieved in literacy advice through normalization of domestic pedagogy. Raising literate, moral children was embedded in domestic pedagogy. Images in advice of teaching were in the context of the domestic sphere where children counted chickens, peeled nutmegs, and were read to as they sewed and knitted. Yet the forms of domestic literacy available to mothers were restricted by the type of texts they had access to and the practices associated with it. The socialization of women as natural caregivers and models of morality for their children was conflated with women's biology and reproductive roles, with the effect of rendering women natural mentors of literacy, and thus naturally responsible for their children's literacy knowledge. As Graff (1979) pointed out, this literacy knowledge took the form of a social code, imbued with habitus of middle and upper class Anglo-Saxon culture.

Yet it was suggested as well that in the absence of widespread and compulsory schooling, literacy advice to mothers varied across contexts, and there was evidence that children's literacy practices were mentored by a range of people other than mothers; fathers were ideally linked to the family reading circle, older children, nurses, and governesses provided role models for literacy practices, and reading, though valued, was not the most important form of knowledge for children raised on the North American frontiers and in cottage industries.

In this way, we must be wary of drawing the same pedagogical meanings from the advice for women living in very different social and economic worlds. What seems "intense" (Hays, 1996) mothering in an early nineteenth-century text geared toward a Victorian mother whose children were educated at home, who did not need to contend with the timetables and surveillance of schools, and whose pedagogic work was likely carried out by nurses, may take on a different meaning for contemporary mothering practices and ideals. Indeed, we are not dealing, in the Nineteenth Century, with the same discourse of "intensity" because we are not dealing with the same contexts for literacy learning, or the same social organization of mothering.

With this caveat aside, there is evidence to suggest that while discourses of intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy offered different positions for women across social class locations, and over the shifting social and educational relations of the Nineteenth Century, they can nevertheless be recognized by their interdependence upon discourses of the "normal family." Indeed, achieving the social visions of morality, industrialized capitalism, and later nationhood, depended upon the availability of

women's work to the Church, and later to the School, and thus upon the ideal of domesticity in which women were available to do this literacy work.

While women needed to negotiate positions for themselves as legitimate readers and writers (Flint, 1993; Green, 2001), many benefited from the fact that it was upon the basis of their mothering, and the high value accorded to literacy in the restricted form it was promoted, that women were able to claim social and political rights. Moreover, as the "century of the child" dawned, a more gentler disposition toward children appealed to New World families and social reformers such as Child and Key. In understanding who gains power within these discourses of mothering, these nuances must be taken into account, and thus constitute an important theme in the first decades of the Twentieth Century when formal schooling is consolidated in Canada and the United States.

This genealogy suggests that the mother-as-teacher-of-literacy is rooted in mothering discourses which resonate in the Twenty-first Century. Of interest in the remainder of this study are the continuities, discontinuities, and shifts in literacy advice discourses, and the new strategies and techniques that become attached to these over time. The next chapter explores literacy advice with a particular focus on the 1950s and 1960s, although considerable attention is paid to literacy advice in the early years of the Twentieth Century as both a link to nineteenth-century images of the ideal nineteenth-century mother, and a foregrounding to her incarnation in the context of post-war democratic ideals and cold war competition.

CHAPTER V: WHY CAN'T JOHNNY READ?

> What can I do? Almost angrily the young mother faced me across the narrow classroom desk. "I'm so confused and I feel so helpless! I know Tommy isn't dumb, yet ever since he started school he's had trouble with his reading. And always you teachers have told me the same thing. 'Don't push him' you say, 'Be patient'. He'll straighten out. Well, I haven't pushed him. And I haven't tried to teach him, though Heaven knows I've been tempted many times. But I know you're right when you say that it is a job for an expert — and you're the expert. But here is Tommy in the fourth grade and still behind his class in reading. *Isn't there something we can do at home that will help him?* [Emphasis in text] (Christopher, 1957, p. 32)

> I have two active little children who keep me hopping. There isn't much time for rest or for myself but even though I try to eat well and sleep, I am always so tired. I feel like the day just goes on and on and I scream to talk with another adult. (Hilliard, 1954, p. 12)

One mother is frantic, another is exhausted and lonely. These voices, albeit filtered through the lenses of editors and authors of advice magazines, nevertheless show women negotiating roles as their child's first educators that feel neither natural, nor particularly empowering. Tommy's mother is negotiating the discourses of domestic pedagogy and intensive mothering that insist on her ultimate responsibility for Tommy's reading abilities, while regarding her direct involvement in teaching him to read as

potentially dangerous to his emotional well-being and his success as a reader. Her status and abilities as a mother were judged against her son's reading abilities, even as her domestic literacy practices were regulated by the shared understanding implicit in these mothering discourses that "she is not an expert." Tommy's mother wanted more control. Or perhaps she just wanted the school to teach him how how to read.

And then there is the mother who doesn't know why she finds only depression in what should be the joyous events of raising her child. This, too, speaks to the dynamic between the institution of motherhood, and mothering as socially situated practice. In the advice pages of magazines cited in this chapter, for every piece of advice on promoting children's reading, there were many more that counseled women who were feeling tired and depressed, lonely and isolated. Such advice was shaped and supported by commercial advertising for products to help women feel less tired, more beautiful, less lonely, more competent and confident. Yet voices of boredom, isolation, and despair are woven through the pages of *Chatelaine* and *Parents' Magazine*, particularly in the 1950s. Though they fall outside the realm of literacy advice, these voices are nevertheless vital reminders of the broader context, as well as the diversity of individual experience, that shaped mothering, and domestic literacy work in post war North America. The genealogy of the mother-teacher of literacy in Chapter Four suggested discursive strategies that inform an analysis of contemporary literacy advice to mothers. The analysis suggested that while advice may be read as "disciplinary texts" to guide desired literacy practices in children, these texts were also very much about disciplining mothering and mothers' literacy practices. In this chapter, I sketch the discursive shape of literacy advice to mothers in the 1950s and 1960s from the perspective of women's shifting roles as

domestic literacy managers. I foreground this with an analysis of literacy advice that appeared in women's magazines in early years of the Twentieth Century, though such advice was relatively rare and did not constitute the "wave" of literacy advice that appeared in the later Nineteenth Century, nor would appear again in the mid-1950s.

As noted in Chapter Two, feminist scholars have explored child-raising advice to mothers in the inter-war and post-war eras (Arnup, 1996; Gleason, 1999). The analysis of literacy advice in this chapter builds upon and extends that literature by re-analysing popular child-raising texts through a "literacy lens." While this chapter builds on themes outlined in Chapter Four, it also identifies new themes and discursive strategies linked to intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family. These new themes include the rise of psychology and the "mental hygiene" movement, and the association of literacy advice with other constructs of normalcy, such as the ideal of the nuclear family, attachment theory, and the "sensitive mother." Inter-textual links in literacy advice from psychologists, the medical profession, and education institutions also provide rich terrain for exploring the ways in which literacy advice was distributed and "normed" across diverse institutional settings.

The analysis of advice in this chapter rests upon commercially produced, best-selling child-raising and reading advice texts, as well as the few available that were distributed locally in parent newsletters and government issued pamphlets and booklets. With the exception of the United States' based *Parents' Magazine*, which absorbed *Mothers' Magazine* in 1929, there were relatively few consistent sources of child-raising advice to consult during this time period, and even fewer references to reading advice, let alone the broader notion of "literacy." Indeed, as in previous decades, literacy advice was

more specifically advice to promote children's reading; the two terms were often equated. While the analysis in this chapter focuses on the literacy advice circulating at the time, perhaps with the exception of the best selling texts of Flesch (1955) and Doman (1964), it cannot be assumed that this advice was accorded by individual parents the same importance as it was by educators or researchers. The sources consulted for analysis of advice included *Chatelaine* magazine, *Parents' Magazine* in the United States, the first editions of Spock's (1946; 1957) *Baby and Child Care*, The Department of National Health and Welfare of Canada (1949) *Canadian Mother and Child* (1949) and The Department of National Health and Welfare of Canada (1950) *Up the Years From One to Six* (developed and distributed freely to Canadian mothers until the 1980s by the Canadian Department of National Health and Welfare), and the newsletters of the Canadian Home and School Federation (CHSF), titled *Canadian Home and School* and its forerunner, *Food for Thought*. I conduct more detailed discursive analysis of commercial best sellers such as Flesch's *Why Johnny Can't Read* (1955) and Doman's (1964) *Teach Your Baby to Read,* as well as Nancy Larrick's (1958, 1964, 1975) *A Parents' Guide to Children's Reading,* because they appeared in at least two editions and represented key shifts and currents in popular and academic debates about the role of parents and particularly mothers in their children's literacy development.

The table on the following page summarizes the domestic literacy management roles for mothers embedded in literacy advice from 1950 to 1965, and its links to mothering discourses. The chapter begins with an overview of literacy advice from 1929 to 1950, followed by a more detailed analysis in the years 1950 to 1965 as literacy advice to mothers spiked in popular magazines.

Table 4: Discourses and Themes in Literacy Advice to Mothers, 1945–1968

Domestic literacy management	**Intensive mothering**	**Domestic pedagogy**	**The normal family**
Preserving a reading culture	Home reading of "good books" becomes associated with the psychological construct of "mother-child" attachment.	Mothers should make reading appealing by providing interesting books, time for children to read, and a quiet environment. The ideal domestic setting for reading has walls lined with book shelves laden with classic literature.	The "progress of human civilization" is dependent upon families that read to their children and attend libraries with them.
Parental involvement in schools	Contradictory advice: Children's emotional health is equated with "reading readiness" and thus the quality of mothering in the home. Yet, children who come to school as readers are bored.	Domestic pedagogy bridges home and school as sites for literacy support/surveillance. Should parents assert their power over teachers or support democratic ideals by remaining in a more helpful "para-professional" role?	Mothers' work in support of schools contingent on gender division of labour and women's presence in the home. Women who work "a threat to children's learning."
Teaching children to read	Mothers should find every opportunity to foster their child's oral language skills. They must also ensure their children are always happy because happy children come to school ready to read. But they must not be "competitive" and pressure children to read.	Debate over "look-say" and "phonics" reading methods introduced by Flesch (1955) into popular culture. Ideal mothering roles are to teach children by creating "natural" opportunities to learn in everyday life at home, or alternatively to directly teach young children to read using phonics methods.	Children's "emotional stability" and "good citizenship" depend upon the reading practices modeled in the properly functioning nuclear family.

Regulating reading practices	Mothers should constantly monitor what children are reading.	Mothers should regulate children's reading and discourage the "comic book habit."	Focus of family life is on maintaining a love of "good" reading in the face of competition from "visual" sources such as movies, comics and television which can deteriorate family life and children's mental health. "Good reading is preventative medicine for the mind."

Domestic literacy management 1929 to 1945

By the 1930s, psychology had infiltrated many aspects of Canadian "child training" literature. Indeed, this period can be characterized by the quest for "normal" children and families (Gleason, 1999), and a shift in the formation of character, to the development of normal personalities (Gere, 1997). There was also growing interest in all aspects of the psychological and behavioural development of the pre-school child (Gesell, 1940, vi).[10] Literacy advice to mothers during this time was embedded in the discursive ideal of the normal family, and connected to a range of state and para-state institutions that convened around the concept of "mental hygiene." The mental hygiene movement sought to define normal or "typical" child behaviour, which could be expressed as scales or lists to assist professional to in turn identify, prevent, and remediate "extreme" or "abnormal" behaviour. The mental hygiene approach to child-raising emphasized the children's environment as a key explanatory factor for "many types of inadequacy and of mental disturbance" (Blatz & Bott, 1929, p. 252) and thus advice to parents focused on regulating the home environment to prevent potential "abnormalities". This interest in the home environment as a key factor in child development implied increased scrutiny of mothering practices, as well as new domestic literacy roles that drew on discourses of intensive mothering and the normal family.

The mental hygiene approach to "child training" is exemplified in William Blatz's and Helen Bott's (1928) *Parents and the Pre-School Child.* This was considered "the first

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[10] The tern "pre-school" was used to describe children between the ages of zero to six. More recently, the term has come to be associated with children ages 3-5 who attend part-time pre-school programs. The term "early years" currently most commonly describes the life stage of children aged 0-6.

real text book in Parent Education" in Canada (Johnson, 1929, p. 32). Blatz was the director of the *St. George School for Child Study,* which held discussion groups on problems of child-training for middle-class mothers. The outcomes of these discussions, which were facilitated by Helen Bott, were interpreted through the lens of mental hygiene and constituted the main source of data for *Parents and the Pre-School Child.* The mental hygiene approach marked a departure from the theories of developmental determinism predominant in the Nineteenth Century, as discussed in Chapter Four. Blatz and Bott questioned the doctrine of developmental determinism that held that the "basic patterns of character are laid down in the first two years of life" (1929 p. 259). They argued that such a doctrine promoted the "developmental derby" (Hardyment, 1995) played by many parents who had picked up the incipient message that the "earlier development takes place, the better" (Blatz & Bott, p. 256). In terms that echo contemporary concerns over the implications of the "early years last forever" doctrine (Canadian Institute of Child Health, 1997), Blatz and Bott observed that "the widespread emphasis today upon childhood as the great period in the making of the individual is causing a blight of pessimism in the minds of those who have passed well beyond that period" (Blatz & Bott, 1929, p. 260). They wondered if the belief among the general population that childhood was a determinant phase in the human life cycle did not in itself constitute a controlling environmental factor, a self-fulfilling prophecy as it were, with detrimental consequences for the course of action available to individuals as they grew older (Blatz and Blott, 1929, p. 261).

Indeed, adherence to the perspective of developmental determinism undermined the emphasis in the mental hygiene movement on parent education as a tool for the

intervention and prevention of the "problems of child-training." Parent education had become an important feature of the mental hygiene movement, since one of the implications of the increased interest among scientists in the process of child development was the belief that this process was too complex and fragile for the average mother to understand without the intervention of experts, as parent educators.[11]

Frances Lily Johnson, who compiled bibliographies for Blatz and Bott, reviewed *Parents and the Pre-School Child* for *Chatelaine* magazine in January, 1929. She claimed the book would find audience among mothers, teachers, nurses, clinicians, and social workers alike and was essential reading for "avoiding the pitfalls that lie in the path of every normal child during the course of his life, by means of well-planned and consistent training in the early years" (Johnson, 1929, p. 32). With its focus on educating parents, one implication of the mental hygiene movement was the call for parents to reclaim involvement in their children's learning, which the authors felt had been "too far delegated to teachers and other specialists" (p. 279). They singled out fathers in particular:

> [Fathers] should take the time and trouble to maintain an active and appreciative participation with the child in the process of learning]. There was a time when this task was assumed by the parents, but with the modern speeding up and specialization of life this has been delegated to others — and not merely instruction but the whole process of managing the child. It sometimes strikes one with a shock to realize how far the

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[11] This notion was taken to its idealistic extreme by B. F. Skinner in *Walden Two*, in his utopian fantasy in which children are raised without the annoying inconsistencies and inadequacies of their mothers and fathers.

average parent, particularly the father, is removed from the activities of his own child, not merely in the school, but in the home. (p. 279)

However, while the mental hygiene lens dominated child-raising advice, literacy advice remained sparse. *Chatelaine* magazine published only three articles on the topic of children's reading and writing in the 1930s. In an article, "Teaching the Child to Read: There Is An Art In It and a Good Deal of Planning" (1929, p. 40), Marjorie Powell, a former teacher, drew on the tenets of mental hygiene to offer "a few simple rules" for parents to follow at home that constituted "good reading as a preventative medicine for the mind" (p. 40). Such rules included, first and foremost, not forcing children to read, but rather enticing them into the practice by placing desirable books next to a bowl full of shiny red apples, letting children see mother reading, selecting books at a higher level than their abilities, sending the younger ones out to play so older children can concentrate, producing new books on topics related to their school work, "sending them off to dreamland mounted on romances," talking about books once they are finished reading them, and encouraging children to re-tell the stories they read (p. 40). Anticipating the possible reactions of busy mothers with little time and many children, and naturalizing the "common-sense" domestic literacy practices associated with the habitus of middle-class, Anglo-Saxon Canada, Powell assured her readers that, "[N]one of this is drudgery. In fact it will become your greatest joy, a sort of great game, by which you will forge an unbreakable bond" (Powell, 1929, p. 40).

Motivation for supporting reading in these ways derived from concerns to provide children with a "constant love" in times of "fad and fancies that pass each other in swift confusion" (Powell, 1929, p. 40). Just like the ideals of the family social reading seventy

years earlier, reading in the home was considered a strategy for domestic accord and cultural continuity, a means of holding in place a changing world and wielding influence over children, who were presented with many more interesting activities than reading. Indeed, Powell claims that these "good" reading practices work as an antidote to the immensely popular but less desirable activities of "teasing to go to the movies or someone else's house because there isn't anything to do at home" (p. 40).

A review of the citations for children's reading in the US-based *Parents Magazine* similarly suggested only intermittent concern for children's reading in the 1930s. However, perhaps because the editorial board of *Parents Magazine* was composed of members of Columbia Teachers' College, this magazine generally published more articles on reading and parental involvement during this period than did *Chatelaine.* Much advice was informed by the constructs of maturation theories that held that children should not learn to read before they were "mentally" ready. Citing Morphett and Washburn's influential 1937 research, Williams told parents that "children must have the mental age of six years and six months in order to learn to read. In most cases it is useless to expect this accomplishment of children who are mentally younger" (Williams, 1939, p. 210). In this vein, advice emphasized the quality of children's experiences inside and outside of school, and argued that delaying reading instruction provided more opportunities for young children in Grade One to gain the life experiences necessary to learn to read: "It is extremely difficult to derive much sense from 'come with me to the zoo' unless one knows what a zoo is" (p. 221). Advice assumed, and reinforced, professional-level interest and knowledge on the part of its readers in the "science" of children's reading, as college instructors and school teachers contributed articles to

popular magazines. Yet as important as it was for both mothers and fathers to be abreast of the latest reading methods used in school, they should not interfere: "Children are sensitive, and it is possible to develop in these early stages of reading either great joy and pleasure in reading, or dislike and fear. This may greatly affect later reading progress when a child starts school...[M]ost failures are due to hurrying children" (Wilson & Burke, 1943, p. 28).

Indeed, appropriate household routines that articulated with the needs of the school were considered more important than reading to children or modeling literacy practices in the home. In this way, domestic literacy management was really about managing children's time and space in the context of the normal family. Fenner and Fishburn (1943) provided a self-guided questionnaire for mothers against which to measure their performance in supporting their children's literacy and learning:

> If Eugene has a hard time settling down to school work in the mornings, it may be that an earlier breakfast hour would result in less hurry and confusion at home. ...[H]as your child too many or too few out-of-school activities? Do you provide a quiet place for home study with good light and ventilation, study equipment and freedom from interruption? (p. 125)

Happiness was a precondition for children's ability to read. The ideals to strive for, according to Fenner and Fishburn (1943), were "a home life that is happy, unselfish and democratic, the ability to read and write, study and act and the use of free time for worthy activities and pleasures" (p. 127). Perhaps the most constant thread in reading advice in the 1940s was the concern for what children read. In 1941, a "children's reading committee" was struck by the Canadian Home and School Federation (CHSF), in

part to challenge the spread of violent comic books believed to harm children, and to "turn the attention of parents to the value of good literature and to the need to extend library services for children" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 3). Prominent in parenting magazines were "book list" features that recommended desired reading for boys and girls, and oriented parents toward purchasing books that appealed to children along gender and age differences.[12]

Yet as interconnected as "good reading" and "good mothering" were in this advice, there was also recognition of the uniqueness of each child — many advice articles emphasized that children learned to read at different ages and rates, depending on their "mental ages," and one pointed out that children who learned to read in Grade Three often get more enjoyment out of reading than those who are hurried to learn in Grade One (Williams, 1939, p. 45). According to this advice, the principle domestic pedagogy task for mothers in the 1940s was to provide a happy home. There were dangers involved in encouraging children to read before they were mentally ready, not the least of which was boredom in school (Rautman, 1945, p. 152) or the experience of failure (Rautman, 1945; Williams, 1939; Wilson and Burke, 1943), from which children needed protection. Indeed, reading to children too much could have the effect of putting them off reading altogether:

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[12] See for example the regular feature by Ruth Wendell Washburn in *Parents' Magazine* in the 1940s and on occasion by Elizabeth Chant Robertson and Kate Aitken in the *Chatelaine* in the 1950s. The role of book lists and recommended reading in constructing gender identities is a theme that touches on the concerns of this thesis, but is also more fully explored in the work of Bronywn Davies. For example, see Davies, B. (1989). *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales. Preschool Children and Gender*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin and Davies, B. (1993). *Shards of Glass. Children Reading and Writing Beyond Gendered Identities*. Sydney: Hampton Press.

> Often parents are so anxious for their son or daughter to develop an interest in the printed page that they spend an excessive amount of time reading stories to the youngster. If stories are read to him constantly, he may have his curiosity completely satisfied with the result that he will have no reason to learn to read for himself. (Rautman, 1945, p. 152)

Moreover, articles included many examples of ideal middle-class homes that promoted reading, in which siblings rather than mothers played key roles in fostering young children's interest in reading (Sanders, 1944, p. 117), and in which children could pursue their own reading interests with some independence from adults. Referring to her own son, Bean (1944) wrote, "At four years old he got his own library card and went alone to the library to pick out his own books while I went to the store" (p. 120). Indeed, children could be expected to "look at books" independently at home or with their older siblings when mothers were "busy with their own duties" (Rautman, 1945, p. 21).

Domestic pedagogy tasks thus took the shape of providing and encouraging an atmosphere for the appreciation of books, but not for the direct teaching or encouragement of "real reading." This was a fine line, and one that in part reflected the value of reading as a cultural performance, embedded in the habitus of middle-class Anglo-Saxon culture, rather than an actual meaning making practice. But this also suggests that literacy advice shifted according to social context: it would indeed be impossible in later years to encourage a four year old to visit a library alone and mothers thus became key partners in this activity. Moreover, in a war time domestic economy, it was perhaps possible for mothers to be "too busy" to read to their children, in ways that they were not able to be in the middle classes of the Nineteenth Century, nor indeed in

the 1970s and 1980s, when mothers ideally used domestic tasks as opportunities to impart literacy-related knowledge. Thus, discontinuities in the discourse of intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy may be attributed to a complex interplay of wartime domestic economic realities, nation-building priorities, and cultural and scientific views that regarded children as potentially fragile and emotionally vulnerable — considerations that at the time seemed more pressing than the age at which they learned to read.

Less ambiguous in this advice was the need to articulate home life and school life. Indeed, the connections between domesticity, child-raising, and democracy were made in the publication of Benjamin Spock's (1946) *Baby and Child Care.* Spock was a pediatrician and became one of the most popular child-raising experts of the Twentieth Century. In 1946, he sought to ease the concerns of parents in a changing world, and positioned child-raising as a key cultural practice to avoid the evils of fascism and anti-democratic governance, and to stave off the "outside" influences of new forms of media, such as the radio (Spock, 1946). Amid these broader social visions was also the persistent tension over mothers' domestic literacy management roles. As we will learn in the following section, the place of mothers in regulating children's reading practices while observing the expert status of teachers, doctors, and other experts became increasingly conflicted.

Domestic literacy management in the 1950s and 1960s

Whereas references to children's reading in popular parenting magazines in the 1930s and 1940s were made in the context of managing children's emotional fragility and ensuring their happiness, domestic literacy management in the 1950s revolved around

three main tasks: preserving the "culture" of reading in the home, involvement in schools, and regulating children's reading practices.

Preserving a "reading culture"

Preserving a culture of book reading was considered an important aspect of nation-building and an antidote to the rapid changes in society that many felt threatened the normal Canadian way of life. For example, in 1952 *Saturday Night* featured an article lamenting the "reading culture crisis" in Canada, marked by the perceived decline in children's and adult's interest in reading and evidence of changing reading practices. The author argued that the decline in reading of the classics and novels was a threat to the "continuity of human culture" (Jones, 1952, p. 30). He attributed this decline to the rising cost of books, to the temptations of more exciting media such as TV, radio, magazines, and movies, and to parents who did not spend the time they once did reading to their children, and to the sanitized prose in children's school readers whose controlled vocabulary and scientific "readability indexes" (p. 29) made reading a thankless chore. Taken together, Jones argued, these influences left children little incentive to become the "book worms" of previous eras. Solutions to this perceived crisis involved a recommitment "to the reading of great literature" and the need for a new crop of Canadian authors to write new "great works." Concerns over a crisis in reading in the 1950s were echoed by Alice Kane in *Canadian Home and School.* She linked children's desire to read books to their intelligence, and to a new concern among educators and psychologists for children's "well-balanced" personalities.

> Do your children enjoy books? Or is reading a hardship to them? Mostly the answer depends on the attitude of the family unit. If the parents read

> and enjoy their books and talk about them, the children will too. Books are important; children need them if they are to grow into intelligent, well-balanced men and women. (Kane, 1958, p. 1)

As documented in Chapter Four, advice in support of the home library and children's need for their own bookshelf echoed Hall's recommendations along the same lines forty years earlier. The preservation of the ideal of family social reading and the home library were a level for preserving a "reading culture" as defined by middle-class Anglo-Saxon educators and researchers. The ideal of a "reading culture" spurred the development of the "home reading committee" struck by the Canadian Home School Federation campaign in 1951. According to the official history of that Federation (Mansfield, 2000), this committee aimed to "turn the attention of parents to the value of good literature and to the need to extend library services for children" (p. 2). Deverell, writing in the *Canadian Home and School,* challenged the popular view that the ability to read was a key to prosperity and an indicator of the amount of respect that should be accorded and individual. He argued that "this is surely a very limited value to place on reading" (1953, p. 17), and emphasized instead the cultural importance of reading books. While acknowledging that reading for work and to keep abreast of current affairs and sport news "had their place in our reading, these should not completely replace the reading of books, which really matter" (p. 17). Elsewhere, Deverell (1953) advised that the requisite home book shelf "should not include too many mysteries or romances" (p. 8). He asked: "Instead of comic book collections, why not encourage your boy to collect really worthwhile books with hard covers?" (p. 9)

Promoting a reading culture was also a means of regulating children's reading. A November 1953 editorial in *Parents' Magazine* highlighted the threats to children's "good" reading posed by undesirable comics, which children were reading in ever-increasing numbers. However, the magazine's proposed solution to this crisis involved taking advantage of the market for these comics by publishing its own more "wholesome" children's comic series.

The *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in British Columbia* in 1960 also considered the out-of-school literacy activities of children a threat to the work of the school:

> Some radio, television and moving-picture programs, as well as certain types of reading material, may undermine the efforts of the schools. The Commission considers that programs and reading materials stressing crime, vulgarity, and promiscuity are out of keeping with the purposes of education. Even in their least damaging forms they may lessen the influence of the schools and, as competing interest create a distraction from serious learning. (Chant, 1960, pp. 49–50)

Once again, these images of ideal reading suggest that literacy advice is not only about promoting children's abilities to read and write, but also about promoting and maintaining a middle-class literacy habitus. Indeed, the concern for a "reading culture" may also have been a response to increased immigration to Canada and the United States in the wake of World War Two, as well as the context the Cold War in which the maintenance of cultural ideals seemed particularly important for distinguishing North American and Western European societies from those of Eastern Europe. But before

moving to this theme in literacy advice, it is important to consider the shifting relationships between children's literacy and parental involvement in schools.

Parental involvement in schools

Domestic literacy work entailed not only managing literacy experiences inside the home, but also managing the literacy relationships between the home, school, and broader community. Indeed the lines between the domestic and public sphere become blurred through a literacy lens in which the work of mothers crossed and intersected each of these domains. What is "family literacy" and what is "school literacy" is more difficult to distinguish as the ideals of a "reading culture" meld with the ideals of school success and nation-building. This theme enters the data analysis during this early 1950s era, and becomes even more important in the analysis of literacy advice in the 1990s.

Spock (1957) believed that parental work for "good schools" was a cornerstone of democracy. He encouraged mothers to effect school reform by "becoming members of local parent-teacher associations, attending meetings regularly and showing the principals and superintendents they are interested in good schools" (p. 316). Woolgar (1954) in *Food for Thought* noted that the "changing view of the child" and new-found theories about the "integration of body, mind and spirit," led to an increase in home-school co-operation whereby the "whole child" and his different lives were brought together in a shift from "authoritarianism to democratic governance" (p. 33). He reported that "a full 2% of Canadian parents were involved in their children's school in the form of willingly contacting their children's teachers and visiting the school" (Woolgar, 1954, p. 34), a marked increase over former years, though lower than desired since "10% of children badly needed the cooperative effort of parents and teachers" (p. 31). Woolgar attributed

this increase in parental involvement to higher levels of parent education through which parents had become better versed in the mental health principles that regarded the child as a "whole." It was the application of sound mental health principles in the home, and the cooperation between parent and teacher in promoting these principles, that was deemed key to children's learning, and even more importantly, the promotion of "democratic ideals" and "sound mental health" (1954, p. 31).

In addition to promoting democracy and mental health, the work of school and community-involved mothers was also vital to providing children with the all-important "best" books outside of school, as part of the effort to promote a reading culture. Editions of *Canadian Home and School* and *Food for Thought*, as well as articles in popular magazines, are replete with reports of the work of Home and School Associations (also called Parent-Teacher Associations or PTAs) in organizing inter-school book exchanges, lobbying politicians for support for local libraries, fund raising for school libraries, organizing book mobiles to rural families, and so on. This work constituted the main source of support for Canadian libraries in the 1950s. Alethea Johnson of the Canadian Association of Children's Libraries attested to the benefits of this work for integrating (or some may say for assimilating) new Canadians. She praised the father of a little girl named Mary, who with Mary's mother, wearing a "shawl worn in old-word style," introduced her to the world of books at the public library (Johnson, 1950, p. 17). Johnson recommended that, if there was no public library in their town, parents should "inquire of your provincial Department of Education about such services," pointing out that "Home and School leaders have been responsible for many of the inter-school book exchanges and the regional library co-operation which is growing so rapidly in Canada" (p. 17).

A national project to build the public library system was launched in 1950 and supported by provincial Home and School Associations, who called upon parents to "report on library facilities and to survey regulations on school and community library services in their area, with a view to action" (Canadian Home and School Parent Teacher Federation, 2004, p, 2).[13] Women's involvement in this work was not only important to achieving the aims of the public library and public schooling systems, but was also an indication of private and public dimensions of domestic literacy work. Alethea Johnston (1950) connected socially and school-involved parents and "good" reading practices in the home in commenting that, "librarians have observed that the families who find time to read together belong to the busiest parents" (p. 17).

Teachers, parents, and librarians likely regarded the work of establishing public libraries in schools and communities as vital to the promotion of children's literacy and learning. But for parents this was also unpaid work, carried out in the main by women with children in the school system. Special encouragement to sustain this demanding work was required. Writing in *Canadian Home and School*, Sister Frances de Sales (1950) reassured parents that: "Perhaps you sometimes say to yourself, 'my job isn't important because it's such a little job!' But you are wrong. The most obscure person can be very important"(p. 13). And yet some mothers questioned the effectiveness of the "bake sale" approach to parental involvement which diminished the importance and impact of women's domestic literacy work. A letter from Mrs. Agnes Bell in *Liberty* magazine was reprinted in the December 1959 edition of *Canadian Home and School*:

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[13] The Canadian Home and School Federation was renamed the Canadian Home and School Parent Teacher Federation in 2000, four years before they published their official history.

> After eight years, 70 dozen cookies, 50 loaves of sandwiches, miles of knitting, and endless cups of tea, I've had enough of Home and School Associations. When my daughter, Karen, started kindergarten in 1950, in Hamilton, Ont.'s east end, I could hardly wait to pay my 50 cents to join Canada's least exclusive, most over-publicized organization. ...[F]undraising becomes an end in itself. No one seems to care where, when or why the money will be spent. A film strip, projector, kindergarten equipment, scissors, sports gear, drapes for the teachers' lounge. If these are necessary we should ask for city funds for them....[M]any teachers never attend — often with good reason. Many attend night school, others have outside demands. Teachers who do come, tend to congregate in a corner; few parents have nerve enough to storm the barricade. (Bell, 1959, p. 20)

In response to her letter, readers attacked Mrs. Bell on several issues. Some accused her of writing under a pseudonym to hide her identity. Others felt she had undermined the important role of the Home and School Association in supporting public education. One writer felt she simply lacked a spirit of cooperation (1959, pp. 30–31). But a Mr. Thomas Ireland countered that the Home and School Association should not sweep Mrs. Bell's concerns aside, and that indeed, "Home and School" structures should be more formal, purposeful, and exclusive, with two tiers of members, and thus become a more "streamlined, more effective organization conducive to recognition by all concerned" (December 1959, p. 31). In other words, Mr. Ireland seemed to be suggesting that if the literacy work done by the Home and School Association was less like women's

work, or more like government or business organizations, it would be accorded greater status. These exchanges suggest that the public literacy work carried out by mothers in the form of parental involvement in schools and public libraries was not always accorded the social status commensurate with the efforts and commitment invested in it.

In his 1955 best seller *Why Johnny Can't Read,* Rudolph Flesch captured the anxiety among educators and psychologists surrounding the "reading culture crisis" and parents' involvement in schools. He brought into the public sphere long-standing academic debates about how children should be taught to read, and advocated a more confrontational, rather than cooperative relationship between homes and schools. Flesch's work, and other advice to mothers for teaching their children to read (or for why they should not teach their children to read), is considered in the next section.

Teaching children to read

"Reading readiness" was a concept grounded in the tenets of mental hygiene and its attendant maturation theories, whose influence upon reading advice in the 1940s was documented earlier in this chapter. Arnold Gesell's (1940) "ages and stages" approach to marking children's development helped to shape the view that children under the age of five or six were not emotionally or physically mature enough to read, and many should wait until they were even older (1940, p. 209). Gesell developed "reading readiness" criteria to judge children's readiness to read. The criteria included a "mental age" of 6–6.5 years, a "relatively mature personality," "normal vision and hearing" and the "ability to adjust to the requirements of school routine" (Gesell, 1940, p. 209). He also suggested that picture book reading could be used as a diagnostic tool to further gauge reading readiness for children aged 12 months to six years. Although Gesell did not advise

parents directly, his criteria for reading readiness, and his use of mother-child story book reading practices as a diagnostic tool for assessing children's reading abilities, has translated into many varieties of "checklists and tips" for mothers on how to get their children "ready to read" which continue to circulate well into the Twenty-first Century.

Interestingly, few of these "Gesellian-inspired" checklists had much to do with getting meaning from print. Indeed, getting ready to begin formal schooling was equated with getting ready to read. In both the 1950 and 1971 editions of *Up the Years from One to Six*, published and distributed at no cost by the Department of National Health and Welfare of Canada, mothers were urged to build criteria for school readiness into their parenting practices. The criteria included sound health, security of love and affection, a healthy attitude to following instructions, the ability to get along with other children, dress themselves, and be without their mother for several hours a day, and "providing your child with information about the world by answering his questions and pointing out similarities and differences" (Department of National Health and Welfare of Canada, 1950, p. 114). This list spanned two editions of the *Up the Years* manual, twenty years apart, suggesting that the reading readiness paradigm guided advice for a whole generation of children and changed little even in the face of the "rapidly changing society" that motivated many commentators to offer literacy advice in the first place.

For mothers, teaching children to read was work best left to the experts. Instead, their roles in this process involved conforming to ideals of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family. On the rare occasions when Spock addressed reading to children in his first three editions of *Your Baby and Child* (1946; 1957), it is in the context of readiness for school and concern for the damage inflicted upon the child's

psyche by "competitive" parents who push children to "read early." As he stated, "[I]t often does harm and it never helps. It will only put him out of step with the other children and may make it more difficult for him to catch onto the school system of teaching these subjects" (Spock, 1957, p. 318). While Spock felt that the solution to reading difficulties was prompt and appropriate assistance at school, in a section entitled "Trouble with Lessons", he articulated the newly popular "secure attachment" view that the cause of children's reading difficulties could be attributed to psychological problems caused by poor parenting such as "severe deprivation of love" (Spock, 1957, p. 320), sibling rivalry, over-critical or nagging parents, and so on (Spock, 1957).

Just as in the 1940s, criteria for reading readiness emphasized more children's emotional stability than their knowledge of, or interest in, print. One of the key sources of emotional stability necessary to learn to read was a mother's constant presence in the home. Spock evoked in the first edition of his best seller the Freudian concept of "security" in the context of warning mothers not to work:

> The important thing for a mother to realize is that the younger the child the more necessary it is for him to have a steady, loving person taking care of him. In most cases, the mother is the best one to give him this feeling of "belonging" safely and surely. She doesn't quit on the job, she doesn't turn against him, she takes care of him always in the same familiar house. (Spock, 1946, p. 460)

The concept of security was bolstered through Bowlby's (1951) concept of "maternal deprivation." Bowlby's (1951) report on the mental health of children orphaned or lost in Europe in World War II was particularly influential in shifting the

Freudian focus from children's internal mental states as sources of emotional conflict to the effects of family relationships and mothering practices upon children's "maladjustment." Extrapolating his findings to typical families in North America, Bowlby was worried about the high social and emotional consequences of maternal deprivation, or even "partial deprivation," which meant nothing less than "constant attention day and night, seven days a week and 365 days a year" (Hulbert, 2003, p. 205). The concept of maternal deprivation provided a new set of motivations and strategies for the discourse of intensive mothering evidenced in literacy advice from the middle 1950s onward.

The tenet of intensive mothering that only biological mothers could be suitable caregivers could also be traced in advice for promoting children's success in school and their "readiness to read." In her article, "Can Babies and Careers Be Combined?", Cameron (1959) defined babies as "any children from one week of age into the teens who need their mother's presence, care and guidance" (p. 8). Cameron divided working mothers into those who need to work, and those who work by choice. A mother who "works by choice" was considered to have misunderstood "the mothering career" (p. 8). "She's the gal who devotes her energies to making fine citizens of other people's children and pays somebody to teach her own" (Cameron, 1959, p. 8). This advice equated reading readiness with the broader goal of "giving a good citizen to the country" (p. 9), two goals that relied upon women's participation in the discourses of intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy.

Yet discourses of intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy could be traced to opponents of the reading readiness paradigm as well. Flesch (1955) was a vehement

opponent of reading readiness, if not the ideals of intensive mothering and the normal family that bolstered it. In *Why Johnny Can't Read*, he argued that the "look-say" approach to reading amounted to "word guessing" and required children to memorize long lists of words and suffer through inane and boring "controlled" texts such as *Dick and Jane* before they could read fluently. He advocated instead for a phonics approach, arguing that once children could recognize and decode the letter-sound combinations of the English language, they could read, and would no longer need to rely on guess work or memorization.

For Flesch, women's domestic literacy work ideally involved asserting authority and control over "Johnny's" education by demanding reform in school reading methods, and teaching their children to read at home since "schools just couldn't get it right" (Flesch, 1955, p. 56). To this end, mothers were provided a list of fifteen specific instructional steps to carry out with "Johnny" every day. These steps consisted of strict adherence to a consecutive and repetitive set of drills.

Interestingly, Spock (1957) also criticized the "see-say" method of teaching children to read, yet he did so in the context of growing concern over boys' reading difficulties:

> Children learn that the word means dog before they know the letters that go into it. For most children this is a quicker and easier way to learn, and it has been adopted in many schools. However, a certain number of children, particularly boys, as soon as they have learned a number of words begin to be confused between "dog" and "god" and "was" and "saw" and "on" and

> "no." ...[T]he child with left-right confusion should be identified early and taught by the old fashioned spelling "phonetic" method. (p. 321)

Any similarity between Spock's and Flesch's views on mothers' role in their children's literacy ended there. As questionable as the reading methods Flesch promoted were, the social malaise he tapped into suggests once again that advice to mothers about their children's reading was rarely just about reading. For example, Korda (2001) in his review of American best-sellers in the Twentieth Century, suggested that Flesch's book rocketed to commercial success because *Why Johnny Can't Read* was the first book to really question the values and results of the comfortable suburban life and to suggest that behind the glossy, calm surface, whole areas — in this case, schools — were hardly functioning at all" (Korda, 2000, p. 103). Certainly, Cold War competition and in particular the USSR's launch of Sputnik also played a factor in focusing the lens upon young children's reading abilities as a barometer for North America's ambitions to economically outstrip the Eastern Bloc (Pearson, 2000). Indeed, Flesch's "reading crisis" in North America was couched within a larger concern for US global economic competition.

> Generally speaking, students in our schools are about two years behind students of the same age in other countries...I know of innumerable cases of young Austrians and Germans who applied for admission to college in this country. The standard practice is to give those students credit for two years of college if they have finished what corresponds to our high school abroad. (Flesch, 1955, p. 77)

The "reading culture crisis" was transforming into a "reading crisis." The distinction is important. Educators were becoming less concerned with the cultural practices of reading the classics in cozy homes lined with book shelves, and instead worried about the children who couldn't read at all. In attributing the "reading crisis" to incompetent teachers, administrators, and academics, Flesch gave mothers a way out of the blame that was often placed upon them if their children had difficulty reading. Yet, in Flesch's regime, mothers were still held responsible for "Johnny's" reading abilities, and indeed their responsibilities in this area were all the more daunting than merely setting up a nice bookshelf: "My advice is, teach your child to read yourself — before the age of five or before he learns bad habits from the school" (Flesch, 1955, p. 110).

There were many who challenged Flesch's "cure-all" approach to the perceived inadequacies of the school system. Writing in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Virgil Rogers (1955) observed that in every industrialized country there were about 10–15% of children, who, regardless of the method by which they were taught, had difficulties learning to read (Rogers, 1955). The solution he proposed was sufficient extra tutoring and support within the school — mothers did not come up for blame, nor did teachers, or children's socio-economic status — and indeed Rogers hoped that little Johnny would through his own cunning and fleetfootedness, avoid the pain of Flesch's "guaranteed method" by running the other way (Rogers, 1955, p. 71).

In *Parents' Magazine*, two prominent educators sought to reassure parents about reading methods used in schools. They acknowledged that parents tended to feel ashamed if their "Johnny can't read by the time he is seven and so blame the school for what they consider Johnny's failure" (Beaumont & Franklin, 1955, p. 42). They commented on the

ever-increasing and damaging competition among parents concerning their children's reading abilities, reminding parents that the ability to read was complex and that modern teaching methods did indeed work. They did not provide advice about what parents should do at home to support reading — this was cast as the role of a good teacher. But the article closed with a hint that the "reading crisis" may have been about concerns over immigration and cultural diversity in schools, as well as the fall out from the USSR's launch of Sputnik. "Cultured homes," in this context, may be read as a code for the discourses of difference that privileged the literacy habitus associated with Anglo-Saxon middle classes.

In spite of doubts over simplistic "cure-all" approaches to addressing children's reading difficulties, in the years following *Why Johnny Can't Read* many books and pamphlets appeared in the educational market to tap into parents' concern for their children's reading abilities. This rise in literacy advice paralleled a more general increase in child-raising advice provided in books, magazines and pamphlets in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Bruno Bettelheim, in his best-selling *Dialogue with Mothers* (1962), attributed this to "a growing market of concerned parents and even more concerned scientists and professionals, for the production of "well adjusted" children" (Bettelheim, 1962, p. 2).

Concerned parents of primary school children who were not yet able to read were still warned against trying to teach their child at home, though as one mother claimed, "heaven knows I've been tempted many times" (Christopher, 1957, p. 32). The most common advice still admonished parents thought to be competitive, and assured them that their normal middle-class home life would provide their child with everything

needed to learn to read. Paradoxically, parental concern for their children's reading was considered normal and appropriate. This concern indeed presented itself as an opportunity to market new advice books, and by extension, to circulate discourses of intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy. Laycock (1958) in recommending Nancy Larrick's *A Parents' Guide to Children's Reading,* observed:

> Since the 3-Rs are so much in the public eye today many parents are asking themselves, "can my child read adequately? If not, what is wrong? What can I do about it?" This book aims to help the parent to find an answer to these questions. It deals with what the parent can do to get the child ready for reading, the crucial first steps in grade one, the gathering of momentum in grades two and three and progress on many fronts in grades four, five and six. (Laycock, 1958, p. 12)

In the context of the "crisis" in education announced in the late 1950s, educators, researchers, and commentators began to look to the home as the solution, and the cause, for children's reading difficulties. This had important new implications for the regulation not only of children's reading, but also of mothering practices.

Regulating mothers' and children's literacy practices

Writing in *Parents' Magazine* in 1957, Christopher resurrected domestic literacy advice from the Nineteenth Century in the service of meeting mid-twentieth-century goals for schooling and nation-building. She recommended that mothers orient their domestic time to supporting their children's language development. She advised mothers to "play word games at home, label furniture and clothing in big letters, keep a notebook of new words the child was learning, buy him a picture dictionary and visit the library"

(Christopher, 1957, p. 33). Similarly, Larrick's' *Parents' Guide to Children's Reading*, first published in 1958, with a second edition published in 1964, heralded an interest in explicitly combining women's everyday domestic work with teaching children "pre-reading" skills. This shift was slow and uneven across texts and contexts, but it was a consistent trend in advice from the late 1950s. *A Parent's Guide to Reading* was one of the first projects of the United States National Book Committee, "a non-profit venture to teach parents ways to support children's reading" (Larrick, 1958, p. xx). Written and published in the United States, it became recommended reading for Canadian parents in *Canadian Home and School*, and sold over half a million copies in Canada and the United States. The author explained in the introduction that the advice contained in the book was endorsed by a broad range of institutions and associations and represented the latest in research on reading. The view that mothers were reading "helpers" to both their child (referred to throughout as a single, male child) and to the school was introduced in the first part of the book, titled "How to help, day in and day out." Larrick's main message was that a child who was "good at talking" was also a "good reader" and therefore the ideal domestic setting revolved around stimulating his language development in the home in interesting and creative ways, at every opportunity. Larrick also emphasized the link between supporting her child's reading and making him happy: "If you provide him with continuing delight in reading, you are helping him to be a happy, self-sufficient person" (Larrick, 1958, p. 21).

A Parents' Guide to Children's Reading offered lists of language games for mother and child to play, complete with detailed explanations for how each game contributed to reading readiness. Perhaps as an inter-textual reference to, and rebuke of,

Flesch's advice, these games should "never be like lessons or drills" (Larrick, 1958, p. 23) but rather occur naturally in the daily activities of the home. Promoting reading became associated with everything in the child's, and indeed the parents,' domesticated and exclusive world as the requisite stay-at-home mother was advised to support her child's language by acquiring a pet, planting seeds, conducting visits to the supermarket, the dairy, the post office, the zoo, and for suburban or rural families, a drive in "dense city traffic" (p. 43). She recommended: "Give the child plenty of time to take in the sights and sounds and smells and ask all the questions he can think of" (Larrick, 1958, p. 43). Mothers were advised to make notes on their children's best linguistic inventions.

To exclude any alternate views of the desirability or plausibility of carrying out such advice, the author insisted: "No matter how exasperating, this natural curiosity should be fostered" (p. 42). While ostensibly fathers may have been pressed into driving their children through dense traffic to stimulate their language development, it is the middle-class mother of the late 1950s and 1960s who was most likely to visit the supermarket and dairy, and inhabit the domestic time and space required to carry out these suggestions. Failure to comply with this advice could put the child's reading abilities at stake. Larrick cautioned:

> Your reaction to the curiosity of your four or five year old may influence him for the rest of his life. If you brush aside his questions, he may conclude that questions are bad and exploration should be discontinued. Yet these are the very things you wish to foster. (Larrick, 1958, p. 43)

An analysis of this statement from a multi-vocal perspective suggests that many mothers, as well as fathers and other caregivers of young children, perhaps even the

author herself, have been known to brush aside children's questions, particularly when they are constant and can't always be afforded one's "complete" attention. The view that anything less than full attention to all of children's questions could damage them for "the rest of their lives" normalized the discourse of intensive mothering as it excluded, through threats, the possibility of any other mothering or child-raising practice, nor indeed the children's agency to discover answers from other sources, in the spirit of the children who took themselves off to the library in the literacy advice of the 1940s.

Curiously, Larrick warned parents that the fruits of their literacy work in the home might prove anti-climatic once their child started school and met with the bland texts of "Oh, look, Tommy, look, oh, oh" (p. 88). But they could be consoled by the reassurance that as bland as the text was in comparison to all the vocabulary development done at home, "at least he is really reading for himself" (p. 89). Here Larrick was navigating the contradictory nature of her advice. Engage in rich domestic literacy practices and expose a child to wonderful books, so that he can arrive at school ready to read mind numbing, meaningless texts. Indeed, mounting critique of the drab texts that characterized children's literature in schools was one factor in the eventual demise of the "reading readiness" paradigm. Theodore Geisel, most commonly known as "Dr. Seuss", weighed in on literacy advice to parents, professing horror at the dull and stale graded readers that he said passed for children's literature in schools. In an interview with Silverman (1960) in *Parents' Magazine,* he said that in response to his horror at such literature, he set out to write books that incorporated phonological awareness, repetition, and vocabulary building, but, just as importantly, were fun to read and appealed to parents as well as children. He drew a firm connection between reading aloud to children at home and

success in reading at school, highlighting the importance of humour and entertainment in encouraging children to want to read.

In the interview (Silverman, 1960) Geisel suggested that the real problem with children's reading problems in school was that parents didn't read enough to them. As an author of popular children's books, "Dr. Seuss" was deemed well placed to provide literacy advice to parents, even as mothers themselves were asked to defer to expert educators and researchers in matters concerning their children's reading. Father-celebrities were also recruited to offer reading advice to other fathers. Richard Armour (1967), reflecting on his children's formative years, advised new fathers to make more time for their children than he had done, and while asserting their role as head of the house, to nevertheless remain flexible and approachable, and to read to their children. He shared that reading to his children every evening was one thing he was proud of, and called for a return to the "old" art of reading aloud. Yet, fathers who couldn't manage that could always delegate: "Of course some fathers turn the reading aloud over to their wives, or Grandfather or Grandmother. There is a good chance that grandparents go back to that earlier time when reading aloud in the home was a regular thing" (Armour, 1967, p. 48).

The gist of literacy advice in the 1960s was that middle-class homes needed to contribute much more to supporting children's reading than merely their "culture" or normal family life. Story book reading was but one, though central, practice, in an expanding repertoire of recommended domestic literacy activities. In addition to children's authors, psychiatrists and developmental psychologists offered literacy advice in popular magazines. They made links between the stages of story book reading and the

stages of development in young children (Neisser & Piers, 1962, p. 55) and considered the problem of the "bookworm" who may consume too much "junk" reading (p. 84). There were repeated calls for parental involvement in the school reading program (Secrist, 1959) and a need for mothers to pay more attention to their children's reading abilities (Eng, 1959). Across these texts, solutions to these "reading problems" included more monitoring of children's reading practices, more interaction between children and parents in the form of language games and purposeful mother-child conversation, more trips to the zoo, and more one-to-one story book reading in the home. In short, more work for mothers, and more surveillance of her mothering practices.

Yet the most enduring form of advice to parents was storybook reading. This practice was emphasized in the second edition of Larrick's *Parents' Guide to Children's Reading* (1964) and was central to advice strategies which relied upon the regulation of mothers and children's domestic time and space:

> Few activities create a warmer relationship between child and grownup than reading aloud. It is deeply flattering to be read to and have the undivided attention of the adult. Many parents plan a regular time for reading aloud each day. Just before nap-time and just before bedtime are traditional choices. Whatever the hour, be sure to make it the same each day so the child will look forward to it as he does lunch or supper. (p. 30)

The bedtime story or "read aloud time" became a "sacred hour" (Larrick, 1964, p. 31) for Peter and his family, and was represented in other advice as an opportunity for parent-child bonding. Yet we have come in this advice a long way from the images of the family social reading of the Nineteenth Century. The parent-child bedtime story had

become in 1960s literacy advice a private, didactic experience which took place "upstairs" and away from guests or other family members. In spite of the protestations in advice that parents shouldn't pressure their children to read, the detailed attention to children's reading in this advice suggests a very different message. The publishers and marketers of parenting magazines and books were aware that raising a child who could read before the age of seven was a significant marker of social status for parents and an indication of good mothering. The representation of reading in advice as a private performance and an individual achievement reinforced this status, even as the same advice frowned upon "competitive" parents who pressured their children. This tension between the social status accrued to the parents of "good" readers, and advice to support but not pressure children in this process, is perhaps most stark in the work of Glenn Doman.

Doman's work exemplified a version of domestic pedagogy that accentuated direct, rather than implicit forms of literacy teaching in the home. Like Bowlby (1951), Doman contributed to a long established trend in neuroscience and human development research of extrapolating findings from studies based on extreme or atypical cases of developmental delay or deprivation to the general population. He argued that if the "abnormal" children he worked with could learn to read, than "normal" children of even younger ages, such as babies and toddlers, could and should learn to read with ease. His views were controversial not because he argued that mothers were their children's "natural" teachers, but because many scholars believed the teaching methods he advocated were not developmentally appropriate for young children. But like Flesch's work (1955) (which Doman thought ridiculous), Doman (1964) also explicitly named the

stereotypes linking "good mothering" and children's reading. The popularity of his views, which continue to circulate on Internet chat rooms into the 2000s, may be attributed to his critique of psychology, and the gender biases within education institutions that rendered them suspicious of the contributions the average mother could make to her children's reading. Doman argued that this "professional paternalism" has

> [C]ome close to blunting mothers' instinctive reactions to their growing children, convincing them that they are being betrayed by their maternal instincts. If this trend continues, we run the serious risk of persuading mothers to view their offspring not as children at all but instead as little bundles of egotistical urges and dark, rather nasty packages of strange and frightening symbolisms that an untrained mother couldn't possibly understand. Nonsense. In our experience mothers make the very best mothers that there are. (Doman, 1964, p. 96)

Doman articulated children's reading as a flashpoint for the intersection of social class, mothering practices, and schooling. He reassured mothers that their social class background had nothing to do with their children's ability to read, but also named "non-readers" as the biggest problem in education, a problem that mothers needed to address:

> What a blessing [teaching children to read at home] would be for the privileged mother, for the fortunate child, for the terribly overworked teacher (who could then spend her time transmitting to her pupils the store of knowledge man has accumulated). And what a blessing it would be for the under-financed, underhoused, under-staffed school systems. Look around and see who are the real problems in school. Look at the top ten

> children in each class and see what common factor is the most prominent in the group. That's easy — they are the best readers. The non-reading children are the greatest problem in education. (Doman, 1964, p. 107)

In another example of the use of threats as a disciplinary strategy, Doman warned mothers that if they did not teach their children when they were tiny, they would have wasted those precious early years when, he argued, they are most able to learn to read. Like other examples of literacy advice documented in this chapter, one strategy evidenced in Doman's advice for normalizing intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy was the regulation of domestic time (For example, do this five times a day for five minutes each time) and space (in a corner of your home free from visual distractions), and of mothering practices such as: "hug your child, praise him, tell him he is the most clever child ever" (p. 56). In patronizing tones, he declared that his team had "come to the conclusion that the vast majority of mothers would be successful in teaching their children to read, but predicted that the small majority of intellectual mothers would enjoy even more success than 'dizzy blondes'" (p. 153.) However, he stated, "our results proved the opposite, dizzy blondes were more enthusiastic" (p. 153).

In the 1960s, Doman's book both reflected and stimulated interest in "early reading" in the academy in ways that suggest how the social trends and interests of popular culture can often drive academic research. For example, in 1966 Durkin published her ground breaking study, *Children Who Read Early*, documenting the practices that support early reading at home in ways that challenged the tenets of "reading readiness" as well as the drill techniques associated with Doman's method. Krebs and Krebs (1966) writing in *Parents' Magazine*, reviewed research on the new interest in

"early reading" and told parents they should not be tempted by the promises of "smart babies". They pointed out that,

> To answer the claim that early formal teaching is desirable because there is so much more to learn than before, and therefore the earlier children begin the better, educators point out that for average children there is apparently no lasting advantage to early reading. (Krebs & Krebs, 1966)

The authors concluded that experiencing failure in learning to read "early" would be more detrimental to children than not being taught to read at all. The desirability of children's early reading was up for debate. However, increased interest in the home as a context for literacy development of pre-school and school-aged children led to the formation in 1967 of the International Reading Association's Committee on Parents and Reading. This committee was formed as a result of the "Parents and Reading" convention held in 1967 in Kansas City in collaboration with the International Reading Association (IRA) and the US National Congress of Parents and Teachers. As described by the organizers, this was the "first IRA conference concerned specifically with the role of parents and the home in reading instruction" (Fay, in Smith, 1971, p. v).

This committee began to produce advice to parents for encouraging home reading, much of it based on papers given at that and subsequent IRA conventions. For example, in congratulating an enthusiastic mother who wanted to meet with the author to discuss plans for her six-month-old daughter's "books and reading," Gagliardo (1967) described the ideal domestic literacy practices that produce a successful school reader. These ranged from "mother's singing as she moved about her work" and father "eagerly singing nursery rhymes from his own childhood" (p. 5) to family visits to the zoo, walks in

nature, the custom of visits to the library, and the "necessity of book ownership" (p. 7). Gagliardo's advice reflected the view that even though domestic literacy expectations placed upon mothers were increasing, none of this was real work: "What a relief to discover that many of the activities which prepare a child for the great adventure of reading are actually part of everyday living!" (Gagliardo, 1967, p. 8). This "everyday living," however, was of the sort associated with middle-class homes that assumed para-professional roles in relation to teachers and researchers. This was in contrast to parents who "can't care" about their children's reading. In the same book, Karl (1967) commented: "There are parents whose educational backgrounds are such that the value of reading is not apparent to them. There are others whose own interests are so overpowering that there is no place in their thoughts for the development of their children" (p. 37).

Literacy advice was increasing in quantity if not in diversity. The Canadian Home School Federation decided to launch a home reading campaign to mark the Canadian Centennial in 1967. This was likely the first family literacy campaign in Canada, though it went by the name of the Centennial Reading Project. According to the Canadian Home School Federation official history published in 1994, the project objectives included:

> Encouraging parents to take responsibility for interesting pre-school children in pre-reading activities, providing a home bookshelf, helping to establish school and public libraries, developing a reading army of people to read to pre-schoolers or other groups, and disseminating information on children's reading (CHSF, 1994).

The campaign produced a Children's Reading Kit which was mailed to local Home and School Associations in the fall of 1967. Advice provided here was similar to advice that appeared in *Food for Thought*, *Canadian Home and School*, as well as in *Parents' Magazine* and *Chatelaine*.[14] Topics covered the cultural importance of the home book shelf, stating: "It's this kind of living with books that puts reading on a very personal level. Even a small library can build lifelong friendships with books" (CHSF, 1967). Another sheet encouraged parents to take "joy" and time in helping their children with homework, and to stock their house with appropriate reference books: "Your child's questions are cause for rejoicing for they show that he or she is thinking. The best thing you can say is, "Let's look it up" (CHSF, 1967). The advice prescribed the kinds of reference books to buy, and where to place them in the home, the goal being for mothers to "engage the interests of the entire family" (CHSF, 1967). In keeping with the close inter-textual links with the home reading campaigns of their US counterparts in the *National Committee for Parents and Teachers*, the Canadian Home and School Federation campaign deployed a number of discursive strategies that proved powerful in normalizing literacy acquisition as dependent upon women's domestic work and their "constant" availability and attention to their children's learning needs. Throughout the

[14] The Reading Kit included the article, *What Every Parent Should Know about the Teaching of Reading*, by Dr. A.F. Deverell of the University of Saskatchewan, and two pamphlets on the importance of reading aloud to children. Two other brochures were also produced and distributed as part of the project. They were *Books for a Family Bookshelf* by Helen Robertson, coordinator of children's services in the Winnipeg Public Library, and *What Every Parent Should Know about Early Childhood Influences* by Professor Alice Borden of the University of British Columbia. Two thousand posters were printed by IBM Canada, and Canadian educational reference-book publishers sponsored the printing of 900,000 copies of the brochure *Place a Book in the Hands of your Child.*

1950s and 1960s, such literacy advice implied not only the regulation of children's literacy practices, but the regulation of women's mothering practices as well.

Conclusion

With reference to the questions that guided this thesis, it may be concluded from the foregoing analysis that discursive formations associated with the "mother-as-teacher-of literacy" were indeed consistent with intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family. But the strategies that keep these discourses in place — and enable them to work as practices actively shaping literacy advice — shifted, and were often competing and contradictory. For example, guilt and fear were powerful strategies that normalized intensive mothering as a pre-requisite for children's literacy development: Even if women did not comply with this advice by design or default, they might have felt guilty for not doing so, and afraid of the consequences for their children's learning. The prevalence of threats and warnings in literacy advice discourses also served as dividing strategies, separating good mothers from bad, thinking citizens from problem readers.

The contradictions and silences in the advice reviewed in this and the previous chapter suggest that, regardless of its empirical base, advice to mothers about children's literacy was about more than children's abilities to make and share meaning from texts. Indeed, children's reading practices were also a lens into mothering abilities, and links between mental health, family bonding, and the project of meeting the "challenges" of public education in a democracy were replete in this advice.

In spite of the different philosophical and theoretical positions, and the different roles for mothers that advice suggested, there is also continuity in literacy advice from the Nineteenth and earlier Twentieth Centuries into the 1960s. This advice normalized

mothers as responsible for their children's literacy skills, and assumed the "normal family" as a necessary setting for domestic pedagogy, however defined, to occur. Moreover, although the increased emphasis placed upon domestic pedagogy in the 1950s, in particular, signaled recognition that women's domestic literacy work in the home had a public impact, there was virtual silence surrounding women's experiences of this work and the social context in which that work took place. While the official goals of mainstream literacy advice were to contribute to democracy by creating "thinking citizens," and "intelligent, well-balanced men and women," its effects were to normalize and promote the status of the habitus of middle-class, Anglo-Saxon families. In this way, the "reading culture crisis" became the "problem of the non-readers." As Gleason (1999) noted, it was the deviation of immigrant, working-class, single parent, Aboriginal and African-Canadian families from the ideals of the normal family and from the practices of intensive mothering, that labeled them "problem families" and children from these families would be labeled as "problem children" largely because they were not deemed appropriately "ready to read."

It is important to remember, however, that the ideal literacy practices associated with intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy in the 1950s and 1960s were mitigated by social conditions that made it possible, in many Canadian and US communities, for four-year-olds to go off to the library alone, and hence not be placed in a constant supervisory/pedagogic role with their mothers. Moreover, Mrs. Bell's letter (p. 140), reminds us that mothers negotiated these discourses in the context of their personal lives, their faculties of critical appraisal, and the cultural resources available to them. This

underlines the shifting context in which mothering discourses play out in different times and places.

As discussed in Chapter Three, feminist scholars have identified the dependence of schooling upon mothering work. Yet the analysis of advice in this chapter pushes this argument further, suggesting that "ideal" child readers in school settings were dependent upon the extent to which their mothers participated in the discourses of intensive mothering and domestic pedagogy, and indeed the extent to which their families approached "normalcy." It is here that the spectre is raised that in tying children's success as readers to the practices of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the "normal" family, advice may have had the effect of normalizing and reproducing not only gender inequality, but also inequalities in children's literacy achievement. Children whose families did not participate in these mothering discourses may have found themselves at a disadvantage in a schooling system that took the practice of these discourses for granted. I will return to this theme in subsequent chapters. These shifting and contested discourses of the "mother as teacher of literacy" in the context of the women's movement, and the rise and fall of the social welfare state, form the basis for Chapter Six.

CHAPTER VI: FROM EXTENSIVE SERVICES TO THE READ-ALOUD SOLUTION: DISCONTINUITIES AND CONTINUITIES IN LITERACY ADVICE IN THE 1970S AND 1980S

The years 1969 to 1988 were characterized by significant discursive shifts and discontinuities in literacy advice to mothers. This chapter documents these shifts in the context of institutional responses to family and social change, as well as shifts toward social constructivist theories, often referred to as the "social turn" (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Taylor, 1983)[15] in the study of early childhood and school aged literacy acquisition. Indeed, this social turn drew attention to the broader class, race, and gender issues that shaped children's literacy acquisition, but it also had the paradoxical effect of drawing greater attention on the part of educators and policy makers to the family as a context for learning, and, more specifically, to mothering practices.

It is within the rubric of social and educational change that the volume of literacy advice to Canadian mothers increased markedly in the late 1970s, even as its content remained uniform across a variety of commercial, government and popular texts. Indeed, the analysis in this chapter suggests a discursive shift between the late 1960s and early 1970s, when "extensive services" was the favoured approach for addressing academic achievement gaps among children in public schools, to the 1980s, when "intensive mothering" re-emerged as the desired solution to this persistent issue.

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[15] The social turn was part of a larger theoretical movement and held that reading and writing only make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural as well as historical, political, and economic practices of which they are but a part.

The analysis of advice in Chapter Five suggested that reading readiness in the 1930s and 1940s was conceptualized as a set of pre-determined steps toward the achievement of a "mental-age" at which reading instruction could occur. Providing children with the right kinds of books, and ensuring children were not mentally damaged by too much reading, was a theme in that literacy advice. In the 1950s, however, increased concern for emotionally stable children geared literacy advice toward the connections between raising happy children and promoting reading in the home. Raising emotionally stable and happy children and thus contributing to the democratic project of public education was considered an essential pre-requisite for national visions built around democracy, a "reading culture," and global economic competition. Ideally, women's domestic literacy work in the home was geared toward the fulfillment of these national visions, and advice became more specifically oriented to promoting reading "readiness" behaviours, as psychologists and educators emphasized the connections between emotional stability, reading, and citizenship.

The present chapter builds on these insights. It considers mothers' shifting domestic literacy roles, as described in literacy advice, in the context of the important social and economic changes that took place during the 1970s and 1980s. The chapter traces shifts in literacy advice from its target group of academically-oriented parents that generally dissuaded low-income or minority parents from direct involvement in their children's school literacy, to the more broadly distributed message to all parents that "you hold the key to your child's success." Although literacy advice in the early 1970s contributes to the analysis and arguments made in this chapter, it should be noted that there was not as large a volume of advice to draw upon, perhaps an indication that

popular culture was preoccupied with other social issues and the "crisis in reading" of the 1950s and the "smart baby" movement in the 1960s had passed. The literacy advice discourse strategies and themes arising from this chapter's analysis are summarized in Table 5 on the following page.

Table 5: Discourses and Themes in Literacy Advice to Mothers 1968–1988

Domestic literacy management roles	Intensive mothering	Domestic pedagogy	The normal family
Invisible supporters of "natural learning"	Constant attention, "really listening" to your child, and tailoring parenting practices to his natural development without pressuring him are literacy practices associated with good mothering.	Supporting children's literacy comes naturally to sensitive mothers. This work involves managing domestic time and space, such as limiting TV and providing quiet space to study.	The ideal mother has the choice and desire to stay at home with her children. Idealized oral language and literacy practices normalize and reproduce gendered divisions of labour in the home.
Identical interests: mothers as literacy co-learners	Mothers' interests and children's interests are the same. Mothers enjoy reading practices that their children enjoy and children model their mothers' literacy practices. Mothers with little formal education are not good literacy models and need to improve their own literacy to prevent their children from continuing this "cycle."	Mothers and fathers should see themselves as entertainers and salespeople, constantly improving their skills to encourage their children to read. Mothers are also responsible for managing the time and space required to promote one-to one "special time" with each child, promoting bonding.	Children of working mothers or "broken" families may not become good readers because they do not receive the literacy interactions deemed essential for school readiness.
Domestic literacy as nation-building: Mothering for the "new knowledge economy"	Reading difficulties start at an early age with lifetime consequences. Mothers need to ensure their children are ready for school and ready to participate in the economy by more constant interaction with their children,	North America is in a literacy crisis because families have lax attitudes toward learning. Parents need to take responsibility for the quality of education their children receive by teaching in the home, supervising homework,	Mothers need to prioritize their children's education and emotional happiness by caring for them at home in the early years.

	more professional knowledge of how and what to read to children.	monitoring schools and teachers.	

In keeping with the methodology described in Chapter Two, the analysis in this chapter includes literacy advice published in commercial parenting magazines, child raising advice manuals, and books on reading to children. Penelope Leach's (1978) *Your Baby and Child*, Nancy Larrick's (1975) *A Parents' Guide to Children's Reading (*1975), and Jim Trelease's (1982; 1986) *Read Aloud Handbook* are analysed in particular detail, because not only do these represent significant shifts in literacy advice to mothers, but also they were best sellers at the time in Canada and the United States and produced subsequent editions against which shifts in literacy advice over time could be documented. They are, in a sense, textual barometers reflecting the social malaise that was gathering in the late 1970s surrounding the family, and the place of mothering in particular, as a force in educational reproduction.

Domestic literacy management in the 1970s and 1980s

Invisible supporters of "natural learning"

In the late 1960s in Canada, the academic expectations of young children were re-cast in the context of child-centred, experiential learning, and the regulation of their reading practices eased, as did the ideals embedded in gendered divisions of labour, at least in intent and terminology. Spock's 1977 revised edition is a bow to the women's movement: "The main reason for this third revision (5th edition) of *Baby and Child Care* is to eliminate the sexist biases of the sort that help to create and perpetuate discrimination against girls and women" (Spock, 1977, p. 5). He goes on to state the new assumptions underpinning his advice:

> I always assumed that the parent taking the greater share of the care of young children (and of the home) would be the mother, whether or not she wanted an outside career. Yet it's this most universal assumption that leads to women feeling a greater compulsion than men to sacrifice a part of their careers in order that the children will be well cared for. Now I recognized that the father's responsibility is as great as the mothers. (Spock, 1977, p. 5)

Yet, as the literacy advice in that edition, and indeed in subsequent advice manuals suggests, the commitment to inclusiveness in the use of the term "parent," and the expectation that both fathers and mothers read and carry out literacy advice, belied evidence to the contrary and served to render even more invisible the domestic literacy work of mothers. However, from a policy perspective, the view that families with children thrived in a context of community supports that did not only involve mothering work was also present.

The 1968 *Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of* Education in the Schools of Ontario, known as the *Hall-Dennis Report*, offered a glimpse into the social and educational context shaping connections between literacy and mothering in the mid to late 1960s in Ontario, and in other parts of Canada and western nations. The commission's report was based on submissions from one hundred and twelve organizations convening during 1965–1966, visits to educational systems in other Canadian provinces, the United States and Europe, and extensive deliberations by the convening committee. Its broad-based inquiry and recommendations reflected other policies and literacy advice at the time and shaped advice discourses surrounding parental

involvement in children's literacy development into the 1970s. In 1968, Canada was forging a vision of multi-culturalism and a unique Canadian identity. The one-hundred page document described the characteristics of Canadian society as increasingly urbanized, multi-cultural, and prosperous. This document suggested that the key theme underpinning the aims and objectives for education in Ontario in 1968 was to protect and promote children's "[f]reedom to search for truth" (p. 21) as the cornerstone of a free society and "to protect our way of life" (Hall & Dennis, 1968, p. 21). As with most key policy documents and commissions concerned with education since the nineteenth century, the *Hall-Dennis Report* located its new education vision within a context of rapid social change.

> What is new, exciting and thought-provoking in our era is that what was once the privilege of an elite has now become the right of a multitude. How to provide learning experiences aiming at a thousand different destinies and at the same time educate toward a common heritage and common citizenship? (Hall & Dennis, p. 21)

The project of educating the "multitude" in a democratic society was the main theme of the commission's work. In line with other education policy documents in the Twentieth Century, it emphasized the importance of children's early years as a crucial stage of life, and called for child-centred, experiential approaches to teaching and learning that would foster children's participation in the ideals of a multi-cultural democracy. The home was considered an important setting for learning:

> Every day and every stage of child development is important. The middle stages and adolescence are not forgotten years. However, in view of the

> most recent findings based upon research and clinical studies, special emphasis must be placed upon the early years…thus the home is a base of exceeding importance. (Hall & Dennis, 1968, p. 42)

Yet the document questioned the tenets of developmental determinism, reminding educators of the complexity of children's learning trajectories, and suggesting they move away from the quest for simple solutions and instead embrace these complexities: "No one factor, no one method, no one endearing human characteristic, can be seized as a magic wan which will transform children into life-long learners and adventurers" (p. 24). Nevertheless, the document described the middle-class home as a "natural" setting for children's learning:

> Teaching children simple numbers, content, helping them become aware of time, naming parts of the body, concepts of colour and direction these are some of the countless words and games that most middle-class parents take for granted and teach almost unconsciously. Feeling objects, finding words for experiences, talking about events and things out of sight or from yesterday, anticipating the future, are the subtle ways in which a child in a loving, caring atmosphere acquires the foundation upon which a school can build. (Hall & Dennis, 1968, p. 52)

In contrast, deprived homes were constructed as providing little of use to their children's learning:

> In deprived conditions adults may speak to children, and the children may play on the street with old tin cans and tires, but the limitation of the quality in variety and sequential presentation of ideas compromises the

> child's vocabulary and comprehension from a very early age. These children often have had little acquaintance with books, tend to reverse letters and are pegged as failures early in their school experience. (Hall & Dennis, 1968, p. 52)

Perhaps as an inter-textual reference to the "smart baby" movement and intervention methods associated with Doman (1964), the document recommended that children from "deprived environments" benefit from enriched learning rather than methods to "rapidly upgrade disadvantaged children" (Hall & Dennis 1968, p. 52). Instead, the authors of the document argued that children's learning:

> [C]annot follow a set time table. Any time of day or night and any day of the weekend or any season may herald a new idea. Solid programming for every moment of time may not of necessity create a positive learning experience. For the mind, like a machine, may make its leaps in moments of serenity and solitude. (Hall & Dennis, 1968, p. 46)

Thus, because learning was believed to occur "naturally," at least in middle-class homes, it did not require any specific interventions on the part of mothers or fathers with respect to home reading, or homework support. According to the Commission, it was the school and other community agencies that were assigned the work of creating learning conditions for all children, including those from "deprived homes," to prosper as learners in the years before and during schooling. Integrated learning would ideally intersect at the school as the heart of the community:

> The school could be a community centre in the very real sense. It should be a co-ordinating centre for social services to preschool children and their

> families — pre-natal clinics, well-baby clinics, crèches and nursery schools for example. Liaison with public health nurses, librarians, community recreation and so on should be close and continuous. Administrative patterns should be devised to enhance such co-operation and joining efforts on the premise that the needs of the child should be met with the minimum of inconvenience to the child and his parents. (Hall & Dennis, 1968, p. 57)

In addition to this strategy of extensive services to address the impact of socio-economic inequality on children's schooling success, there were specific recommendations for involvement of the Home and School Parent-Teacher Association in educating the school about community needs. In contrast to the *BC Royal Commission on Education* in 1960 reviewed in Chapter Five, the *Ontario Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives in Education* called for more, rather than less, community involvement in schools. Recommendations for parental involvement included "enlist[ing] the volunteer help of Home and School and Parent-Teacher Associations, and other members of the community for school and out of school activities," (Hall & Dennis, 1968, p. 198) in addition to:

> Permit[ting] the establishment of a parents' school committee in each school district, the purpose of which would be to assist the school staff in interpreting the school to the community, and to aid in keeping school staffs and trustees aware of the needs of the community. (p. 199)

Within this broad rubric of extensive services to promote language development and learning was an effort to bridge a perceived divide between communities and

schools. This was deemed important as educators, policy makers, and popular child raising experts tried to come to terms with academic achievement gaps along class and racial lines. While school-community rapprochement was desirable, what ascended in literacy advice was the parents' role in bridging the academic achievement gap through domestic literacy work.

Canadian mothers continued to be urged, in the vein of Larrick's advice (1958; 1964), into more "natural" pedagogic roles that placed the child's needs at the centre of the home. As the Department of National Health and Welfare of Canada (1971) explained to mothers:

> When you understand how your child develops best, you will find plenty of time to give him out of your busy day. The compromises you make now with such things as good housekeeping will pay dividends as your child grows up. You can manage to do a fair job of housekeeping and a good job of raising children, if you are sensible in accepting moderate standards of tidiness and cleanliness. Plan your work around your children's schedule rather than on insisting on doing things at the usual, conventional time. (*Department of National Health and Welfare of Canada*, 1971, p. 67–68)

Mothers who directly taught reading at home were still perceived as "competitive," although Spock changes the term "competitive" to "ambitious" in his 1968 edition of *Baby and Child Care*, in advising that parents who want to teach "the extra-bright" child to read are probably following their own vicarious desire for success and recognition, rather than their children's "natural" interests (Spock, 1968; 1977).

Brazelton (1974) similarly articulated the social malaise surrounding "pushy parents." In *Toddlers and Parents: A Declaration of Independence*, Brazelton discussed reading in the context of the "whole question of early learning" (p. 185). He described a scenario in which Lucy, a three year old, and Mrs. Danforth, her preschool teacher, are locked in a power struggle over Lucy's desire to read to her classmates. In the middle of story time, Lucy wants to "show off" the words she can read. This interrupts the group, and Mrs. Danforth tells Lucy she can read later; Lucy digs in her heels and screams to be able to read to the group. She is given "time out" and eventually, the power struggle is resolved when the caregiver leaves the other children to play and Lucy is allowed to read to her:

> "Now", [sighs Mrs. Danforth], "read, Lucy, and show off all the words you've learned." Lucy was elated, and she missed the edge in Mrs. Danforth's voice. Doggedly she started to pick out the words she recognized. Mrs. Danforth realized that there were ten or more that Lucy could recognize and name. Although she was impressed, she began to wonder how hard the Camerons were pushing Lucy at this early an age. (Brazelton, 1974, p. 189)

Dr. Brazelton then offered a broad social commentary on the intellectual parents he met in his practice. Here he invoked his status as expert in asking:

> Should parents of a child as driven as Lucy encourage her to learn to read? What, if any, are the deficits — particularly if the pressure comes from the child? I hear these questions often in my practice in Cambridge, Mass. where many parents are young intellectuals. In such a setting, their children are exposed to reading as a way of life, and as a way of "being

like daddy and mommy." Many of them show signs of readiness to read as early as two and a half and press their parents to teach them to read and to spell. They memorize familiar words in favourite books. They recognize how rewarded their parents are when they perform in this area. So it's no wonder they are driven from within....[T]he cycle is set up for performance. (Brazelton, 1974, p. 54)

Interestingly, this "cycle of performance" that Brazelton worried about became the antidote to the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy (Nickse, 1990) that emerged in the 1980s as a threat to the school system and to the economic survival of US and Canada (United States Commission on Reading, 1983). Of interest, too, are the ways in which more antiquated views about reading were recruited in new discourses of ideal mothering. Brazelton wanted parents to "naturally" produce school-ready children without being competitive or blatant about it. His concerns harkened back to discourses of morality and the body of the Nineteenth Century which regarded some reading practices as unhealthy and thus dangerous. In a similar vein to advice documented in Chapter Five, literacy advice was linked to discourses of the body through the psychological lens of mental health, and the silent but strong implication that the blame for Lucy's interest in reading may be attributed to maternal deprivation:

I would like to know how expensive such precocity [interest in reading] might be. Is this task an appropriate one for these ages? Is the nervous system mature enough so that this becomes easy and natural? If not what are more appropriate tasks? If Lucy performs such a demanding cognitive task, will she use energy that might be devoted to other areas, such as

> personality development? Or will certain cognitive processes become fixed as she learns by rote memory? Then, when she enters later stages which demand more and more complex learning formulas, will she be able to apply this fixed formula? Precocity is usually expensive. In Lucy's case, the only sign that this is anything but good for her is the head of steam she demonstrates to perform and to show it off. This could mean that her main motive is not to satisfy any need to learn but to create a performance for adults around her. She may be trying to fill up a hunger for approval which could be better served in other ways. (Brazelton, 1974, p. 55)

Brazelton hit on the performative aspects of reading that hold explanatory value for analyzing dominant literacy advice discourses. These construct literacy more as a performance of middle-class habitus than as a meaning-making activity. This was discussed in Chapter Five in the context of literacy as a social code and I will return to this idea in Chapter Seven. Ashley's (1972) predictions for "children's reading in the 1970s" (Ashley, 1972) suggested that parents' ideal roles in children's reading remained focused on the need to supply them with "good" literature. Yet the growing interest in the topic of parental involvement among scholars, documented in Chapter Five, meant that in spite of Brazelton (1974) and Spock's (1968: 1977) concerns, this role was about to expand. Indeed, while Brazelton expressed concern for the mental health of children whose parents promoted reading, popular magazines such as *Parents* and *Better Family Living* (formerly *Parents' Magazine*) published articles in 1973 and 1974 on getting a "Happy Head Start in Reading" (Carter, 1973, pp. 48–59) and "What Parents Can Do to

the natural occupations of their age and turned into scholars before their time. (Spock, 1977, p. 449)

Giving advice that would be deemed rather heretic in the 2000s when parents are asked to take an active role in children's homework, Spock advised parents not to get too involved in helping with homework or taking on a tutoring role because "parents often make poor tutors not because they don't know enough, not because they don't care enough, but because they care too much, are too upset when their child doesn't understand" (Spock, 1977, p. 452). This view left open an alternative pathway to reading as a broader literacy practice supported by peers, friends of the family, or tutors.

Larrick's (1975) third edition of *A Parents' Guide to Children's Reading* offered advice that contrasted with this more easy-going perspective, even as it represented women's literacy work as "natural." In her first chapter re-titled, "You Are the Major Influence," Larrick noted changes in family life that adversely affect children's chances to become readers. She elaborated, "in a time of greater leisure for adults, parents are spending less and less time in their activities with their children. One study indicates that fathers spend less than half a minute a day interacting with their infants" (p. 4). Yet Larrick did not address the involvement of fathers in their children's "readiness to read" and given what she knew about fathers' level of interest in her advice, it can be assumed that the "parents" she was addressing were mothers. Larrick continued to inform parents that the two main ways to cultivate reading were the stimulation of oral language development and ensuring children's continued pleasure in books. Yet she emphasized in this edition the importance of the home environment for children's learning. It was the "relaxed atmosphere of the home" that was the natural setting for oral language

development and book reading to take place, because "parents can move toward these two goals with greater assurance of success than the nursery school teacher who sees the child for only a few hours a day and must try to meet the needs and interests of fifteen to twenty children at once" (p. 19). In this way, the ideal conditions for children's learning were linked to the constant care provided by attentive, biological mothers. There were new consequences for children of mothers who did not adhere to this advice, as the responsibity for children's reading was shifted from school to home:

> Many children are already on the road to reading failure when they enter first grade. No matter what the teacher does, no matter which teaching method is used, it will be impossible for some children to catch up. They may remain reading cripples all through school because of what they did not get before they came to school. (Larrick, 1975, p. 3)

Identical interests: mothers as literacy co-learners

A classic example of this conflation between "natural" pedagogic work and sensitive mothering is articulated by Penelope Leach whose first best seller, *Your Baby and Child from Birth to Age Six*, appeared in 1978. Her advice marked a shift toward more intensive mothering in child-raising advice discourses, perhaps as a reflection of the growing unease many experts expressed over the future of the nuclear family (Hulbert, 2003). According to Leach (1978), however, her advice was not susceptible to shifts in child-raising trends, because *Your Baby and Child* was written from "your baby or child's point of view...however fashion in child-rearing may shift and alter, that viewpoint is both the most important and the most neglected" (Leach, 1978, p. 20).

In *Your Baby and Child*, mothers were represented as avid baby-watchers, anticipating their children's emotional and cognitive needs, and finding great fulfillment in this: "The more you can understand him and recognize his present position on the developmental map that directs him toward being a person, the more interesting you will find him" (p. 20). This intensive role of constantly watching and monitoring babies' needs and predicting and supporting their developmental stages was not real work, since "taking the baby's point of view does not mean neglecting yours, the parents' viewpoint. Your interests and his are identical" (p. 20). Moreover, "this kind of sensitively concentrated attention to our own real-life child who is a person-in-the-making, is the essence of love" (p. 21).

Leach (1978) was one of the first best-selling child-raising experts to promote pre-school children's reading. She did this by linking maternal-directed promotion of reading with sensitive mothering. Literacy advice in her manual is found under the heading "books" rather than "reading," and books are listed along with music as tools for "playing and thinking". "Whereas, every human being has a sense of rhythm," Leach pointed out, and can enjoy music, "where books are concerned, the child really does need your direct help" (p. 432). Leach represented reading as a cultural skill to be taught to children, in a way that idealized and reinforced the hegemony of a middle-class, Anglo-Celtic literacy habitus. Leach offered detailed advice for choosing and sharing books with young children, recognizing this as an aspect of domestic literacy work vital to reproducing social and educational capital:

> Almost every toddler enjoys looking at picture books as well as hearing stories read aloud. But the pre-school years are the ideal time to expand

your child's acquaintance with and affection for books and all they contain. They are going to be vital to his later education. (Leach, 1978, p. 432)

Mothers were provided with detailed information on the latest in reading research and equally detailed instructions on the complex process of choosing picture books appropriate for their children. Her instructions bear quoting in their entirety as they will be reproduced in similar forms by other child-raising experts and parenting magazines that join in the promotion of pre-school children's reading in the 1980s.

> He needs three kinds of book [sic]. Picture books are important. By "reading" pictures he prepares himself for reading words later on. Both are symbols after all, the words are just a further abstraction from the pictures. Look at them with him. Help him to mine each illustration of its last detail. How many birds are in that tree? What is the little boy in the background doing? Try to find him books with big, colorful, detailed illustrations rather than the sterile conventional A is for Antelope type. Highly illustrated story books are important too. If you chose good ones, he will be able to follow the story you are reading him on the picture pages, or at least stop you in mid-sentence to study the highlights of the plot. You have read about the children getting ready for the party. Now on this page he can study the party itself, discover what the children wore and had for tea....[Y]our books are important too. He needs to get the idea that books are important to you — to the adult world — as well as to children. If you read for pleasure anyway, this will happen automatically. If not, try

> sometimes to look up the answer to one of his questions in a book, or to find him a picture of something that interests him. Help him to see them as useful as well as fun. (Leach, 1978, p. 432)

This professional-level knowledge of how to choose books, read them to children, and use one's own time to model literacy behaviour can be seen as disciplinary strategies that have the intended effect of orienting mothers to intensive mothering as a precondition for their children's literacy development and "success later in life" (Leach, 1978, p. 432). As evidenced in the analysis of Larrick's (1958; 1964; 1975) literacy advice, the ideal role for mothers as domestic literacy supporters in Leach's *Your Baby and Child* was one of a "language learning helper" where a mother's constant verbal engagement with her child was a prerequisite for the reading skills he would need when he started school. It was also, however, a cultural practice that normalized gender roles in the home and the literacy habitus for the "normal" family. Leach instructed:

> His imaginary games give you scope for providing words, too. Equipped with a tiny pair of gloves and a huge umbrella, he announces, "I'm Daddy." He knows that his father often goes out and he is obviously playing a Daddy-going-out game in his head. "Is Daddy going to the office or is he going for a walk?" you ask. You have supplied him with name-labels for two of the places Daddy might go; you have helped him elaborate his thinking with his own game. (Leach, 1978, p. 415)

For both Larrick and Leach, the work involved in supporting children's reading readiness required preparation, planning, and mother's willingness to learn:

> If you are hazy about the old rhymes and songs, get one or more Mother Goose books and recordings and brush up on words and melodies so you can let them flow from memory without having to look at the book while you tie your baby's shoes. (Larrick, 1975, p. 21)

Indeed an important shift in the intensive mothering discourse during this time was from the view that mothers were natural teachers of language and literacy, to the view that mothers required specific expert intervention, and a willingness to "teach themselves" how to be good teachers. Rather than a "natural" talent, domestic pedagogy became a sphere in which women were to reflect critically on their practice and strive to improve. In another section on books, in the same manual, Leach advised that:

> Books are going to be vital to your child's education. Help him or her to make friends with them and learn to value them. Being read to is a lasting pleasure for every child. Take it slowly; teach yourself to adapt difficult words or put in explanations as you go. Show the pictures and encourage talk about what is happening. (Leach, 1978, p. 416)

These professional-level skills involved in reading to children appeared in the 1980s as required of parents if they were to fulfill their duties as parents. Reading, and story book reading in particular, became not only a major focus of research into the academic achievement gap plaguing schools, but a cornerstone of parenting advice whereby mothers emerged as the single most important person determining children's academic abilities. Jim Trelease (1982) opened the first of four editions of his popular *The Read Aloud Handbook* with an excerpt from the poem "The Reading Mother" by Strickland Gillian:

> You may have tangible wealth untold; Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold. Richer than I you can never be, I had a Mother who read to me. (Trelease, 1982, p. 17)

The purpose of Trelease's book was to encourage parents to read aloud to children to "awaken their sleeping imaginations and improve their deteriorating language skills" (p. 11). His approach required of parents a desire to examine their parenting practices, their use of family time, and their commitment to their children, as well as to hone their read-aloud skills. Based on his visits to primary classrooms in the United States, he cited a dramatic decline in reading and literacy in the US since the 1960s that he hoped, through his book, could be reversed as parents, teachers, and librarians returned to the "old practice" of reading to children, and more so, make that reading "a habit." Trelease did not provide evidence that children's language skills were deteriorating. But Trelease emphasized this point nevertheless, connecting it to an issue that was a social concern: the quality of family life.

Like many reading advice books and literacy research, Trelease drew on his own experience as a parent to produce advice and models for other parents to emulate. He maintained that all it took to turn children into successful people who liked to read was fifteen minutes a day of a parent reading one-to-one with each child in the family. Drawing upon psychologist Jerome Kagan's views on how to reverse children's "verbal shortcomings", Trelease recommended "intensified one-to-one attention," emphasizing that "somewhere in that seven-day week, there must be time for your child to discover the special-ness of you, one-on-one even if only once or twice a week" (Trelease, 1982, p. 32). Indeed, an important theme in Trelease's advice was to encourage parents to manage

their time better: "I know first-hand how much time is wasted in a typical family day" (p. 26).

Quoting Dr. Brazelton, Trelease reminded parents that this focus on reading was not about promoting skills or intelligence, but rather a higher quality of learning in the home and at school. The reward of this learning, however, was children who naturally "teach themselves to read," and children who were good readers were associated with parents who made time to read one-to-one with each children regularly, limited TV, made reading exciting (as exciting as TV) and supplied children with lots of fascinating books appropriate to their gender, age, and interests. Children's struggles with reading were attributed to the neglect or ignorance of their parents. This dividing strategy, between children who are read to at home and those who are not, and between the children who get "one-on-one" attention and those who didn't, rendered invisible the other forms of domestic pedagogy that need to be in place in order for that "15 minutes a day" to translate into years of academic success and national prosperity. From a multi-vocal analysis, Trelease's emphasis on "making time," "wasting time," and "how little time" it takes to enjoy reading, suggested that indeed parents, even those who had a husband or wife to share the load, complained that their lives did not permit the kind of time and attention that was required to support their children's schooling, not to mention their country's economic health and prosperity. He described a conversation with a mother who came up to him after one of his presentations on reading to say that, "time is a rare commodity in her home. She works, her husband works, they don't have a lot of time to spare" (p. 35). Trelease recounted that:

> I sympathized with her situation and gently pointed out that my wife and I have the same situation. And just when I think there isn't enough time to spare for the night's reading, I told the parent, I ask myself, 'Which is more precious, my time or my child? Which can I more easily afford to waste?' (p. 35)

It is difficult to know what this mother, or other readers, were to make out of the veiled threat that by not reading to one's children regularly, they were "wasting" them. This particular mother apparently walked away without saying a word. Trelease continued to argue that the key to creating a society of children who loved to read, were parents who were themselves experts in reading aloud, who could make the correct book selections, engage their children's imaginations and above all, manage their domestic time effectively. While he directed his advice to fathers as well as mothers, the themes of bonding and time management were directed to mothers. In the tradition of the heart wrenching and moralistic didactic literature of the Nineteenth Century, Trelease recounted the story of a little girl who pretended she couldn't read, so her mother would spend time with her. He quoted what she shared with him: "'The only time all day when I have my mother all to myself is when she reads to me at bedtime.'" Trelease explained that the little girl was afraid her mother would go off "to read to her sisters and brother and leave her without that intimate sharing time each night" (Trelease, 1982, p. 36).

In its focus on mother's time management and the promise of intimacy for lonely children, not to mention the use of guilt and threats, this advice seemed to be about much more than encouraging Americans and Canadians to read more. This advice also normalized the two-parent family in the face of changing families and changing gender

roles. Trelease's advice also recruited the discourse of domestic pedagogy which involved the regulation of domestic time and space, while the different material conditions that shaped families' experience of time was silenced.

As we have seen in Chapter Five, the regulation of time and space is an important strategy in the discourse of domestic pedagogy. Time management skills differentiated "good" families from families that were drowning in the mediocrity of the "TV culture" (Trelease, 1982, pp. 21–23) and thus providing little of use or value to their children's literacy knowledge. Trelease decried in each of his editions, and at various places in his books, the national problem of homes that were void of literate activity. Once this image was created, Trelease continued the lucrative project of "selling reading." Certainly his books enjoyed enormous commercial success as they were publicized in parenting magazines, school newsletters, and reading advice up to the present.

Indeed, as Larson (2001) has observed, "selling reading" became a new marketing opportunity for a whole range of social commentators, school teachers, and parenting experts in the late 1970s and 1980s, producing for the market a wave of "How-to-Books" and magazine articles directed at parents on the importance of teaching their children to read. Titles such as *Your Child Can Read and You Can Help* (Erwin, 1976), *Help Your Child to Read: New Ways to Make Learning Fun* (Forgan, 1975), *Teach Your Child to Read in Sixty Days* (Ledson, 1975), and *Parents: Help Your Child Become a Better Reader* (Wiesendanger & Birlem, 1982) suggested that, at least in the minds of commercial publishers and education institutions such as the International Reading Association (IRA), the Home and School Parent Teacher Associations, and the desires of the purchasing public, responsibility for teaching children to read had indeed shifted to

parents, who required advice to carry out their renewed, if contradictory, roles. Wiesendanger and Birlem (1982) introduced the rationale for their book in this way:

> Unfortunately, for years parents have been told not to interfere with their child's learning. Parents have been afraid to help their children for fear they might damage anything that has been done in the schools. Recently, however, this viewpoint has changed. ... Currently, the prevailing viewpoint is that parents should help their kids in any what that is possible, and that means that parents should work directly with their children. First, there is a feeling of closeness of warmth that is shared when a parent spend time with his child. [S]econd, children make the greatest progress when being tutored by their own parents. (Wiesendanger & Birlem, 1982, p. iv)

Fortunately for these writers, they did not need to provide detailed evidence to support their claims that children do better when taught by their parents. A generation of children and parents raised on Spock's advice were told just the opposite. What was evident, however, was that a new generation of advice supporting parental involvement in reading had begun and research would be found to support it. Indeed, most books and articles on children's reading followed a similar formula. The text opened with a discussion of the new-found importance of the parent's role in helping children learn to read. There was often a requisite chapter or section on the threats of television to children's reading and advice for controlling TV watching in the home, as well as how to choose and share storybooks with children. The importance of promoting children's emotional security, and the connections between this and children's success as readers,

constituted another common theme. Prominent in advice was the view that mothers in particular should see themselves as co-learners with their children, with a commitment to developing the new skills and abilities now required to support their children's reading. This impetus to self-regulation was supported in part by providing mothers with checklists. In an invitation for mothers to measure themselves against criteria for appropriate domestic pedagogy, Erwin, a teacher, described what she looked for when visiting her students' homes:

> Are there books and reading materials? Are there places for relaxing reading and talking? Are there indicators of hobbies and special interests? Are the children's projects on display? Is there a family bulletin board? Is there a television? (Is it the focal point of the sitting area? How many are there?) Do the children have a place of their own? Is the home child oriented? (Erwin, 1976, p. 43)

As Hays (1996) observed in the context of the implications for intensive mothering discourses for appropriate child-raising, all this activity to stimulate children's literacy could get expensive. The children's book-publishing industry, toys, games, and education companies all sought to benefit from, and thus joined in the work of, spreading the message of the importance of creating a stimulating literacy environment in the home. The way had been paved, then, for parents, and mothers in particular, to receive a new and yet more alarming message in the early 1980s that there was a literacy crisis in North America, and much of it had to do with parents' "lax" attitude toward their children's reading and scholastic success.

Domestic literacy work as nation-building: Mothering for a new knowledge economy

Although this study has documented the importance of women's domestic literacy work to nation-building aspirations, this role was made yet more visible in the wake of new policies and practices introduced in *A Nation at Risk*, published by the US Commission for Excellence in Education, in 1983:

> The people of the United States need to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy and training essential to this new era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life. (United States National Commission on Education, 1983, p. 7)

"A Nation at Risk" was initiated in 1981 with the election of US President Ronald Reagan. Its statements regarding literacy, knowledge, and risk would come to shape new discourses of literacy advice well into the 1990s and 2000s in Canada, as well as the United States. This document ushered in the concepts of the "global village" and the "new knowledge economy" in the context of concern for the United States', and by extension Canada's, competitive advantage in what was described as an increasingly competitive global economy. Certainly, the discourses associated with the "risk" economy would be circulated in international institutions of the OECD, the World Bank, and UNESCO in ways that contributed to the coalescing of education policy across diverse Western countries. The *Nation at Risk* report was a precursor to trade

liberalization agreements that characterized world politics in the late 1980s and 1990s, in which:

> [K]knowledge, learning, information and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce. ...[T]he implications of this are that if only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our education system for the benefit of all...learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the "information age" we are entering. (United States National Commission on Education, 1983, p. 7)

As the introduction to the report stated:

> [I]f an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have interpreted it as an act of war....[W]e have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. ...[W]e have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament. (United States National Commission on Education, 1983, p. 5)

Just as parents were found wanting in the 1950s for their failure to bolster a "reading culture," this report concluded that, "we are raising a new generation of Americans that is scientifically and technologically illiterate" (p. 10). In advice that seemed to endorse Flesch's (1955) call for direct parental surveillance of their children's teachers and schools, *A Nation at Risk* called upon parents to take more responsibility for the quality of education their children received. The ideal child for the "information age"

was defined for parents, with silences surrounding the implications of this for the work of mothers:

> You know that you cannot confidently launch your children into today's world unless they are of strong character and well-educated in the use of language, science and mathematics. They must possess a deep respect for intelligence, achievement and learning, and the skills needed to use them; for setting goals; and for disciplined work. That respect must be accompanied by an intolerance for the shoddy and second-rate masquerading as "good enough." (p. 23)

While parents have always been reminded of their important educative role, their place as the "first and most important teacher in the home" (Trelease, 1982, p. 31) became government policy. There were also specific tasks and responsibilities attached to this role, many of which seem to have been taken from pages of Larrick's (1975) and Trelease's (1982) advice:

> As surely as you are your child's first and most influential teacher, your child's ideas about education and its significance begin with you. You must be a living example of what you expect your children to honor and emulate. Moreover, you bear a responsibility to participate actively in your child's education. You should encourage more diligent study and discourage satisfaction with mediocrity and the attitude that says "let it slide"; monitor your child's study; encourage good study habits; encourage your child to take more demanding rather than less demanding courses; nurture your child's curiosity, creativity and confidence; and be

an active participant in the work of the schools. (United States National Commission for Education, 1983, p. 35).

In the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, mothers, as well as other caregivers, were deemed appropriate role models for their children's literacy by virtue of their moral standing and their proximity to childlike emotional states. In the 1950s and 1960s, the dominant literacy advice discourses warned mothers against being "too competitive" or pressuring their children to read too early. Reading experts provided mothers with advice based on the assumption that mothers required considerable professional support and services to carry out their domestic literacy work effectively. However, in the early 1980s, it was the mother who didn't read to her child, or couldn't read well, who was considered the greatest "risk" to the project of schooling and economic reform. This discursive shift was noted by Flesch (1981) in his revised edition of *Why Johnny (Still) Can't Read.* A chapter of this book appeared in *Family Circle* magazine in 1979, and the sequel to the 1955 *Why Johnny Can't Read* was published in 1981. While the bulk of the book was dedicated to reiterating his arguments for a "phonics first" program, he also dedicated one chapter to criticizing the reliance of the "look-say" or whole language movement upon parents' teaching in the home. Noting that this "look-say" research rarely mentions fathers' role in teaching children to read, he argued that a "phonics first" approach need not rely on mothers' work in the home and had similar results for children of all socio-economic groups. Perhaps this argument explains the enduring appeal of Flesch's advice among parents to the present day. Moreover, his main message remained that parents should not trust teachers or schools, a message that connected powerfully to the message of *A Nation at Risk.*

It was during this time that the image of the father in domestic literacy receded to near invisibility. Whereas literacy advice texts would mention the place of fathers as storybook readers in the home, even if they were "special guests," this father image disappeared in the 1980s. This is perhaps explained by the wave of media and corporate attention to the crisis of "illiterate mothers." In a discourse similar in its moral undertones to that of "intergenerational pauperism" described in Chapter Four, in the 1980s, an illiterate mother could pass on, like a disease, illiteracy to her children. An advertisement promoting the right-wing Coors Foundation for Family Literacy stated:

> The problem with illiteracy is it's so contagious. In America, illiteracy is spreading like the worst kind of disease. At least 23% of American women are functionally illiterate. And since women are the primary caretakers of children, the cycle continues to be passed down, from generation to generation. (Coors, 1985)

The crisis surrounding adults, and particularly mothers, who were illiterate became a hot topic in newspapers and magazines in the middle and late 1980s. The "problem" of women's literacy was presented in the context of its impacts on a mothers' ability to carry out domestic literacy work. In a 1987 article in *Chatelaine*, Turpin wrote the confession of her "illiteracy":

> It was discouraging for me to know that Fern [my husband] had to deal with the burden of my illiteracy. Besides doing his job as a health-care worker, he shopped for groceries and did all the budgeting. When the children were small, he read and explained to me the direction for medical care of making formula before he left for work. As the children grew

> older, Fern read all the notes and report cards they brought home from school. My children were getting an education, and I was happy for them, but I was unhappy that I could not read stories to them or help them with their homework. (Turpin, 1987, p. 196)

It is interesting that Turpin saw the main burden of her illiteracy as her inability to perform the domestic literacy work associated with mothering. Paradoxically, it was the isolation of being a homemaker that prevented Turpin from learning literacy later in her life. When Turpin found a literacy tutor, she described her increasing literacy skills, and her new-found confidence in being able to "write letters and grocery lists, and do my banking." And so the personal face of this woman who did not learn literacy in her youth presented a complex image of new-found self esteem, a desire for independence, but also a desire to use literacy to meet the expectations of her role as wife and mother.

There is an interesting intersection between the rise in expectations and standards for domestic literacy work in the 1980s, and the phenomenon of middle-class women entering the workforce and challenging ideals of the "normal family." Indeed, just as women were making more places for themselves in public life, discourses of "intensive mothering" became more prevalent. Gone were the days when helping with homework was discouraged, or homework was considered the responsibility of children themselves.

In the 1970s there were only five articles on the topic of children, reading and schooling in *Chatelaine*; in the 1980s there were over 30. Similarly, *Parent Magazine* (which changed its title from *Parents' & Better Homemaking Magazine* in 1978), in the company of *Redbook, Better Homes and Gardens* and even *Phi Delta Kappan*, ran a total of 18 articles from 1978 to 1985 that supported the new teaching roles created for

mothers. On topics that varied from "Should You Teach Your Baby to Read?" (McGrath, 1980) to "How Well Are Our Schools Teaching Our Children to Read?" (Kaercher, 1984) and "The Working Mothers' Dilemma" (Grant, 1985), the impact upon women's involvement in the workforce and the growing importance of their domestic literacy work were key themes in the new "literacy crisis" facing North America.

Gone were the days when talking to and reading with children in the home was sufficient to promote reading readiness. Books, magazine articles, and family literacy classes were now dedicated to teaching mothers how to help their children with their homework, promote their baby's and toddler's intelligence through books, and even more importantly, how to help children to become "school ready." The formula for creating a home environment conducive to school readiness intersected, and in many ways was a variation on Trelease's (1982) theme of managing domestic time and space. Gray (1985), writing in *Chatelaine*, offered mothers whose children were having problems in school, tips on "How to Help Your Child Through the Difficult Stages". This advice normalized the view that children's school difficulties were mothers' responsibility to address, through polite and cooperative communication with teachers. The advice in "How to Help Your Child with Homework", (Maynard, 1987) was offered by a school principal. This principal recommended that children should:

> [E]njoy family reading time in which all family members sit down together, each with a book or a magazine, for about 15 minutes. This daily ritual (which should not replace bedtime stories read by parents) shows children that reading is as much a part of adult life as TV. (p. 37)

For older children, parents were asked to sit down with their children and "structure study time" (Maynard, 1987, p. 37). Children also needed a space "free of distraction," with the parent monitoring studying by "making friendly check-ups every study session to interrupt daydreaming" (p. 37). In "Underachievers and Over-Achievers: How to Help Them Resolve Problems of School" (Maynard, 1988) *Chatelaine* focused parents on the need to become involved in their children's everyday schooling experiences. And certainly while schools were changing, the analysis in previous chapters suggests that schools have always been changing, as have the ideal roles mothers should adopt in support of their children's literacy. However, many of these changes were being written into education policy. In British Columbia, *The Sullivan Report* (Sullivan, 1988), institutionalized Parent Advisory Councils, providing parents with a legislated avenue for participation in their children's school.

Discourses do not erupt out of nowhere. As we will see in Chapter Seven, new strategies normalize the "common-sense" beliefs of the past, resuscitating them to new purposes. The idea that mothers have a moral obligation to do whatever necessary to educate their children has much currency in advice. As Leach stated, "unrealistic though this view of dedicated parenthood may be, I make no apology for it. In these days of good contraception and world over-population, there is a moral obligation to rear as well as we can, the children we have" (1978, p. 8). Constructing "good mothering" as both a choice, and a moral obligation, continued a discourse of intensive mothering we first noted in Child in 1831: "The care of children requires a great many sacrifices, and a great deal of self-denial; but the woman who is not willing to sacrifice a good deal in such a cause, does not deserve to be a mother" (p. 23).

Conclusion

The advice analyzed in this chapter suggests a shift from "extensive services" to "intensive mothering" as a social response to the need for stimulating learning environments for children. It was possible, albeit in a limited context, and for a limited time, to envision a community-wide, socially supported approach to providing young children with the literacy and learning opportunities that mainstream culture felt important for them to learn. Indeed there was considerable suspicion and malaise surrounding parents that placed too much emphasis on reading and led their children into "unnatural pursuits." This discontinuity in the reliance upon women's domestic literacy work to effect desired social change is an important reminder that mothering discourses are not natural, but socially constructed.

By the end of the 1970s, shifts in advice, and indeed in services available to mothers and families, suggested that social malaise surrounding changes in the family, and indeed economic changes that placed in question policies associated with the social welfare state, resuscitated mothering discourses. Indeed, they had never really gone away. Women's domestic literacy work was re-discovered as important, though always potentially dangerous. Indeed, domestic literacy work was best performed discreetly: the "natural" abilities of middle-class parents to raise literate children meant that there should be no evidence of pressuring children to read. However, the literacy work of mothers deemed "at risk" of passing on "illiteracy" to their children became a topic of high exposure in the media, and was the rationale for the family literacy interventions created for women in the middle of the 1980s. The dominant view, though one strongly contested by many educators, was that low-literate mothers were a danger to their children and the

inherent deficits in their domestic literacy work was a cause for societal concern (Auerbach, 1989)

The recruitment of the domestic sphere, and the focus on mothering practices, as the "magic bullet" for explaining children's academic success, coincided neatly with a political and economical climate that was moving away from the concept of the "public" in education. Discourses of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family were recruited in new ways to bolster such reforms. Mothers were always deemed responsible for children's emotional health and happiness; it took a small but significant shift to extend these responsibilities to the inculcation of more complex literacy skills, learned earlier in the child's life, with much higher stakes with regard to the academic and social consequences of not possessing school literacy knowledge in Kindergarten.

This analysis also suggests that guilt, shame, and fear remained strategies to normalize the perspective, inherent to intensive mothering, that biological mothers are best suited and responsible for domestic literacy, both in the home and in the public sphere of supporting libraries and schools. This supports the contention in this thesis that in literacy advice discourses, as in discourses more generally, a good deal more than language is present. Indeed it seems that literacy advice was often more directed to regulating mothering practices than to creating vibrant and inclusive literacy cultures. One conclusion that can be drawn here is that even as the 1980s ushered in the need for more complex and diverse uses for literacy, the representations of literacy in mainstream popular advice and media became increasingly confined to the iconic image of the mother-child literacy dyad.

The next chapter follows the trajectory of this literacy advice as it intersects with the neo-liberal economic policies and the "new" early brain research of the 1990s and 2000s. This chapter will focus not only on mothering discourses in literacy advice, but how these discourses were shaped by people's resistance to them.

CHAPTER VII: BODIES, BRAINS AND BAKE SALES: LITERACY ADVICE 1988–2002

It is a Thursday evening in late November 2001 in Vancouver, British Columbia. A panel has been organized by the local teacher's association to discuss ways of involving parents more in their children's literacy development, in the years before and during formal schooling. The panel includes family literacy educators, school board employees, teachers and librarians. In attendance are parents, teachers, parent advisory council representatives, and local community educators. They are critical of the recent wave of cuts to schools, concerned about growing poverty among families, and eager to find new ways to reach out to families and improve educational opportunities for low-income children.

One of the panel participants completes her discussion of strategies for supporting low-income parents to be more active in their children's learning. She highlights the importance of visiting people in their homes, making face to face contact, accompanying mothers to the library, reading with them and their children in the Laundromat. A woman in the audience speaks up: She is a kindergarten teacher working part time and has two small children, one a baby, the other three years old. She wants to be honest — she just doesn't get time to go to the library. Juggling work and child care, and just keeping the household going, is all she can manage. She wants to know how others manage to find the time to read to their children, to do all the things she knows she is supposed to be doing for their literacy and their brain development, because she is simply overwhelmed.

Her comments are met with a brief silence. Members of the panel begin to offer her time management strategies: "It doesn't take much — just 15 minutes a day." "Do literacy activities while you are shopping, doing laundry, riding in the car." "Try to have fun, don't worry, make it part of your life."

The family literacy forum described above, one of many that took place in communities across Canada and the United Sates in the 1990s and into the Twenty-first Century, was organized to assist parents. But this exchange can also be read as a "moment in the practice of discourse of mothering" (Smith & Griffith, 2005), in which one mother struggled to negotiate the conflict between institutionally-driven mothering discourses and her lived experience. No one on the panel was able to suggest that someone else (perhaps the children's father?) share in supporting her children's literacy development. There was little discursive space to consider the factors that underpin the time crunch she experienced in a society that expects women to contribute meaningfully to the economy through work outside the home, while meeting the increasing expectations for her children's development in the early years. Feeling overwhelmed? "Try harder" was the inevitable answer.

Previous chapters have described the close connection that has been made historically between mothering and children's literacy. But as the forum described above suggests, this link took on new meaning in the 1990s as literacy came to be regarded as *the* social lever shaping children's social, academic, and financial "success." This is captured in the announcement by then Minister of State for Early Childhood in British Columbia that "family literacy programs prepare families to prepare their children for success in life — they address parents' own literacy needs and their need to be able to help their children" (Bond, January, 2002).

This chapter documents the explosion of literacy advice to mothers in the 1990s as a product of the intersection of the social forces associated with education policy reform begun with the *A Nation at Risk* report in 1983. Of importance was the

"discovery" of the literacy problem in Western industrialized countries and the fear that more children entering school were not equipped to attain the levels of literacy required of them by the "new knowledge economy." In addition, a wave of parent education resources emerged commercially and in the public sector to bolster education reforms designed to institutionalize the "parent as educator" model as a key pillar of school accountability. This model implied both a re-dedication to supporting school readiness in the home from birth upward, and to "getting involved and staying involved" in children's schools. Significant as well were the implications for parent education of the "new" brain research, whose slogan, "the early years last forever" (Canadian Institute for Child Health, 1997) was designed to grab parents' attention and direct them to attend more closely to the quality of their children's early literacy experiences, linked as they were to their long-term life chances.

Drawing on the conceptual framework described in Chapter Two, this chapter continues the analysis of literacy advice to parents offered in best-selling child-raising texts available in Canada, as well as popular parenting magazines. I contend with the vast increase in the amount of literacy advice directed to mothers, as well as its provenance from a diversity of new sources such as public health agencies, news agencies, toy companies, service clubs, and even national professional hockey and basketball teams.

The Internet emerged as a vital publishing source in the 1990s and represented a significant change to the means for distributing and accessing literacy advice to mothers. One has only to "google" "children's reading" or "advice about children's reading" to find thousands of sites offering (much the same) literacy advice to parents. However, the Internet also provides new insights into how mothers negotiate and resist literacy advice,

constituting a source of data that was not available for analysis in previous chapters. A summary of the themes and discourse strategies associated with literacy advice in the 1990s and early 2000s is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Discourses and Themes in Literacy Advice to Mothers, 1988–2003

Domestic literacy roles for mothers	Intensive mothering	Domestic pedagogy	The normal family
Perfect literacies: mothers as literacy models and teachers	Supporting children's literacy is a constant and everyday occupation. Mothers require parenting education to practice intensive mothering as a pre-condition for children's early literacy development.	Domestic sphere is a refuge from a demanding world. Literacy and brains develop in a calm, stress-free home where literacy and learning activities are prioritized and teachers and schools are closely monitored.	Literacy advice assumes mothers stay at home with their young children and have a partner to share housework to make more time for family literacy.
"Read while you breastfeed": Mothering as embodied literacy practice	Attachment parenting and literacy are connected in the embodied practices of storybook reading, and modeling literacy to children.	Every moment is a moment to promote, model, and perform literacy activities, including breastfeeding, lap storybook reading, and "tickle rhymes."	The nuclear family is the ideal environment for practicing domestic literacy. Families that vary from this norm are considered "at risk" of literacy failure.
Work your way out of poverty: domestic literacy as family power	Mothers raising children alone and on low incomes need to work hard to raise their parenting skills to the standards of intensive mothering. This included improving their literacy skills.	Powerful literacies in the home emulate those of schooling regardless of differently situated families.	For middle-class families, the stay-at-home mother provides the ideal domestic literacy environment. For single, low-income mothers, getting off welfare by doing paid work is the ideal way to support their children's literacy.
Mothering the early brain: literacy as nurturing baby care	Supporting children's literacy begins before birth and is dependent upon attachment mothering practices.	Every parent-child interaction is a learning experience with profound consequences for future success in life, including literacy knowledge.	The ideals of the normal family and attachment mothering "builds" brains and thus literacy skills.

Before turning to this analysis, I briefly contextualize the advice in new policy frameworks that drove education reform and the family literacy movement during this decade. An important addition to the discursive landscape of literacy advice in the 1990s was the National Centre for Family Literacy in the United States, and the family literacy movement that took root in North America and the United Kingdom during the 1980s and 1990s.

As an educational approach, family literacy programming emphasizes the role of the parent as the child's first educator, in the early years before school, and as involved parents during the children's formal schooling. The design and curricula for family literacy programs vary but most commonly involve parents and children ages zero to six in activities aimed at supporting young children's literacy development and parents' literacy skills. There is often a parent education component aimed at helping parents to support their children's literacy development. Family literacy is a legislated service in both the United States and the United Kingdom. In Canada, where literacy funding is usually short-term and administered through individual provinces and territories rather than from a national office, family literacy programming is eclectic, diverse, and community-based, though guided by the notion that parents are their children's "first and most important" educators, and that low-income, and minority families in particular, require the interventions of professionals to fulfil this role. As Pitt (2002) observed, "[h]elping children to become successful users of literacy in school is one of the motivations behind this new literacy education, because schools are failing to produce children who can reach standardized literacy levels" (Pitt, 2002, p. 116).

According to David (2002), one of the signs of this emphasis on educating parents to educate their children is that the meaning of educational opportunity has shifted emphasis from the state's role in the redistribution of resources to promote equality of access and results, to an emphasis on the individual's responsibility for finding and taking advantage of opportunities provided in the emerging educational marketplace. She argued that this shift amounts to a refocus from *equality* of opportunity, to *quality* of opportunity, where individual parents are deemed responsible for the quality of education their children receive. As we saw in Chapter Six, the 1970s' social welfare state conceived of the academic achievement gap in terms of social class and the unequal distribution of social resources. Since the late 1960s, the family as a context for literacy development received growing attention among researchers of reading instruction. In fact the evolution of the concept of family literacy over the past twenty years may be seen to involve an uneasy process of grafting reading instruction research onto the social malaise concerning the fate of the nuclear family expressed by Leach (1978), among others. Indeed, Hannon (2000) suggested that that the popularity of family literacy may be due to "deeper cultural currents — relating to anxieties about national literacy levels and the position of families in society — which make programs labelled "family literacy" particularly attractive to policy makers and funders" (p. 126).

Continuing a trend begun in the early 1980s, more educators and lay experts (notably children's authors) began writing parent manuals on reading and promoting family literacy in the 1990s.[16] In Canada, this trend took place within the context of the

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[16] See, for example, Paul Kropp (1995), a Canadian children's author who became a promotional speaker for literacy groups, a contributor to *Parents Today* magazine on reading and schooling issues, and an advocate, in the late 1990s, for "boys' literacy Robert Munsch is the

"Common Sense Revolution" ushered in by the Conservative Government elected in Ontario in 1995 (Dehli, 1996). The proponents of this "revolution" evoked a mythical and romanticized view of the past where family harmony, economic prosperity, and fiscal responsibility were believed to have prevailed in simpler times when everyone just used their "common sense."

The ideal of promoting literacy in family settings became a cornerstone of these social and educational visions in the USA, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The potential for understanding family settings as a lens into the socio-cultural nature of literacy, which was introduced by the social turn in literacy research described in Chapter Six, was all but erased as the concept of "family literacy" became associated not with a socio-cultural phenomenon but an educational intervention involving parents and their young children. The following definition, from the National Council for Family Literacy in the USA, reflected this shift, and the dominant mission of family literacy in policy and programs in North America: "At NCFL we prefer to define family literacy as a holistic, family focused approach, targeting at-risk parents and children with intensive, frequent, and long term educational and other services" (Darling, 1993, p. 3). Indeed the terms "intensive," "frequent," and "long term" denoted the application of educational interventions to interrupt the "cycle of illiteracy" that proponents of this approach believed was the cause of children's academic difficulties in school.

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family literacy advocate for ABC Canada, a corporate funded literacy promotion agency based in Ottawa, Canada.

Perfect literacies: Mothers as literacy models and monitors

One of the most important domestic literacy management roles in the 1990s was to worry that your children weren't learning enough, getting enough stimulation, and weren't being read to often enough to "love reading" for the rest of their lives. And one of the key roles of child-raising manuals in this decade was to emphasize the importance of early learning to children's futures, and that parents "shouldn't worry" in ways that stress out their children. As documented in Chapter Four, a significant theme in literacy advice in the nineteenth century was mothers' roles as literacy models to their children, and as monitors of their literacy practices. This theme was also prevalent in the 1990s, where every act of mothering was associated with how it supported literacy, and mothers were called upon to monitor the performance of their children's teachers.

Intensive mothering remained a pre-condition for children's literacy development, in the context of continuing malaise over the well being of the "normal family," documented in Chapter Six. The "Education Agenda for the 1990s" was featured in the September 1989 issue of *Chatelaine,* in which Maynard drew on the 1987 Southam Report of the a "literacy crisis" in Canada (Calamai, 1987), to warn parents that their children were also "at risk" and required in the future many more skills than schools could provide:

> Today Canada competes with Europe and the Pacific Rim, where workers boast better training and frequently for less pay. How can our schools meet the challenge? They will need the three R's, but they will also need strengths rarely taught in traditional classrooms – creativity, flexibility and teamwork. It all adds

up to a monumental job for the schools, but teachers' energy is stretched to the limit. (Maynard, 1989, p. 57)

Citing immigration, AIDS, drugs, racism and sexual abuse as factors that prevented schools from "teaching the 3-Rs", Maynard created the need for new kinds of literacy advice, which involved much higher levels of parental involvement in their children's schooling. A 1990 *Chatelaine* article marked the declaration of the United Nations' *International Literacy Year* with several features on literacy and schooling in Canada. One such article featured photos of mothers reading to children, "sharing the pleasure of reading and writing" (Maynard, 1990a, p. 221). The author articulated the statements that would come to dominate domestic literacy advice in the 1990s, that story book reading is natural, it promotes mother-child bonding and it is essential because teachers can't do it alone (or can't be trusted to do it alone). Maynard claimed that, "Not even the most dedicated teacher can provide the one-to-one practice that reading fluency demands or the sustained encouragement that makes writing a source of personal pride" (Maynard, 1990a, p. 221).This advice contained specific and detailed instructions for teaching children to read at home. Reading was constructed as a one-to-one activity requiring mothers' "undivided attention," and mothers were reminded to also give gifts that promote literacy, and to support "libraries, schools and community groups" (Maynard, 1990a, p. 221).

Calls for parents to take more responsibility for their children's literacy and language development were silent about the fact that in most cases it would be mothers who would take on these responsibilities. For mothers feeling the stress, there was more advice, such as "Guilt: How to Stop Blaming Yourself" (Maynard, 1990b) and "High

Expectations, When Parents Expect Too Much" (Maynard, 1992). In support of policy goals to help parents take up their increasing responsibilities for their children's education experiences, Gray (1992) offered, "The Parent-Teacher Conference, How to Get the Most Out of It".

The second edition of Leach's (1988) *Your Baby and Child* suggested that stimulating children's literacy in early childhood had grabbed the attention of the mainstream publishing market even before the declaration of the International Literacy Year. Leach now featured a new section on early learning with detailed advice (presented as scenarios) for supporting children's literacy. This edition opened with a commentary about the place of mothers and families in "today's world", signaling broader social malaise about the well-being of the family in an age of declining social supports and pressure on parents to be "even better parents":

> There are even women who, having fought to "have their cake and eat it too" feel guilt because they are managing to work and care yet feel that they do neither "properly." Fathers fare no better. For every chauvinistic male who still believes that "babies are women's work" another wants to share his child's life and up-bringing and cannot do so because, whatever its professed ideals, society still puts work before people. And even when the social practicalities of life run smoothly, there are couples everywhere castigating themselves for not being "really good parents." We could describe those parents but they are centrally mythical. We have edged parents into a no-win situation: an emotional trap. Children do not need

> superhuman, perfect parents. They have always managed with good enough parents: the parents they happened to have. (Leach, 1988, pp. 5–6)

Readers would be mistaken to think that these comforting words signaled Leach's abandonment of intensive mothering as the best form of mothering for children. Indeed, if parents were already "good enough," they ostensibly would not feel the need to read her book. While "reading" did not appear in the index to this edition, Leach described a "typical" parent's preoccupations with giving their pre-school child a "head start" in learning:

> When my child starts school she will learn to read and write. If she learns to read and write at nursery school she will be a school success from the beginning. But if she's going to learn to read and write at nursery school she'd better go to a play group first so that she gets a flying start at nursery. Maybe I can persuade the play group to take her quite soon, when she's two and a half, but they'll have to be able to see that she's ready so we'd better got to the toddler group and practice play group skills…" (Leach, 1988, p. 376).

Leach went on to say that these concerns were understandable, but that it was undesirable to push children into formal learning too early, claiming, "If you let your child lead, you cannot teach him too much …the simple answer to 'how much should I teach my child at home?' is, "as much as your child himself invites" (p. 378). The ideal pedagogy for developing literacy skills in the home was then outlined:

> Your two year old is not likely to invite you to sit down with flash cards and teach him to read, but he may well become fascinated by what the

> postman brings, irritated by everybody vanishing behind Sunday papers and amazed by your desire to sit and gaze at a book with no pictures in it. Let him into the secret of reading and let him decide whether to accept it as information about adult behaviour or to experiment with the idea for himself. If the reading-game takes off with advertising billboards, television slogans and road signs, by all means play it with him. Many pre-school children can recognize "exit", "stop" and "walk" long before it occurs to anyone to teach them to read. Once your child understands what all those squiggles mean something, that they constitute a useful and enjoyable code system in older people's lives, he may try to follow with his finger the words you read aloud to him and want his name written on everything from his door to his T-shirt. He may but he may not. It doesn't matter either way. It is his interest in, and understanding of, the point and process of reading which will give him a head start, not the level of his skill. (p. 378)

In her 1978 manual, Leach focused on the link between talking to children and developing their learning skills for school. In 1988, this advice also included the importance of mentoring and modeling many uses and forms of print. While Leach stated that "it doesn't matter" if children take an interest in this "code" or not, it did of course matter, or the ideal literacy behaviours of a two-year old child who "may try to follow with his finger the words you read aloud to him" would not be described in such detail. It is here too, that the view of reading in the home was not only meant to be enjoyable, but a means of getting a "head start," though it is not clear over what or whom these gains

should be made. The ideal literacy learning environment was one in which the stay-at-home mother provided an environment rich in new and interesting things, well thought-out learning opportunities, and the interesting day trips that were also a part of 1950s advice.

Similarly, each of the editions of Spock's child-raising manuals published in the 1990s (1992; 1998) included new or expanded sections on the importance of home reading to school success, and on parental involvement in schooling. The sixth edition of Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care* appeared in 1992. It varied in small but important ways from previous editions. Discussion of "reading" still appeared in the index under "reading problems," and the maturation, or as he called it, "reading early" perspective, continued to dominate Spock's advice in the 1990s as he considered reading before school under the topic of "gifted children." Parents of "early readers" remained under suspicion for succumbing to societal pressures to engage their children in this "unnatural" activity before they were ready. However, the section on "school" in the same edition was greatly expanded to make space for new categories of difference and difficulty children may experience in relation to the school system, including "rebelliousness," "the hyperactive child," those with "reading and writing difficulties," and the "over conscientious child." Under the category, "reading and writing difficulties", Spock still equated "poor reading" with visual problems and (in the 1998 edition) linked gender to learning disabilities, pointing out that:

> 10% of children — most of them boys — have much more than the average difficulty recognizing and remembering the appearance of words. They continue to reverse many words and letters for several years. It takes

> them a lot longer to learn to read reasonably well and some of them remain poor spellers for life, no matter how much they are drilled. (Spock, 1998, p. 558)

In keeping with the majority of advice texts, Spock cited explicit phonics instruction as the most effective remedy for reading difficulties:

> Most of these children can be helped by extra practice in phonics in which they sound the letters and syllables for words, and point at them with their fingers at the same time. In this way, they can make up for some of their weaknesses in recognizing words visually. (p. 559)

Spock's advice for helping children with homework was interesting because in spite of the growing pressure, and even contractual arrangements and legislation in some jurisdictions in the UK, the US, and Canada for parents to oversee homework, Spock reiterated his 1946 recommendation that if they could afford it, parents should get a tutor rather than help their children with homework. Yet if in this sixth edition (1992) Spock seemed to be struggling with the relative place that reading and school work should occupy in family life, his seventh edition (1998), described as "fully revised and expanded for the new century," laid these reservations to rest and embraced home reading as an essential practice for "raising mentally healthy children" (1998, p. 466). Reading, especially reading aloud during "family reading hour," took a new and prominent place in Spock's ideal family as an antidote to what he portrayed as the corrupting influences of new technologies and the mass media. In addition to parent-child reading, children also needed to see their parents reading. In fact, reading should be a "family value":

> A family reading hour is another way to promote reading. Your children witness sustained reading by the adults and learn that such reading is a strong family value. Ask friends to give books as presents for birthdays. Keep magazines and books around the house. I'm concerned that reading not become a lost art, made obsolescent by the electronic media. The gift of reading is the gift of imagination, access to new worlds and school success. Make sure it is a gift your child comes to appreciate and love. (p. 468)

According to Spock, media in the form of computer and video games and television were considered a threat to an "active inner life" (1998, p. 467). In a rather dramatic departure from previous editions in which reading to babies was not considered, in the 1998 edition, Spock echoed the advice in other popular advice texts and expounded on the necessity and virtues of reading to babies and young children, and went further than most in the amount of time he recommended dedicating to the practice:

> I suggest you begin to foster a love of reading and the printed word from the start. By four to six months, you can begin to read to your child. Get thick cardboard books so he can suck on them and drool all over them. Of course he isn't interested in the pictures or story at this time. But you are laying the groundwork, as he learns to enjoy sitting in your lap, being close to you and sharing this strange picture book in front of you ... I'd suggest you read to your child as often as possible, at least once or twice a day. Additionally, reading a bedtime story, or for older children, a chapter

> a night of a long book, is a wonderful bedtime ritual that promotes warmth, love and imagination. (Spock, 1998, pp. 467–468)

Penelope Leach's third edition of the popular *Baby and Child Care* (1997) also featured revisions and extensions to its sections on "reading." As discussed above, Leach expressed her skepticism of structured early learning experiences and the motivations of parents who pursued them (1979; 1989). In her 1997 edition, she joined Spock in warning parents not to live vicariously through their children, structuring their every minute to "compete" and to "qualify" for the best schools. But she acknowledged that, indeed, one cannot raise toddlers without a view to their future education:

> Although our toddler seems to be on the go all day, it's important to her future education that she begin to learn to enjoy play that demands more thought than muscle and to enjoy looking and listening without much doing. It's adult participation that helps toddlers understand and concentrate. (p. 248)

In this manual, Leach (1997) raised the standard for the attentive adult accompanying the toddler on its linear journey through his or her development tasks. The adult (all the photos in the book picture women with children) was constructed as ready and able to assist the toddler in a more challenging set of development tasks, she argued, than faced the toddlers of the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, in the pragmatic tradition of best-selling, child-raising experts, Leach covered all the bases — responding to parents who are concerned their children have a "head start" in school, and protecting the child (since she still writes from the "child's point of view") from undue pressure. And while it was the social concern for the financial and economic consequences of children who did not

arrive at school "ready to learn" that drove this advice, an important practice for mothers was to negotiate the fine line between demonstrating appropriate concern for their children's literacy and school readiness, while not appearing to pressure them or to be "competitive". These contradictory ideals for domestic literacy were mirrored in Hays' (1996) observation of the deep cultural contradictions that shape mothering more broadly. Children must be prepared for success in school and in the market place, but they must also remain innocent, and "naturally" children. It is mothers' domestic literacy task to navigate between these contradictory forces. This attempt to navigate this cultural contradiction represented an enduring but ever stronger theme in child raising advice manuals in the 1990s.

Against the backdrop of popular interest in the literacy practices in the private lives of families, the United States National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) generated and distributed family literacy advice in many textual forms, and through many different distribution methods. These texts found their way into local community organizations in particular in the form of "fact sheets" and booklets to be distributed to parents attending parenting education classes, family literacy programs, libraries, and even their doctor's offices. One of the consequences of the concentration of media outlets in the middle of the 1990s was that even though more advice was circulated, the content of that advice was quite uniform, and was in fact "recycled" through the close inter-textual links between the NCFL, the US Department of Education, Canadian national, provincial and local literacy groups, and the childcare and family support movements. Literacy organizations producing advice pamphlets and promotional materials for families tended to integrate advice from these different sources, with the consequence

that "tip sheets" could extend to several pages. As described in Chapter One, ABC Canada, which is sponsored by Honda, developed family literacy advice that was re-issued over several years for Family Literacy Day. This advice included twenty-six pieces of advice, one for every letter of the alphabet, that reiterated and extended the most common pieces of advice, from "Ask your child questions about the story you're reading to ensure comprehension," "Book family time to read with your child every day," "Create a special reading place in your home," "Donate funds to the literacy cause!" to "Volunteer your time to family literacy groups," "Zap off the TV — pick up a book instead!" (ABC Canada, 2002). In spite of the diversity of family life across North America, many of these tips are the same as those published by the United States Department of Education offering titled "One hundred tips for parents" (Parent Information and Resource Centre, 2002).

Similarly, the YMCA (2004) published a full booklet for parents called "Raising Kids Who Read" that described in detail forty "developmental assets" including support, empowerment, setting boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, positive social values, positive identities, social competencies, and a commitment to learning that were all deemed necessary traits in both parents and children if children were to become readers. This is heavy reading, with serious expectations and implications for failure.

But the NCFL and other literacy organizations also attempted to educate the public about the "cause" of illiteracy. Continuing trends in the late 1980s, typical promotional materials in the 1990s and 2000s targeted illiterate mothers as the cause of the literacy crisis in Canada and the United States. New morality tales were woven into advice, in which women who improved their literacy also improved their mothering.

Indeed it was the goal of helping women to mother better that was the focus of many family literacy campaigns. It must be remembered, however, that within the social context of actual family literacy programs, very different and perhaps more empowering messages and literacy practices may have been communicated. The discourses of family literacy advice did not necessarily reflect the practices of family literacy educators.

"Read while you breastfeed": Mothering as embodied literacy practice

New child-raising manuals swamped the market in the late 1980s and 1990s, many of which focused on parents' teaching roles in the home and their responsibilities toward schools. From a multi-vocal perspective, experts seemed to be responding to an assumption among policy makers that homes were void of any social interaction or reading and writing, and that encouraging social interaction, and more particularly, "bonding" through reading, was one way to address both concerns. The publishing industry was only too happy to respond to these perceptions with new advice and educational products.

Trelease published the *New Read-Aloud Handbook* in 1989, the third edition of his popular reading advice book. In the introduction, Trelease summarized what he believed to be the two biggest problems related to parents and reading in the 1980s:

> First, parents most in need of help — young, poor, undereducated mothers and fathers — either won't or can't avail themselves of these [reading support] tools; and second, a growing number of affluent, fast-track parents are using education as a pressure cooker to produce instant adults. (Trelease, 1989, p. xxi)

Maintaining that his book was not about teaching children how to read, but rather teaching children how to *want* to read, Trelease claimed that parents who pressured their children to read and be successful at school were performing "suburban child abuse." He then went on to outline another new literacy problem: boys were not reading. He thus directed his advice to fathers, and linked their lack of involvement in their boys' education with the high level of boys attending remedial reading classes. The premise guiding his new edition was that the most important predictor of children's scholastic success was reading aloud to children. Trelease pointed out that thanks to the teaching strategies and focus on reading in schools that emerged from *A Nation At Risk (*United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), reading scores were steadily increasing. But he joined with other reading advice experts in reminding readers that their improved skills were not good enough, because "we live in a world that is getting more complicated by the hour" (Trelease, 1989, p. 6). Trelease adapted his advice to the "new knowledge economy" political discourse, suggesting that reading to children would not only improve or increase their desire to read, but also promote intelligence, culture, knowledge, and flexibility in a changing economy. He deemed the steady decline in American's knowledge of history, appreciation for culture, and the apparent inability of Americans to deal with many kinds of information, was caused by the fact that children, particularly boys, did not choose to read as a pastime outside of school. This, however, could be remedied if parents promoted reading at home and limited children's access to technology. He included additional advice in this edition on the importance of reading to babies, to "condition" them to the world of books, reflecting the trend in the 1980s of advice books for raising "smart" babies. Bonding, emotional intelligence,

academic achievement, and happiness were promised for parents who read one-to-one with their children daily, or at the very least, two or three times a week. The management of domestic time and the importance of physical closeness in "good" story book reading suggested family literacy as an embodied practice.

The emphasis on reading as a central practice in promoting "success" in life and "school readiness" as well as "bonding" is evident in advice provide by Spock and Leach, described above as well as newcomers to the "advice" scene, such as Eisenberg, Murkoff and Hathaway's *What to Expect* series, first published in 1984. These popular manuals (*What to Expect in the First Year* sold 5.6 million copies in the USA and Canada) were modeled on the "woman to woman, over the fence" advice that their middle-class readers may no longer have had access to or had been warned not to trust. *What to Expect* has been criticized for its hetero-normative, patriarchal bias, particularly in its discussions of pre-natal care and child birth (McCullough, 2004, p. 104). The assumption that women had choices to stay off work after their babies were born underpinned the discourse of the "normal family" in their literacy advice. Structured around "questions" asked by fictitious mothers and a few fathers, advice on reading was found in *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (1991). One "parent" asked, "I have a friend … whose husband reads to her tummy every night to give their baby a love of literature. Isn't all this nonsense?" (p. 186). The authors replied:

> In the study of the unborn, it's getting harder and harder to distinguish between nonsense and fact. And while there is plenty of pure nonsense out there, scientists are coming to believe that some of these apparently outlandish theories may turn out to have a basis in fact. … Some

> researchers in the field believe that it is actually possible to stimulate the fetus prior to birth to produce, in a sense, a "super-baby." At least one has claimed to turn out babies who can speak at six months and read at a year and half by exposing the fetus to increasingly complex rhythmic imitations of a mothers' heartbeat. Certainly, anyone who understands child development should be very wary of trying to create a super baby, either before birth or after. It's much more important for a baby to be taught that he or she is loved and wanted than to be taught how to speak and read. (Eisenberg, Murkoff & Hathaway, 1991, p. 187)

The authors conceded that reading to a baby in the womb couldn't do any harm in moderation and it may contribute to an early start on "parent-baby" bonding:

> [S]o enjoy making baby contact now, but don't worry about teaching facts or imparting information — there'll be plenty of time for that later. As you'll soon discover, children grow up all too soon anyway. There's no need to rush the process, particularly before birth. (Eisenberg, Murkoff & Hathaway, 1991, p. 188)

In this way, the authors were able to acknowledge the desire of their target audience to give their children a "head start," but mildly admonish them for it, all the while preparing them to take up appropriate domestic literacy practices when the child is born. The womb as a site of this early socialization also sets up this pedagogic work as natural to mothers. As in Trelease's (1989) advice, this parental desire for "smart babies" was constructed as something internal to parents, rather than shaped by societal values.

In the second edition of *What to Expect in the First Year* (1994a), which offered advice for raising the newborn to one year child, under the heading "reading to baby" the reader encounters the five most common pieces of advice for supporting early literacy development we have come across thus far: "Be a model and let your child see you reading," "Start a juvenile [book] collection," "Learn to read parent-style," "Make reading a habit," and "Keep the library open," which involved ensuring the baby had access to board books at all times (Eisenberg, Murkoff & Hathaway, 1994a, pp. 289–292).

The authors suggested that because of the seduction of television, it was important to begin to read to babies as early as possible, so they could "catch the book worm" early and hence choose to read rather than watch TV as they grew older. In advising mothers to "read to yourself" the authors suggest that babies needed to see their mothers reading if they were going to value it themselves. They suggested, "Though it's hard for parents of young children to find a spare moment for a quiet read, it's worth the effort" (1994, p. 289). This effort would indeed seem effortless if literacy was taken up as an embodied practice, natural to being a mother and to the everyday work of mothering. For example, "read a few pages from a propped up book while you nurse or give your baby a bottle, read a book in his room while he plays, keep a book on your nightstand for reading before you fall asleep and for showing your baby, "this is mommy's book'" (Eisenberg, et al., 1994, p. 289).

While collecting and reading this advice, I was nursing a newborn and thought the idea of propping up the book while feeding worth a try. Not surprisingly, it proved impossible — the book would fall over, I had no free hands to turn the page, and every

time my baby moved I would lose my place. This underscored the ideal images of mothering embedded in this literacy advice and the ways that these suggested reading practices are perhaps more about the performance of "good" mothering than on the place of reading as a meaning-making activity in everyday life.

As in Leach's advice, Eisenberg, Murkoff and Hathaway (1994a) described exactly how to share the book with the baby, providing detailed advice designed to help mothers carry out reading much as would professional educators in a pre-school or school setting. Mothers were seen as "co-learners" with their babies, willing to improve and perfect their skills. Also important to this domestic literacy work was to demonstrate an appropriate maternal tone and inflection:

> If you passed second-grade reading, you know how to pick up a volume of *Mother Goose* and read it aloud. But there's more to reading to a baby. Tone and inflection are important; read slowly, with a lilting sing-song and exaggerated emphasis on the right places. Stop at each page to emphasize salient points. (Eisenberg, Murkoff & Hathaway, 1994a, p. 290)

A key domestic literacy task was to manage baby and children's schedules to support literacy development: "Build reading into baby's agenda — a few minutes at least twice a day, when he's quiet and alert, and when he's already fed. Before naptime, after lunch, after bath and before bed are all good reading times" (p. 290). Story book reading had become a solution to the perceived need for "a sense of roots and security" in the "fast capital" work environment of the 1990s. Mothers' domestic literacy tasks

involved adhering to the all important reading routines that were linked to the ideal of the stay at home mother, captured here by Leach (1988):

> If your child is age 6 or younger, a routine is just as important to him as a ritual. Suppose that Thursday afternoon is usually reserved for going to the library; a change of that routine might seem as upsetting to him as the cancellation of Christmas would. When it's necessary to alter a routine, try to prepare him as soon as possible...alert him earlier in the day if you have to forgo his bedtime story for one night and explain why. Perhaps you can make it up to him by reading the story before his afternoon nap. (Leach, 1988, p. 23)

These themes carried over into *What to Expect in the Toddler Years* (Eisenberg, Murkoff & Hathaway, 1994b). In that volume, reading had its own five page section titled, "What is Important for Your Toddler to Know: Reading is Fundamental," a reference to the source of its advice, the Reading is Fundamental Foundation in the United States.[17]

> Reading is fundamental. But what a lot of today's television-age children never learn is that it's also fun. It's one thing to teach a child to read — with a few primers and a stack of flashcards anyone can do it. But it's quite another thing to

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[17] The Reading is Fundamental Foundation claims to be the first children's literacy organization in the United States. Began in 1966 as a campaign to distribute free books to US school children, the Foundation currently holds contracts with the US Department of Education to promote access to books and children's literacy in 50 US States, Argentina and the United Kingdom (http://www.rif.org/about/leadership/default.mspx, retrieved December 9, 2005). Supported by celebrities such as Ed Asner, Carol Burnett, and Shaquille O'Neal, the Foundation has enjoyed high visibility. In 1987 it added to its book distribution activities by developing advice for parents with over "100 tips" for promoting reading in the home. This list became a source for the *What to Expect* sections on reading.

> teach a child to love reading. And while most experts agree that teaching a child to read — to recognize letters and sound out words and string words into sentences — is a process best left until the child is ready, teaching a child to love reading is a process that can start long before he or she knows an "A" from a "Z." (Eisenberg, et al., 1994, p. 90)

Of interest in the above passage is discursive strategy of distinguishing some children from others — there are those who watch TV and those who have been taught to love reading before school. The advice also distinguished (along the lines of Spock) between teaching children to read (not recommended before school) and teaching children to love reading. Parents were expected to intuitively understand and appreciate the difference. Learning to read was deemed "easy," requiring no more than some primers and flashcards, but it was implied that children who love to read require a qualitatively different kind of experience — and the kind of parenting practices that will provide this. The authors offered extensive advice for how to "nurture" and embody such a love of reading that, while more detailed, varied little from the basic pieces of advice documented earlier in this chapter, and in previous chapters. From the perspective of embodied literacy practice, of interest was the recurrent them of "being cuddly." "Children who come to associate reading with the cozy comfort of being curled up on Mommy or Daddy's lap, almost always enjoy reading books later on" (Eisenberg, et al., 1994b, p. 102). Reading was associated with bonding, security, and the "sensitive mothering." It becomes the main organizing principle of domestic life:

> Children of readers are much more likely to end up being readers themselves. Try to set time aside each day for your reading -- even if you

> manage just a page or two at a sitting. If you can't fit this into your schedule, or if you just don't like to read, make sure your toddler sees you reading at least occasionally. Make reading material a fixture in your home; keep a book by your bedside ("This is Mommy's [or Daddy's] book"), magazines on the coffee table, newspapers next to your armchair. And minimize the amount of television that is watched by your toddler and by you. Studies have shown that families who watch less, read more (Eisenberg, Murkoff & Hathaway, 1994b, p.102).

This image of "a fixture" is interesting. The practices recommended lead one to wonder whether for the authors, reading is about making meaning from the world, or about the performance of "good parenting" and culturally appropriate practices. Indeed, reading the sections on "learning" and "reading" in these manuals, readers could be forgiven for thinking that reading to children and supporting their literacy is all mothers do. In *The Mother of All Toddler Books* (2002), Douglas, a Canadian author of child raising manuals, opened her five page section on reading with the cliché, "one of the greatest gifts a parent can give a child is a love of reading" (p. 134). Describing all the skills children learn by being read to, Douglas' advice was firmly grounded in the assumption that "encouraging a lifelong love of reading" was a mother's work. The icons and asides that decorated the text shared "mom's the word" anecdotes, this one provided by "Rita, 37, mother of two":

> If I'm baking, I show Timothy how I read the recipe. I also show him labels on foods and words on TV. I think if he sees how reading is involved in everything we do on a daily basis, he'll realize how important

> reading is. Of course, letting him pick the book at night to read or offering to read it during the day helps as well. (Douglas, 2002, p. 137)

Douglas' advice similarly recommended the requisite bedtime story, lap time, home library, dramatizing of stories, and "taking time to read yourself so your toddler knows it's important" (p. 133). But Douglas is slightly more creative in recommending that mothers weave reading into those dead air spaces when baby and mother are waiting for the microwave to ding, taking a bath, or "waiting in the bank line-up" (p. 135). Just as reading a novel while breastfeeding sounds slightly more compelling on paper than in practice, the promotion of the practice of reading to a toddler while in a moving line-up suggests that the practical realities of caring for young children are discarded for a greater cause. Reading to babies and toddlers took on a symbolic importance in these texts that suggests that reading is more about the performance and status of a middle-class literacy habitus, than about reading to get meaning from a text as part of the situatedness of everyday life.

In emphasizing routine, bonding, and the domestic sphere as a quiet domain inhabited by mother and child, this advice advocated strongly for an ideal that was likely far from reality. Some readers, it seems, were irritated by the unattainable domestic ideals laid out in advice. Although not related to literacy advice specifically, this sentiment was expressed by a mother in her review of *What to Expect in the Toddler Years* on Amazon.com. She titled her review: "I am having a ritual burning of this book today!"

> My son is 8 months old and I have hardly opened this book. When I do, I just get angry. The advice is condescending, and unreasonable — such as saying that playpens are bad, any sugar, salt or white flour is bad (ruling

> out crackers and cookies as first foods), etc. Like I have nothing else to do but give my child quality interactive time while the maid cleans, the cook prepares organic, tasteless, fat-free meals, and the butler and secretary do all the errands, phone calls and bills. We all live in the real world, and so do our kids. We should enjoy life (including food and Teletubbies) and enjoy our kids, and it will all work out. Most of the advice that isn't insulting or silly is just common sense, you don't need a book for it. Just burn it! (and "What to Expect When Expecting," too). There is some useful medical / developmental information, but you can get that from other sources (NJ mother, 2002).

This absence in advice of the situated context in which child raising is located was similarly evidenced in the *Parents are Learners* campaign of the Canadian Home-School Federation. First launched as the "Literacy in the Information Age" campaign in 1991, to encourage parental involvement in their children's school, the PALS project consisted of parent education workshops and a binder of fact sheets with advice on supporting their children's literacy. Some of these fact sheets had first been developed in the 1967 *Centennial Reading Project* described in Chapter Six. The fact that literacy advice from the 1960s could be recycled for use in parent education classes in the 1990s suggests that perhaps views of what constitutes ideal domestic literacy practices have not changed as much as the perceived role of literacy in children's lives has changed. As pointed out earlier, there is a striking similarity in the content of family literacy advice texts from government institutions of the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This suggests not only that many family literacy texts were generated from the same research

studies and institutions, but that their terminology and common sense assumptions are recycled and reused with little attention to context, culture, or target audience.

Up to now, this chapter has considered advice to middle-class mothers. But a significant feature of literacy advice discourses in the 1990s was its surveillance of low-income and minority mothers who, according to literacy advice provide by the National Center for Family Literacy and other dominant sources of literacy advice, posed the most "risk" to their children's literacy development because they often had low levels of formal education. Discourses of the normal family, intensive mothering, and domestic pedagogy were reinforced through regulatory practices such as home visits and the tying of literacy education to back-to-work welfare programs.

Work your way out of poverty: Domestic literacy as family power

In 1995, Trelease published a fourth edition of the *Read Aloud Handbook* and while his advice remained similar to previous editions, his introductory chapter on "why read aloud" was updated to include concerns that Americans, in their unwillingness to read (or at least purchase) books, were therefore not "smart" and thus unable to keep pace with a changing economy. He asserted, "While American children are not getting smarter, those in other countries are" (Trelease, 1995, p. 5). Most significantly, Trelease's advice came in the format of anecdotes about families he had read about in newspapers; anecdotes that read in similar ways to the morality tales of nineteenth-century advice, particularly in their dividing strategies between academically successful children whose mothers practiced intensive mothering and appropriate domestic literacy management and who lived in a "normal family," and "failing" children, whose mothers did not engage in these strategies. Trelease commented on the unequal conditions for learning

available to poor children with respect to their more well-off counterparts, but argued that the real inequality "began in their homes" (p. 22). He supported this contention by describing the domestic literacy practices of a grandmother who cared for her four grandchildren, one of whom was nine year old Darnell. Overcrowding, lack of a structured routine, and a TV turned on in the kitchen while Darnell did his homework, was testimony to her inadequate domestic literacy management skills and thus Darnell's difficulty in school.

This description contrasted with a successful little boy, Thomas, whose mother was a former teacher and his father a doctor. Thomas' mother took time to discover and stimulate his interests. She limited his TV watching and "took him to the library every day for an hour" (Trelease, 1995, p. 23). As a result, Thomas earned a degree from a community college one month before finishing high school. The moral of this tale, argued Trelease, is that "anyone who waits for the government or local schools to break the cycle of inequality within our communities or homes is going to have a long wait … but if you start in the home and begin with reading, you can change it in less than a lifetime" (1995, p. 23). Trelease highlighted the increased importance of mothers' domestic literacy practices, as a cause of (and solution to) social inequality in the 1990s and 2000s. Pamphlets and promotional materials from the NCFL's "The Power of Family Literacy" (2002) campaign contained photographs and images that reinforced this message. In these texts, family literacy is a mother — usually a black or Hispanic mother — who, with six children, will somehow return to school and get a well-paying job that will keep her and her family off welfare. Promotional materials explaining the "power" of family literacy claimed:

> It's about Sara who takes all six of her children to the front door one day and points to the mailbox. She tells them to look at that mailbox. She says there will never be another welfare check in that mailbox, because she is going to school right beside them. (NCFL, 2002)

Family literacy programs, according to that text, help women like Sara become good, responsible mothers. The practice of targeting family literacy policies towards those who are often most marginalized from the school system is another way in which families with the least resources and representation in the school system are encouraged to "take responsibility" for their situation.

Home visits emerged in the family literacy movement as an effective means to "reach hard to reach" families with important family literacy messages. This practice arose out of community health care models in small and remote communities where home visits are an important way to meet the health care needs of individual families who cannot drive long distances to urban centres. Often in such settings, educators and/or health care workers live and work in the same community with the families they serve and home visits are seen as natural and appropriate extensions of community solidarity. However, the meaning and context of home visits depends largely on their purpose and the relationship between the visitor and host. The following list-serv message from an Even Start educator in the United States, for whom regular home visits to participating families are mandatory, draws attention to the fine line between the use of home visits to reach out to isolated families and build interpersonal relationships, and the role of home visits in breaching family privacy by promoting surveillance and compliance.

> As an adult educator, I have found home visits to be immensely helpful as an evaluation of the effectiveness of my classroom lessons. When you do lessons around nutrition, the content of shelves and refrigerators should change as a result. What better place to truly see the impact of your teachings. If you talk about childhood safety yet go to the home and see numerous unsafe items that you talked about, well it lets you know that the lesson didn't transfer to another environment and that you need to revisit the concepts. PLUS it is wonderful to have the children and adults show you their home, special places and nick-nacks. (Tardaewether, 2002)

The above text suggests that mothering discourses not only are present in texts, but shape the ways in which educators/professionals and families interact. A visit to a home was an opportunity to "check on learning" (even on topics that have nothing to do with the school curriculum), and in this way the home becomes an extension of the classroom. The use of home visits to instill desired mothering practices is a long-standing tool for social reform, as Maria Valverde (1991) described in the context of the "purity" movement in Canada and the United States in the early Twentieth Century. For example, Valverde argued that the term *social* at the turn of the century was used as an "adjective" usually followed by "problem." There was the "social" question and its answers were usually philanthropic. The "social" problems and the desire to understand them led philanthropists and researchers "into the neighbourhoods and homes of the poor (home visiting was a central practice in nineteenth century philanthropy). This investigation began with kitchens, clothes and cupboards of the poor, but it did not end there" (Valverde, 1991, p. 21). While the use of home visits to check on literacy practices may

not be designed to pry into sexual desire, it is still worth considering whether "literacy" had taken the place of "morality" or more generally the "social" as the frame for naming and acting upon persistent social problems that arise from our economic system.

It is in this way that the desired social visions are enacted through women's domestic literacy work, and regulated by social agencies. This vision positions literacy and mothering as solutions to social problems of the neo-liberal nation-state. Foremost among these "problems" was the performance of schools, and a key area for women's domestic literacy work was to uphold parental involvement in schools, the primary role of which was ensuring their children could read, helping with homework and volunteering and fund raising. Indeed, it is in the interface between home and school that mothers, and low-income mothers in particular, were most subject to surveillance and regulation.

But these new roles also produced conflict. Anne Scott described how she and her daughter experienced learning to read at home.

> It was a nightmare just getting her to read, to learn to read when she was in Grade 1. I was working nights at the time because I was on my own. I was always too tired to sit and read with her. One day the teacher had a go at me. And I just said to her "You know you're the one who gets paid to teach her to read between 9.10 and 3.15 and if you can't, then this is your problem, not mine." (A. Scott in Louden, 1994, p. 6)

The juxtaposition between institutional ideals for parental involvement in literacy and the situated experiences of mothers, who are most often called upon to do this work, is highlighted in these contrasting perspectives. Yet as Anne Scott makes clear, the

situated experience of mothers does not always correspond to these ideals. There is a silence in welfare-to-work and parental involvement policies over who is meant to do the work of ensuring these policies are successful. As described in Chapter Three, Standing (1999), Smith (1999), and Dudley-Marling (2001) suggested that these often demanding time-consuming responsibilities will be left to mothers who are likely already juggling multiple roles and family/work conflicts. Such conflicts are acknowledged in parental involvement policies — but they are not excuses for not participating, as the following text from suggests:

> Although some working and single parents may be unable to contribute to schools because of work commitments and time constraints, educators are discovering many additional ways that parents can help students and their schools. Some of these ways are dependent upon the school's desire to involve parents. To effect change, parents must find time to participate in their children's education while schools must provide the supports necessary for them to be involved. The resulting partnerships between parents and teachers will increase student achievement and promote better cooperation between home and school. Together these efforts will connect families and schools to help children succeed in school and in their future. (Nathan, 2003)

While these suggestions were intended to increase parental access to schools and acknowledge the lived realities of families, one effect was to increase the regulation of families, along with the expectations for parental involvement. This echoes the message of the family literacy panel described in the introduction to this chapter: Feeling

overwhelmed? Try harder. Another effect of the reliance upon mothers' domestic literacy work, was the realization among some social commentators that literacy had become too associated with women. Phillips, in Watiuk (2001, p. 2), called this the "feminization of reading," and the proposition that "boys see reading as a girl thing" (Hall, 2002, R5) was offered as an explanation for why on average boys scored lower on reading tests than girls. Shapiro, quoted in the CanWest article, "Boys Need to See Male Role Models" (Hall, 2002) explained that when male teachers are present in the classroom there doesn't seem to be a negative impact on boys' literacy. Consequently, Shapiro advised, "where possible, have the man do the lion's share of the leisure reading. There's no evidence that it will make a difference in the end, but it can't hurt" (Shapiro, in Hall, 2002, R5). One response to the need for male literacy role models was for the Vancouver Public Library to launch a literacy program for fathers and "other male figures, like uncles and brothers" (Hall, 2005, R5). While including fathers in their children's literacy support is laudable, it is interesting that mothers "and other female figures" do not require a special literacy program. It is also interesting to consider why fathers and "other figures" don't attend existing family literacy programs.

In the CanWest Global newspaper's Raise-A-Reader campaign on September 25, 2003, the importance of male role models for boys' reading was a strong theme. Vancouver Canuck's hockey player Trevor Linden was photographed reading to children at the Canuck Place Children's Hospice. Inside pages featured photos of Canuck's coach Marc Crawford reading to schoolchildren, and player Brendan Morrison shared that when he is not on the road, "I sit down with him all the time and go through his books" (Mason, 2003, p. A15). Other articles in the same feature discuss the importance of

library story times for young mothers, and the contribution of English second language classes to helping new immigrant mothers read to their children, though these mothers do not feature in the full page spread photos and interviews.

In others texts, celebrity literacy father figures give way to the domestic literacy work of the "ordinary" father:

> Sam didn't become so well-read all by himself. His love of books — substantial, challenging books — is a direct result of the hours his parents (his dad especially) have spent reading to him. To Sam, this is a completely different activity from reading himself," noted his father, Jim. "Being read to is one of the highlights of his day, and if I have to be away during his bedtime, we both make sure we find another time to read". (Bennet, 1998)

It may well be that fathers play a much larger role in domestic literacy work than is acknowledged in advice or in family literacy research and interventions. The theme of fathers' role in domestic literacy work was evolving in literacy advice to parents at the time this research was concluded.

Mothering the early brain: Literacy as nurturing baby care

"It's not what happens in the White House that is important. It is what happens in your house" (Sears & Sears, 2000, p. 31).

A fourth, emerging theme in literacy advice to mothers in the 2000s is the application of the re-discovered trends of attachment parenting and "early brain research" to literacy advice. As discussed in the introduction, human capital theory framed a new

interest in the early years as a crucial time for brain development. Attachment, stimulation, and intensive care for children in the early years were signaled as crucial to the appropriate "wiring" of children's brains. The interest in early brain development also included a shift in focus from parenting styles and conditions for children's literacy development in low-income homes, to the practices of middle-class parents as well. The policy implication of this shift was considered by David Dodge, the President of the Bank of Canada, who considered early childhood development a crucial capital investment:

> While research has demonstrated that parental input during the first 24 months of life is crucial to the "wiring of the brain", what is much less clear is what kind of support for parents is most effective in fostering child development during that critical period. Some minimum level of income support is important (and is now being delivered through the National Child Benefit). However, it must be remembered that in Canada about half of "children at risk" come from households in the top three income quintiles. The real challenge is not delivering bigger cheques to poor families, it is how to reach all parents in their communities. (Dodge, 2003, p. 5)

It seemed that no one was doing a very good job of parenting (McCain & Mustard, 1999). Children's literacy development, in the context of a human capital investment, became intricately connected to normal brain development, and, recruiting nineteenth-century and earlier twentieth-century discourses, of happiness, morality, and emotional security as well. There was remarkable uniformity in messages promoting the connections between literacy and brain development across commercial, government, and

non-governmental organizations in their public education, and commercial marketing campaigns that "the early years last forever" (CICH, 1997, p. 1). Childhood and parenting and family relationship in the home became all about literacy and brain "wiring." In a pamphlet written by Mary Gordon and the Roots of Empathy Foundation, parents were reminded that they "play a powerful role in wiring a baby's brain for learning: "From a child's first breath to the first day of kindergarten, loving relationships are the best teachers ... This learning sets the stage for success in school and life" (Gordon, 2003, p. 2).

Along with recommendations to parents that they play, celebrate, listen to, and love their children, was the need to read: "Read with your arms lovingly wrapped around your child. Reading this way stimulates many of the child's senses, including the sense of touch. The more senses that are used in learning, the deeper that learning will be" (Gordon, 2003, p. 5). Certainly love and affection are central to children's well-being and it is hard to imagine that parents would need to be told to love their children. This advice suggests not only that reading had become intimately connected to attachment parenting practices and a literacy habitus embedded in the discourse of intensive mothering, but that many institutions believed that homes were not loving, and did not value literacy.

Attachment parenting was the concept underpinning the Sears and Sears (2002) child raising manual, *The Successful Child: What Parents Can Do to Help Kids Turn Out Well.* This latest addition to the Sears' parenting library was a response to a new social concern: "Are Kids Today Successful?" The book was one of the first parenting manuals to integrate the findings of early brain research into parenting advice. "Being smart" was one of ten qualities of a successful child, according to Sears and Sears, along with "a

joyful attitude," "being kind and polite," "having a healthy attitude toward sexuality," and so on. The chapter dedicated to how to "give your child a smart start" began with a review of recent brain research. They asked the question, "Why are some brains smarter than others?" and conclude that two aspects most associated with 'smart brains' — "how fast messages travel from one nerve to another, and how well connected these nerves are" (p. 53) — were directly associated with practices associated with attachment parenting.

The Sears' framed their messages on reading based on the 1985 United States Department of Education report titled *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, that stated that, "reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for building knowledge and eventual success" (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23). They went on to say that "the home is the child's first school. Parents are the child's first teachers. Reading is a child's first subject" (Sears & Sears, 2002 p. 63). Asking why some children struggle in school and others do not, parents were told that "part of the answer lies in the attitude toward learning the home. Learning begins at home" and in that sense, "all children are homeschooled, even those who attend school" (p. 78). These views are consistent with advice from Trelease (1989) and Larrick (1975) who also equated success in school with the extent to which homes mirrored schools in the values and organization of learning. Indeed, this message became a mantra in the 2000s, with the consequences for not reading to children becoming increasingly dire. Prominent children's author Mem Fox reiterated this message in her book promoting the "magic" of home reading. She argued that, "prevention [of reading problems] happens long before a child starts school. In fact, the first day of school is almost too late for a child to begin to learn to read. It's as scary as that" (Fox, 2001, p. 13).

Early brain development is an emerging area of interdisciplinary research, integrating biological, social, and ecological perspectives of human development. The findings of this growing body of research in many ways confirm what people who spend time with children already knew: children thrive in a setting in which they are loved, protected from harm and have opportunities to learn. Strong arguments emanate from this research that support equitable distribution of wealth and resources within and between nation states as a means of promoting health, wealth, and productivity. Moreover, researchers such as Hertzman (1999) link this need for the equitable distribution of wealth to public education policies, warning of the danger that "parents' right to choose" policies in education pose to socio-economic equity.

Yet, while early brain research convincingly shows that socio-economic status affects life chances, a finding confirmed by many other studies, what is problematic is that the translation of these findings into policy and educational practice is mediated through discourses of intensive mothering that naturalize as women's work the responsibilities to teach in the home, and to advocate for quality child care and education. The privileging of the nuclear family as a site for ideal domestic literacy (with children from single parent homes deemed "at risk" for school failure), and advice that embeds children's literacy development in domestic work, raises the expectations placed on mothers but also creates a path for guilt and fear to do their work on mothers' confidence and self-esteem, as well as to displace fathers and other caregivers as important people in their children's lives.

Conclusions

This chapter argues that by the 1990s, advice for supporting infant and pre-school children's literacy became equated with, and embedded in, the everyday tasks of mothering. Children's literacy knowledge became a key indicator of emotional and cognitive development, and advice for supporting children's literacy was developed and distributed by public librarians, public health officials, pre-schools and daycares, teacher associations, toy manufacturers, and the CEOs of major businesses and charity foundations. Highlighted in this analysis were the complex inter-textual relationships that shape literacy advice. Indeed, while much literacy policy and advice originated in the United States, similar policies and advice also circulated in Canada, both by literacy organizations that applied US-based advice to the Canadian context and by Canadians who developed "home grown" literacy advice in magazines and books published in Canada.

As this advice circulated and became increasingly uniform even as it proliferated, new strategies and themes emerged to support the discourses of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family in the changing economic context of the 1990s. These included the view that children and families could be "at risk" to themselves and to society and that the solution to this was more maternal education for supporting their children's literacy. In this way, mothers' and children's literacy were still thought of as dangerous, though it was mothers' own literacy skills that were now considered the threat to the visions of the "new knowledge economy". Working from these assumptions, a variety of interventions, through education and advice, were designed for families, and mostly mothers, of children between the ages of zero to six. In

the next and final chapter of this thesis, the implications of these discursive themes and strategies are considered.

CHAPTER VIII: DISCUSSION

Since that day in 2001 when my daughter and I tried and failed to play literacy games in the car, I have spent a great deal of my time writing this thesis. I had a second child, a little boy who turned three while I was madly completing it. I worked with family support groups who wanted to integrate literacy into their work with young families. I was living inside and through the discourses of literacy and mothering, even as I tried to live outside them to read, write, and analyze their power/knowledge in shaping institutional practices, and my personal experiences of mothering. I could not help but apply the literacy advice I read for the purposes of this study to my own mothering practices. By the standards of most literacy advice, particularly texts written in the last few years, I don't spend enough time with my children. I don't take as many opportunities as I could to stimulate my son's language development. I find the mess of painting and crafts an added stress and am grateful he goes to a daycare where they are set up for this. I want my children to take music lessons but they aren't interested. I eventually refused to sign off on my daughters' reading log every evening, explaining to her teacher that at nine years old, she needed to monitor her own reading, if such a thing was necessary. She reads when she feels like it and still prefers if I read to her, something I like to do at the end of a long day, if I am not too tired and especially if it's a good book.

I read to our three year old son, but then so does everyone in the home including his sister and his father. I check that my daughter's homework is done because I feel it reflects badly upon me if I don't and I want her to be good at math. But it is her father who most often helps her with homework, and we made a decision to put her in a school

where she didn't get hours of homework every night, even if it meant that my working days were shortened considerably by driving and carpooling her to a school farther away. These activities for supporting my children's literacy and learning are dependent upon my "flexible" schedule and the social support networks we are able to draw upon. These networks help to share in the work of raising our children and getting them through school, and they provide a useful barometer for how well I am performing my domestic literacy work. It is nice to know that other mothers forget it was their turn to pick up the kids from school (I haven't yet come across a group of fathers who have organized a car pool, but fathers do also forget it was their turn to pick up), and that all the domestic literacy work in the world won't prevent a child from needing a tutor, or preferring to watch "The Simpsons" instead of reading that chapter book from the library.

These represent the many "moments in the practice of the discourse of mothering" (Griffith & Smith, 2005) that shaped this study. As much as I wanted to step outside mothering discourses and see my domestic literacy work from a critical or ironic perspective, as a white middle-class Canadian mother my children's schooling is a big part of my life, and it's getting bigger. Every day I need to remember to bring something from home that starts with "the letter of the day" for my son's daycare. This involves careful negotiation when my son insists that "Hockey Stick" does start with "B" and "Race Car" does start with "F" and are thus fair game for show and tell. As this study concludes, the work of making British Columbia, where I live, "the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent" (Government of British Columbia, 2005) has become my work. One of the key pillars for achieving the vision of this "most literature jurisdiction" is to provide parents with detailed advice for supporting children to read and

write at home. This "support" blends into direct teaching, as evidenced in these advice texts. One of the first pieces of advice in *Reading for Families* (Achieve BC 2005a) brings this study, and my domestic literacy work, full circle as it asks me to: "Play I Spy with your child, spying words that begin with consonants like "m" or "p." Use furniture, signs, labels and grocery items — any words that you come across in your daily travels together" (p. 1). The Victorian perspective of literacy as an embodied practice resonates across the century as advice in this booklet asks parents to, "encourage your children to spell, read and eat their words, using alphabet pasta or cereal" (AchieveBC, 2005b, p. 2).

Even as I question the motivations of this advice, and the vague and rather meaningless goal of living in the "most literate jurisdiction in North America," on a personal level I am invested in my children's education. In a political and social environment that consistently reduces the resources available to them in school and daycare as it calls upon my domestic literacy work in the home, I will likely find myself initiating a game of Alphabet I Spy with my son in our next shopping trip. And this time I may be tempted to be more insistent that we at least cover off a few consonants.

In this study I analyzed almost 300 advice texts published over a period of one hundred and fifty years. It was not an exhaustive account of all the advice texts published, nor a full explanation of how we got to the present dispensation in which mothers are asked to recite pasta alphabet letters as they feed them to their children. However, bringing together the traditionally distinct bodies of literature surrounding reading pedagogy with feminist histories and sociologies of childhood and schooling provided new insights into the discontinuities, and perhaps more prominently, the continuities in the common sense statement that "parents are their children's first and

most important educators" and the mother is the parent most suited to this role. This study found that the discursive formations of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family are embedded not only in child-raising ideals, but also in the ideals surrounding mothers' and children's literacy practices. Often represented as a skill to be acquired, it became clear that literacy practices desired in young children were discursively linked to desirable mothering practices. "Good" mothering was inseparable from "good" literacy. This also suggests the ways in which reading pedagogy and the broader concept of "family literacy" is also profoundly a gendered practice of power, deeply embedded in its own, perhaps unexamined, cultural practices, and social goals. The historical lens provided in this thesis has made visible how contemporary views of literacy as pivotal to children's academic achievement and social and economic success are associated with social visions that often have more to do with the regulation of mothering and family life than with promoting reading and writing.

Literacy advice from each of the periods examined in this study continues to yield many more insights and arguments. One of the biggest challenges in conducting this analysis was to decide when it was time to stop. But Phillips and Jorgenson (2002) remind us that "the end point of discourse analysis comes not because the research stops finding anything new, but because the researcher judges that the data are sufficient to make and justify an interesting argument" (p. 74). That time has come. In this final chapter I first reflect upon the research methods and lenses adopted in this study, the limitations of the study, and implications of these for the research findings. I then describe the research findings in light of the questions that guided this study. Within this discussion, I also identify the effects of mothering discourses in literacy advice on issues

of gender and equality of education opportunity. Next, I identify new themes in the research that deepen and extend the original research topic. I close with some thoughts on the implications of this study for classroom practice, literacy and social policy, and for further research.

Research Methods and Limitations

The discourses of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family constituted the discursive framework for analyzing literacy advice and provided a consistent structure through which to gauge continuities and shifts in themes that became attached to ideals of the "mother as teacher of literacy" over time. Before reflecting on the limitations of this study and areas for further research, I will briefly review the approaches to discourse analysis, and accompanying analytic lenses that guided this thesis.

According to Foucault, discourses are located in historical and cultural systems of knowledge, which are produced and reproduced through relations of power: "whoever is able to disseminate and impose his or her version of reality (through discourse) has power" (Kalman, in Taylor, 1997, p. 52). Foucault argued that the distinguishing features of discourses are not only that they are political, but that they are intertwined with our social and political identities in ways that mask their power to define, delimit, and/or erase individual lived experiences. It is through this power, Foucault (1977) argued, that discourses regulate social behaviour, values, and practices.

Political relationships are at the centre of critical discourse analysis. According to Gee, politics is at play where people are deciding and communicating which social goods have status, and how these social goods should be distributed. Such decisions are based on particular perspectives: "...what is "normal" and what is not, what is "acceptable" and what is not; what is "possible" and what is not, what "people like us" or "people like them" do or don't do..." (p. 2) This point was made by Maynard (1998) when he stated, "Thinking of discourses as practices rather than solely as texts — or to put it another way, thinking of discourses as texts that work — is one way to capture something of the materiality of discourse" (Maynard, 1998, p. 599).

The premise that discourses are political implies that critical discourse analysis is also concerned with social justice. Locating this study from outside the field of education, as a lens into the discursive construction of mothers in literacy discourse, provided insights into the benefits and importance of a historical approach to understanding contemporary literacy policy and practice. This highlights the contribution that a genealogical approach to critical discourse analysis can bring to critically engaging with and interrupting power/knowledge in contemporary literacy practice. As described in Chapter Two, literacy researchers such as Fairclough (1995), Gee (1999), and Rogers (2003) used strategies of critical discourses analysis to understand how language works as a cultural practice to "mediate relationships between power and privilege," as these are instantiated in everyday learning settings and institutions. Gee (2004), in an argument endorsed by Rogers, Malanchuruvil-Berkes, Mosley, Huie, and O'Garro Joseph (2005), claimed that "Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to "a brand of analysis associated with Fairclough, Hodge, Kress, Wodak, van Dijk and van Leeuwen, and followers.

Lowercase "critical discourse analysis includes a 'wider array of approaches'" (Rogers, et al., 2005, p. 367).

The authors do not directly explain what theoretical bases account for the distinction between the "brand" CDA and the "wider approach" of critical discourses analysis. However, it may imply Fairclough's (1995) distinction between the historical approach to discourse analysis adopted by Foucault, and his own "textually oriented" approach. The privileging of a "close" linguistic approach to textual analysis is evident in the definitions of CDA put forward by Rogers, Malanchuruvil-Berkes, Mosley, Huie, and O'Garro Joseph (2005), and indeed in much critical discourse analysis conducted in literacy research. However, it may be argued from a Foucauldian perspective that this distinction constitutes a strategy for normalizing "what counts" as "critical discourse analysis" among proponents of the approach, with consequences for what is "left out" in literacy research. Foucault's concepts of genealogy, as well as post-structural feminism, bring to critical discourse analysis not only a cultural tool for a linguistic analysis of power in education settings, but also a historical lens for appreciating the ways in which gender and nation, culture and race have played out historically to produce contemporary literacy and educational discourses. In downplaying the contributions of Foucault and feminism to "Critical Discourse Analysis" or the "wider approaches" of critical discourse analysis, literacy researchers risk missing the significance of historical relationships between gender and power/knowledge as they are manifested in contemporary literacy practices.

Dorothy Smith (1999) pointed out that we live in a textually-mediated world. Whether we "take up" literacy advice or not, it nevertheless shapes our experiences of

mothering, fathering, childhood and literacy. Yet this study is not an "accurate representation of reality." The post-structural traditions that give rise to critical discourse analysis reject the project of a "neutral, objective science" (Rogers, et al., 2005, p. 382). This was a central tenet in this study, which opened and closed with my observations that, as a researcher and a mother, I am "part of the language practices I study" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). I lived both inside and outside the advice texts analyzed in this thesis, and as noted earlier in this study, this shaped my interpretations of literacy advice as a complex interplay of both oppression and promise. I engaged in this study because I wanted to better understand the stress I felt as the person responsible for my daughter's literacy knowledge. But as the study unfolded, and my own experiences as a mother shifted and changed, I also became aware of the ways in which literacy advice not only regulated my literacy and mothering work, but at times also held up an image of promise and affirmation: If I can model these ideal literacy practices in my own life, my children will be successful, I will have done a good job. Indeed, what parent does not want their children to do well in school, to be happy and successful?

While my own conflicting readings of literacy advice shaped this analysis, I do not assume that others who read this study will share in all or any of my interpretations. This was not the aim of this research, nor is it the outcome. This analysis did not account for the complex and diverse ways in which mothers, fathers and families may take up literacy advice. A genealogical approach to critical discourse analysis does not lend sufficient insight into the mediation of texts in everyday life to permit this. This analysis was primarily concerned with how mothering discourses reflect the literacy ideals of institutions rather than the everyday literacy practices of mothers, fathers, or children.

However, this analysis may nevertheless provide an understanding of the discursive web in which domestic literacy work (and also family literacy research) is caught.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the analytic tool of multi-vocality was used to interpret texts not as integrated and unified, but as contradictory, and equally caught in the web of often conflicting voices and discourses. As Flint (1993) confirmed in her study of the *Woman Reader*, this multi-vocal strategy picks up the contradictions that often exist between the content of its advice, and its intent. Indeed, if reading to their children came as naturally to mothers as advice claimed, it would not be necessary to provide so much advice on its benefits and how to best carry it out. But while a multi-vocal analysis contributed to exposing the internal contradictions in advice, it also suggests the need for further investigation into the ways in which literacy advice is taken up by mothers and fathers in their everyday lives, and how domestic literacy work is negotiated and carried out in the context of complex and changing gender relationships.

A Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis privileges discontinuity. Yet so powerful was the continuity in advice discourses that more and more texts were included in the analysis to provide evidence of breaks or new discursive formations in literacy advice. This made it necessary to expand the breadth of historical time included in the study, as well as the themes and categories that were generated. Indeed, as Phillips and Jorgenson have stated, the point of discourse analysis is not to exhaust categories but rather generate them (2002, p. 74).

Indeed, to manage this large body of data there was a need to be systematic and inclusive, while a Foucauldian approach, while underlining the need to read broadly and deeply, is known for its eclectic and sometimes selective use of texts (Mills, 2000). Key

decisions made along the way marked moments in this struggle. These mainly took the form of how many texts to include, from which sources, and the ways in which patterns of discourse formations across texts could be illustrated while allowing the reader to make sense of the data her or himself. And as noted above, one struggle was also to know when to stop analyzing. I attempted to resolve these challenges by moving out from canonic advice texts to more obscure ones, from the insights into mothering discourses gleaned in child raising histories, to a re-analysis of these histories from a literacy perspective. This produced an analysis that in some ways covered existing terrain in the scholarship linking mothering with nation-building and particularly schooling, but it also offered new perspectives and insights into the cultural and historic roots of contemporary common sense dictums that "parents are their first and most important educators." The analysis also highlighted literacy as an important if often neglected site of women's work.

My role as researcher/reader of archival records and texts suggested that the ethics of representation are as salient when working with documentary evidence as they are when working with interview participants. The work of creating parameters for my topic and selecting texts necessitated forays into archives that only tangentially promised insights. For example, the archival fonds of the *Canadian Home School Federation* were one promising source of literacy advice, because their area of work so squarely fit the lens of women's domestic literacy work in the home and school, and because their longevity as an institution (founded in 1895) promised a source of continuous advice against which to gauge shifting themes and discourse strategies. As with all the literacy advice texts that were included in this analysis, the data I had access to in these fonds were limited by the choices of its authors as to what to include in their advice, and how

they wished to represent themselves and the organizations and professions to which they dedicated so much of their lives. It was important to remember that archival records and advice texts are artifacts of individual decision making, biases, constructed identities, and the stories people chose to tell. My interpretations of these stories may bear little resemblance to the motives of their authors. For example, bringing feminist and historical lenses to my analysis, I was wont to interpret literacy advice as domesticating and regulatory — they aimed to educate mothers to support learning in homes, schools and communities to carry out desirable (though shifting) nation-building goals. But it is doubtful whether the authors of advice texts saw themselves as oppressors or would interpret their work as regulatory. They likely saw themselves as social reformers, sacrificing their time and energy, working hard on behalf of their community and their country, for the benefit of all.

Thus, part of the work of attending to issues of representation in documentary research is to be careful to contextualize the work of people and organizations within the broader rubric of the social values of the era and the gender and class discourses they took for granted. As Palokow (1998) argued, it is also important to consider that not all forms of discipline, surveillance, or regulation were nefarious, and many families benefited from literacy interventions that provided them with resources they would not otherwise have had access to. The characters that appeared in these advice texts cannot speak back to my analysis in the same way as an interview respondent can; indeed many of the central figures in the most prominent texts analyzed have since passed away.

This suggests the importance of placing the work of social commentators, advisors, and experts in a context that allows more, rather than less, latitude for

interpretation on the part of the reader. I attempted this by often quoting extensive sections of texts so that readers could draw their own interpretations. I also tried as much as possible to describe the discursive context in which literacy advice could be interpreted, often relying upon the existing scholarship of feminist and social historians to do so. However, the work of this discourse analysis involved constructing identities for authors that they themselves may not recognize. This suggests that although Foucault's earlier work sought to separate texts from their authors, and while the findings of this study certainly suggest that discourses are normed across institutional and inter-textual relationships in ways that place the primacy of the author into question, in practice people's identities are invested in the texts they produce, and these identities must be treated with sensitivity.

In summary, although the findings of this study suggest that literacy advice to mothers is shaped by continuity in mothering discourses, there were variations in the themes and strategies associated with literacy advice. Indeed, discourse formations associated with intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family intersected and moved back and forth across time, taking on new meanings and speaking to new themes. The analytic methods of constant comparison, substitution, and multi-vocal analysis adopted in this thesis made it possible to de-link advice from its claims to truth and allowed for new readings of contemporary texts based on the analysis of earlier texts, but also from new readings of these texts from the perspective of contemporary struggles over mothering and literacy connections. The following section expands upon the discursive strategies and themes identified in this analysis.

Summary of findings

What discursive formations are associated with the 'mother-as-teacher-of literacy'?

A central finding in this thesis was that discourses of mothering that included intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family, were enmeshed and integrated with discourses of children's literacy. Hence mothering discourses and literacy discourses cannot be usefully separated if one is to analyze and counter the practices of power that shape current "regimes of truth" surrounding policy and practice aimed to support children's early literacy development. Perhaps one of the most surprising and intriguing findings in this study was the continuities in the discourse formations associated with literacy advice over time. One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that literacy advice to mothers, across the breadth of time and space, is but one continuous text with variations in, rather than departures from, the interlocking mothering discourses of intensive mothering, domestic literacy, and the normal family. This calls into question the claim that contemporary family literacy programs represent a "new" and "innovative" approach to fostering children's literacy acquisition. This study has shown the many ways that contemporary literacy advice is discursively linked to nineteenth-century gender and race theories. The historical weight of images of the Madonna, the ideals of the patriarchal family, and preoccupations with "the other" that manifested itself in Darwinian racism and colonialism can be traced in contemporary literacy advice through a range of discursive strategies and themes.

What discourse strategies are associated with the normalization of the 'mother-as-teacher of literacy' over time?

Discourse strategies that kept intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family in place shifted, and were at times in conflict. As noted above, nineteenth-century literacy ideals strongly shape contemporary literacy and mothering discourses. Women's domestic literacy work was considered an important part of maintaining social status and fostering appropriate morals and habits in their children, both of which were central to mothering work. This "sacred" maternal duty and responsibility was not only visible but celebrated in advice literature, as Flint (1993) and Robbins (2004), have observed, and is suggested in the analysis in Chapter Four. Yet by the early Twentieth Century, mothers' roles as "teachers of literacy" became more didactic and pragmatic than "sacred", as domestic literacy work was oriented to promoting children's success in school, and to contributing to the development of a "normal personality", rather than to a spiritually and morally enlightened character.

"Literacy" in the Nineteenth Century was overwhelmingly represented as book reading, but this reading had social, more than didactic purposes, as in the "family social reading" in which family members and friends read aloud to one other. The ideal of the mother-child bedtime story would not appear until the 1950s in literacy advice, amidst concern for the "reading culture crisis" and the implications of more culturally diverse classrooms for "reading standards." This led to contradictory advice. Children's reading abilities were considered an indication of women's mothering practices. However, mothers were told not to actually teach their children to read nor to interfere in this

process because this was the job of professional teachers and mothers could do much damage.

The study documented a dramatic increase in the quantity of literacy advice from the late 1970s to 2000s in mainstream best-selling child raising texts in general, and literacy advice in particular. This accompanied a shift toward higher expectations for children's literacy attainment at the onset of schooling. By contrast, the late 1960s and 1970s witnessed a slump, or decline in literacy advice in the selected sources, a feature perhaps of the intense social debate about the purposes of schools and the roles of women in North American society. The study revealed how these broader social contexts shaped the content of literacy advice, but also how that content was "normed" (Edmonston, 2001) over time through inter-textual relationships among institutions, individuals and readers. This had the effect of reproducing mothering discourses even when social contexts rendered these discourses obsolete or untenable.

For example, discourse strategies normalized English-speaking upper- and middle-class, nuclear families as providing the ideal setting for supporting children's literacy. As noted at various points in the analysis, literacy advice was powerfully invested in maintaining and privileging this particular literacy "habitus" as both normal and natural. Indeed it also implied that if families and cultural groups somehow changed or transformed their literacy habitus to resemble that of the middle-classes, they too could benefit from the social and economic privileges enjoyed by the middle classes. Since habitus is acquired in the "process of living our everyday lives" (Lemke, 1995, p. 33), discourse strategies in literacy advice worked to promote uniformity in "everyday" practices of literacy.

But discourse strategies in literacy advice also worked to maintain the privileged status of this "normal" family by differentiating its audience along class lines. For example, while the primary message to "read twenty minutes to your child everyday" became the dogma of literacy advice in the 1990s, for middle-class families, literacy advice also began to include topics of school choice, the importance of monitoring their children's teachers, and finding new ways to stimulate their children through home schooling. This pattern of directing different advice to different families is becoming more prevalent. Some families receive reader-friendly posters that prescribe: "Read to your children for twenty minutes a day, four times a week. Make the time. It's your responsibility. If you do your part, we'll do ours" (Regional Reading Council, 2005). While this blunt message is published in newspapers and on school bulletin boards, the Canadian Council on Learning distributed its advice to parents via email messages notifications of the latest "evidence-based" research on early literacy. Here parents are informed that "a shift towards greater and more structured in-home teaching is taking hold within families of young children" (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006). The study announced that, "laying the foundation for children's literacy isn't simply a matter of reading them storybooks in their earliest years. There are many more things parents can do to ensure their preschoolers get off to a good start on the road to speaking, listening, and reading" (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006, p. 1). While some parents are begged to read to their children 20 minutes a day, others are informed that story book reading is indeed not enough to promote their children's success in school, and the more their homes operate like schools, the better will be their children's chance of success. Hidden in these threats and promises are the implications of this advice for the domestic

literacy work of mothers. This suggests that discourse strategies that normalize class and cultural advantage cannot be extricated from strategies that normalize gender inequality. This connects to McClintock's (1995) observation:

> Race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego. Rather, they come into existence in and through relation to each other — if in contradictory and conflicting ways. (p. 356)

Silences surrounding the diverse conditions in which domestic literacy work takes place were thus powerful dividing strategies evident throughout this analysis. If time and space for prolonged homework supervision was an essential domestic literacy task, then how were families living in one room, working sixteen hours a day, to take up this advice? These silences served to define "good mothering" and thus to construct mothering that was somehow insufficient, once again reinforcing "how we are different to they" (Robbins, 2004, p. 82). Literacy advice changed to fit new circumstances, but it never altered the fundamental link between mothering, literacy, and the reproduction of social advantage and disadvantage.

This connects discourse strategies to the political economy of literacy advice. There is little to be gained by health and education institutions which produce literacy advice, or by the market forces that distribute it, in assuring families that the practices and values they bring to literacy are valuable and sufficient, or that there are multiple paths to literacy in the context of diverse family and caregiving structures. As pointed out above, the goal of advice is to maintain the status quo, and to reduce diversity, in order to

minimize the real changes that institutions would need to make to reduce their dependency on women's domestic literacy work. This may account for the fact that literacy advice was always located in the context of a new or impending social crisis. There was the crisis of new immigration and its threats to Western European settlers in North America in the late Nineteenth Century, the "reading culture crisis" in the 1950s, and the crisis in the family in the 1970s. Then there was the literacy crisis of the 1980s, and the crisis in skills and knowledge to perform in a "new knowledge economy" in the 2000s. As Luke (2001) pointed out, the marketisation of public education relies upon the continual creation of a "crisis" as a means for creating a demand for new pedagogical products. Markets place us in a continual state of "lack" and "becoming" (Luke, 2001, 8). Advice to young parents in particular, is based on another social marketing reality. As Anne Hulbert (2003) observed, the focus on the early years as a determinant phase in children's lives is a field of research that is easily converted into a strategy to gain mothers' attention at a time in the family life course when they are most likely to be open to advice, and to regulation.

> There is a reason child-rearing advisers have always proclaimed the importance of the first three years, and it is not based on the latest brain research. Nor is it just the obvious fact, as Brazelton puts it, that "these ages … are almost the last ones in which parents can expect to play an undiluted role". It is that the first three years are the experts' best chance, too to make a mark on parents. (Hulbert, 2003, p. 370)

Once children have started school, the second child is born, and the complexities of daily life and its influences on children are recognized, parents soon realize there is no

"fine-tuned scheme for shaping futures" (Hulbert, 2003, p. 370) in literacy advice, or in homes.

Another key strategy in the normalization of discourses of intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family was the regulation of domestic time and space. Literacy advice was focused on ways for mothers to manage her own and her children's time, and the physical space of the home, so that literacy, most often defined as homework, story book reading, and "doing chores with mom," could take place. Recent studies and reflections on the nature of time offer support for the finding that the regulation of domestic time is a powerful strategy not only in regulating literacy practices but also in normalizing a middle class literacy "habitus". For example, Daly (1996) defined time as both a resource and a currency. He distinguished between *process time* and *linear time* (pp. 10–11) to show how time is experienced in different ways, by different families, in different settings. For example, *process time* is associated with the work involved in caring for children and housework. It can take hours to feed and bathe a baby depending on its mood, hunger, whether there is food in the house, if the family has a car to go shopping, or must take a bus, if there are two parents in the family or one, and so on. Linear time is associated with chronological time, the measuring out of hours and minutes according to the clock. Linear time is associated with efficiencies: If mothers manage linear time then they can save time, find quality time, avoid wasting time, and hence enjoy that time to read to their children.

Yet there is a conflict between the process time internal to families in caring for children and the various and competing linear time demands of institutions such as work and school that include the need to "read to your child (preferably each one separately)

for twenty minutes a day." Pat Guy, introduced in Chapter One, and the mother and Kindergarten teacher introduced in Chapter Seven, were negotiating the conflict between the process time of mothering and the linear timetables of getting children to school (on time), supervising homework, reading to children at bedtime, making time for the library, and so on. Yet often the institutional response is that if parents really care they will "make time" (Trelease, 1995). Mothering discourses construct the "good mother" as one who is able to conform to the expectations of linear time. Relevant here is the observation by Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) that time is experienced differently by middle-class and working-class women. Mace (1998) pointed out that this recognition of the different ways in which families experience time provides us with a "picture of the differences between mothers in different circumstances" (p. 19). Mace built on this insight in the following:

> The idea of a 'natural' mother capable of producing 'normal' children is founded on a failure to recognize different material conditions. Mothers in the middle-class households appear to have more time to talk to their four year- old children; but the appearance is an illusion. Working class mothers, with unskilled and low paid jobs and no-one at home but them to do the housework, are "chained to time" — hence their apparent "lack" of time to do the sensitive mothering which educationalists require of them. (p. 19)

This raises the question of how access to "free time," and control over time in the form of the ever-necessary "flexi-time" job, or the "stay-at-home" parent, constitutes a factor in the reproduction of educational advantage in the present education context that

depends increasingly upon domestic literacy work in the home. The focus upon the regulation of domestic time in literacy advice discourses reviewed in this thesis, as well as the insights of Mace (1998) and Walkerdine and Lucey (1989), suggest topics for further study.

What forms of literacy and of mothering are excluded within mothering discourses?

Representations of literacy practices in low-income homes or homes outside of the "normal family" shifted across the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. In the Nineteenth Century there was little in advice to suggest that literacy was at all a part of the daily lives of "pauper" children and their families. Indeed, it was this absence of literacy that legitimized their poverty. "Cottage" families were in some ways idealized, as the family that lived and worked together also "learned" together. Martineau (1848) provided detailed and positive descriptions of literacy practices in "cottage" and "artisan" families that suggested pathways to learning, if not literacy, that were not dependent upon parents' knowledge of print. She recognized that different lives made for different learning, although this ideal could not stand up to the movement toward democratization and universalization of knowledge in the Twentieth Century. Interestingly, ethnographic literacy studies conducted in the later Twentieth Century that documented rich forms of literacy in low-income homes (Heath, 1983, Taylor, 1983) were ignored in mainstream literacy advice that continued to proceed on the basis that without the intervention of parent education by professionals, literacy practices in low-income homes either did not exist or were counter-productive to the needs of schooling. The work of Trelease (1982,

1985) reinforced this message in his detailed description of the "chaotic" home life of a little African American boy named Darnell, who was raised by his grandmother.

This strategy of unfavourably comparing low-income, African American and/or new immigrant families' literacy practices to those of "normal" families shifted in the late 1990s, when all families were considered to have "strengths" (Auerbach, 1995). The effect of this "strengths discourse" was that families with fewer resources needed to try harder to build on their strengths by practicing the discourse's intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family regardless of the social context in which mothering and literacy was practiced.

Also excluded in literacy advice was a sense that children could be agents in their own literacy practices. Yet there was everywhere in advice texts evidence that children pursued literacy interests that were connected to social worlds that their parents did not necessarily share. Vincent's (2000) insights into the socially-situated nature of literacy in the lives of nineteenth-century children sheds light on this. He argued: "What children could obtain from learning to read and write was conditioned by what they thought the process was for, and where it stood in the process of learning and living" (Vincent, 2000, p. 61). A similar lens can be brought to the study of literacy in contemporary children's lives. As discussed above, one strategy of literacy advice is to produce uniformity — in literacy practices and mothering practices — in the hope that uniformity in parenting and domestic pedagogy would promote uniformity in children's academic outcomes. But this has the effect of erasing the ways in which social and historical contexts mediate literacies across gender, class, and race, and thus create diverse subject positions for

children, just as it does for their parents. Galbraith's observations with respect to the history of children's literature, speaks to this:

> An ideal reader response cannot be made to stand in for children' actual reading experiences, that are irretrievable from history by means of current linguistic and cultural theories. The history of children's literature must be linked to the history of the literary industry and to the agendas of the adults who wrote, produced and bought it. (Galbraith, 1997, p. 4)

Children's agency as literate subjects with identities and motivations outside their mothers' role modeling was considered dangerous to their moral and intellectual development and to society's prospects for achieving its desired social visions. What, when, and how children and mothers read was a constant preoccupation in literacy advice. "Book List" features in magazines constructed ideal "boy" and "girl" readers and promoted ideal literacy as the reading of "good books". Reading comics, watching TV, or reading and writing on computers were consistently represented as pursuits that took children away from "real" reading. As Gleason (1999) has shown, comic book reading in the 1950s was believed to pose threats to both children's morality and to the hegemony of the middle class, in ways that draws comparisons between contemporary fears over the effects of email chatting and MSN to children's "real" reading and civil engagement (Marsh, Brooks, Hughes, Ritchie, Roberts, & Wright, 2005). Evidence suggests that children and youth continued these literacy practices in spite of this advice. However, the possible effect of linking "dangerous" literacies to mothering practices, on children's views of themselves as readers and on their potential for schooling success cannot be underestimated. For example, in their article "Reading, Homes and Families," Carrington

and Luke (2003) described how teachers of a little girl named Eve ascribed her reading difficulties to the fact that her mother didn't live with her. Eve's use of email to connect with her mother was not considered a literacy practice that could contribute to success in school literacy.

Nineteenth-century connections between reading and the body contained in the axiom that "you are what you read" were particularly powerful in shaping the view of mothers' and children's literacy practices as dangerous. Gleason (2001) argued that attending to embodied regulation, or the regulation of children's and adult's bodies in discourses, offers insights into "educational, cultural, historical, and institutional practices..." (p. 191). There are many examples in the literacy advice texts of embodied regulation. Indeed it was primarily women's bodies that defined the ideals of the domestic sphere, of intimacy, nurturing, bonding, and caring, the "nest within a nest" (Hall, 1904), which became intimately associated with children's literacy acquisition. Effective story book reading is said to occur when a child sits on his or her mothers' lap, her arms wrapped lovingly around the child. It happens when mothers talk to their babies as they are breast feeding, or model appropriate literacy by "letting their children see them reading." There were few examples in literacy advice for teaching children literacy by work associated with men, such as unfolding a car engine or playing soccer. One potential explanation for this may be the naturalization of the female body as a site for nurturing, and thus literacy.

Beliefs that women's bodies were naturally nurturing gave rise to associations between story book reading and mother-child bonding. This theme entered literacy advice in the 1950s with the introduction of the concepts of "attachment theory" and the

"sensitive" mother to child psychology, and were taken up in emergent literacy research in the 1970s and 1980s that linked children's literacy acquisition to child development more generally. Literacy research designs and methods have contributed to the normalization of this idyllic literacy image by studying mother-child story book reading practices for clues to "effective" (and ineffective) domestic literacy practices. As this study has shown, "read to your child" is one of the most common pieces of literacy advice even though the efficacy of the practice for children's schooling success has been questioned. For example, in their meta-analysis of empirical studies of storybook reading, Sarborough and Dobrich (1994) concluded that story-book reading contributed much less to children's early literacy development than is believed. Indeed, Anderson, Anderson and Shapiro (2005) found that parent-child storybook reading interactions did not predict the acquisition of reading skills that is often believed, and that many other practices in the home and community environment account for children's literacy knowledge. Gregory, Long and Volk (2004) similarly found that social interactions involving literacy with siblings, grandparents and others caregivers and community members constituted important opportunities for children to be "apprenticed" into school and community literacies.

In spite of these challenges, the image of mother-child storybook reading continues to dominate literacy advice as the "magic bullet" for children's success in school and in life. Along with the weight of its cultural roots in ideals of the Madonna, and the visions of peace and social cohesion it promises, perhaps it is because mother-child story book reading can be studied as an observable literacy event for the purposes of research that this practice is most often recommended. This suggests once again that

literacy advice is not only about promoting children's literacy, but also about normalizing mothering discourses.

Who benefits from mothering and literacy advice discourses?

This study showed how literacy advice to mothers was closely linked to ever-changing nation-building agendas. In this way, educational and government institutions in particular can be said to benefit from the mobilization of women's domestic literacy work in the service of these nation-building aspirations. But of course this regulation would not be possible if no mothers benefited from the status or promise of social mobility that literacy advice promised. It is also important to acknowledge that supporting children's literacy may be seen by many mothers and fathers as a fulfilling and rewarding aspect of child-raising. Men benefit from literacy advice discourses that do not implicate their work or responsibility as central to the literacy achievement of their children. This frees them from the choices surrounding the management of work-family balance that are faced most mothers. Fathers may also be oppressed by social norms that tend to exclude them from involvement in their children's literacy. Mothers may benefit from a sense of control, status, and community in "feminized" literacy settings. Yet it is worth remembering that in spite of the history of literacy as a constructed feminized practice, women were often constructed as in need of expert advice and guidance from male scientists, comedians, and even hockey players. This all suggests the very different ways in which people are positioned in literacy advice.

Literacy advice to mothers: Themes for further research

In her study of family life, history, and social change, Hareven (2000) suggested that families are active agents in the production of social change rather than the objects of

it. "The family planned, initiated or resisted change; it did not just respond to it blindly. Historical research over the past two decades has provided ample evidence to reject stereotypes about the family's passivity" (p. 18). It could be argued through this analysis that the increase in literacy advice, the narrowing of the perspectives of "what counted" as valued literacy practices and routes to literacy, and the imprecation of children's literacy with intensive mothering practices suggest that institutions are acquiring more power over domestic literacy strategies and possibilities. Yet the provision of literacy advice does not equate adherence to advice, even if it does shape a discursive climate that values some literacy practices more than others. The fact that literacy advice becomes more insistent and abundant in the 1990s suggests that people do not in fact adhere to it, or that it is not having the intended effect. Indeed, it would not be necessary to advise parents to read to their children if this was a common practice in all families, and it did indeed lead to educational equality for all.

This study has documented several examples of women who resisted and negotiated discourses that tied their children's literacy success to their own adherence to intensive mothering, domestic pedagogy, and the normal family. Anne Scott (Chapter Seven) said very clearly that she did not have time to teach her children at home, but that she fully expected that he should be taught to read in school anyway. Women entered the workplace and sought public roles even when advice warned them of the dangers this posed to their children's learning.

The shifting image of fathers in literacy advice, and domestic literacy work, are other themes that merits further study. The analysis in Chapter Four suggested that nineteenth-century fathers were perhaps more implicated in the literacy lives of their

children than much of the literacy advice suggested. Although most often represented as a "special guest," advice also suggested, fathers should be more directly involved in domestic literacy work since they likely had the literacy skills to read to their children. Indeed, it is possible and likely that when there was a father and mother in the home, both parents shared or divided roles and responsibilities with respect to supporting children's literacy in ways that have become invisible in literacy advice directed to mothers. This possibility is supported by the work of Nol (2005) in her study of nineteenth-century Canadian families. She found that "separate spheres" were perhaps not as separate as is often believed, and fathers were involved in child-raising and many other aspects of what she describes as the intensely social nature of family life.

The patriarch who led the family in family social reading, or indeed provided his family with the resources to pursue their own reading interests in the family parlour, faded into Blatz' 1929 lament that fathers had all but disappeared from children's lives in the social discourse of childhood. Fathers in the 1960s and 1970s could be expected to read a story at bedtime and even counsel other fathers on the importance of doing so. But, unless they were writing advice texts, they become invisible in the 1980s and 1990s as literacy educators joined with government to fret over the effects of "welfare moms" and changing family relationships upon the educational outcomes of children in schools. In the late 1990s and early 2000s the effects of the feminization of literacy, as a construct of literacy research and advice, became associated with boys' lower reading performance in standardized tests, and a new crisis over "boy's reading." Father figures, rather than actual fathers, appeared as "role models" for boys' literacy and it became part of women's work to involve fathers and other male role models in their children's lives.

Interestingly, everyday fathers didn't seem to make appealing literacy role models. Boys needed guests even more special than fathers, as hockey and baseball players, boxers, and businessmen paraded across literacy promotional materials.

Moving beyond mothering discourses in literacy advice

Implications for literacy research and practice

What are we to make of the finding that literacy advice discourses are a continuous text; that across all these text there are but two or three messages that are "normed" over time and through convention and adherence to mothering discourses? This uniformity of advice (though certainly not uniformity in the ways in which advice texts are mediated and negotiated in local contexts) evokes John Raulston Saul's observation that when everyone starts convening around a single discourse, parroting it, it is an indication that the discourse has become less, rather than more, powerful (2004). We are, in this sense, in Gramsci's interregnum, where the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born. But there are glimpses, from within this study, of ways out of the interregnum of the dominant power/knowledge surrounding mother-literacy.

I suggest three possible routes away from mothering discourses in literacy education. The first rests on a critical awareness of the ways in which literacy research contributes to the reproduction of mothering discourses. The second is a commitment to attend to the situated experiences of mothering in contemporary Canada and the United States as a basis for policy making and literacy research. The third is for literacy educators and researchers to reconsider their faith in the role of instruction, of which advice is one form, to address many forms of social inequality, and to rather engage more actively in how literacy education can be placed in the service of more equitable and fair

social policies for women. This stands in contrast to making women, and low-income and racialized women in particular, responsible for doing the work of addressing social inequality through literacy instruction and advice. These points are briefly elaborated below.

Critical awareness: How literacy research contributes to the reproduction of mothering discourses

The findings of this study suggest that in producing family literacy research that translates into mothering advice, literacy researchers are engaged in gendered practices of power. Literacy research, and the advice and program interventions that often inform such research, are shaped not only by a broad reading of all available research findings, but by a "strategic reading" (Dressman, 1999, p. 34) of findings that are deemed educationally relevant, politically palatable, and perhaps easier to implement. The views of Dressman, in relation to the trend toward "evidence-based research" in the United States that seeks to exclude critical or socio-cultural perspective of literacy, also suggest that literacy advice to mothers may similarly be about much more than teaching children to read. Dressman observed:

> In the 1990's, what appears to be indisputably objective scientific knowledge about early literacy to some appears to others to be a set of discrete facts that have been broadly interpreted to produce policies and literacy curricula that are as much the product of their makers' cultural

> politics and normative assumptions about social reality as they are the product of dispassionate use of scientific method. (Dressman, 1999, p. 1)

This echoed New's (2002) perspective on the socially constructed nature of early literacy research and practice. She stated, "educational responses to and expectations of young children reflect deeply held beliefs, including assumptions about what is normative, necessary and developmentally appropriate" (p. 247). It is thus instructive to read theories and policies of emergent and family literacy with a view to the social, cultural and political contexts that shape them. Indeed, literacy research and literacy advice has been largely blind to the gender implications of its work, a point made by Patterson (1995) in her critique of reading research from 1989–1994. She found that research assumed that "gender does not play a role in the production of reading practices but is simply a biological fact to be noted within a particular research design" (p. 295). This failure to account for gender as a unit of analysis may be seen as a discursive strategy that naturalizes mothers as the managers of domestic literacy. Yet if researchers do not consider how mothering discourses may shape their research designs and interpretations, key questions facing educators and families, such as the relationships between literacy and equity, between school and home literacy practices, and between families and institutions cannot be meaningfully understood or addressed.

In an era that often reduces the purposes and implications of research to "what works" and the need to be "relevant," literacy researchers, and educators in general, have come under pressure to produce findings that can be applied in homes and classrooms in the form of checklists and best practice criteria. Yet the study of childhood and family literacy from psychological and instrumental perspectives can yield only limited

understanding. As Zuckerman (1993) observed, bringing sociological and historical perspectives to these topics teaches psychologists what "many historians take for granted and indeed know in their bones: that human behaviour is invincibly contingent and that social action is crucially conditioned by context" (p. 231). It remains a challenge for family literacy researchers and policy makers to embrace the discursive elements of gender, mothering, and family relationships as a starting point, rather than an afterthought of family literacy research.

Attend to the situated experiences of mothering as a basis for policy making and literacy research

The finding of this study that research itself is a powerful tool in reproducing mothering discourses that has implications for gender inequality suggests that, rather than narrowing the lenses that inform literacy research and policy, there is a need to expand these lenses to include the situated experiences of mothers. A good place to start is in the writings of women like Pat Guy, produced in participatory, women-positive literacy classes across North America (Guy, 2001, p. 5). Another promising starting point is in the expanding genre of mother-memoirs that document the "not so perfect lives" of women mothering in the "age of anxiety." In a review of the book *Three-Ring Circus: How Real Couples Balance Marriage, Work, and Family,* Hilary Fowler introduces Christine, who like many women is a single mother working for an hourly wage, with no sick leave. When her children fall ill, she doesn't have a list of friends of family to call and faces losing her job or leaving her young children home alone. "In this immense crunch there is barely a moment for tears" (Fowler, 2004):

> I went to my room and cried. I didn't want my babies to see me upset. Since the divorce, they had seen me get emotional too many times — like when child support didn't come for a year and I ended up having to donate plasma in order to feed us. I knew I had to keep this job, for them. I also knew they needed me to nurse them back to health. The sobbing continued until Angela's next bout of vomiting, when I was called back to active duty. (Fowler, 2004, p. 59)

Christine could be any mother in a literacy class, a doctor's office or a parent-teacher meeting. Reminding her that her children are "precious" and require the bond of parent-child reading to succeed in life approaches the slim divide between insensitivity and oppression. This suggests the need for researchers, educators and policy makers to inform themselves, and base their work in, the situated experiences of mothering rather than in the abstract and discursive realm of the ideals they hope to achieve by changing mothering practices to effect a more desirable social future.

The limits of instruction to effect social change

As Gee (2001) has suggested, the impetus toward research relevance and the tradition within literacy education to regard instruction (of which advice is one form) as a solution to persistent social issues needs to be reconsidered. Reading storybooks, training parents to support early literacy development and promoting parental involvement in schools may be beneficial to some families in some contexts. But these activities are a small aspect of a much broader cultural struggle over what it means to be a family, what it means to be educated, and what it means to be literate. Researchers, educators, and

policy makers need to seem themselves as part of this cultural struggle and not benign commentators of it.

Conclusion

Robbins (2004) concluded in *Managing Literacy, Mothering America*, that as easy as it may be to critique the moralistic and effervescent femininity contained in nineteenth-century advice literature, these writers nevertheless recognized, and sought to communicate, that women's domestic literacy work has important individual and social consequences. The findings of the present study suggest that from the 1930s, and the institutionalization of universal public education, women's domestic literacy work had become invisible as "real work" in the home, though none the less important for the social and cultural reproduction of advantage and disadvantage. Robbins hoped that Twenty-First Century mothers would reclaim this important role when they make decisions about their child raising approaches and work-family balance, and that governments would reconsider policies that mandate mothers receiving social assistance to return to work when their children are 18 months old.[18] I invoke the distinction between mothering as institution, and mothering as experience, to differ with Robbins' conclusions for addressing the "cultural contradictions" embedded in literacy and mothering.

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[18] Robbins here referred to US legislation brought in under George W. Bush government that required women on social assistance to return to work when their children turn eighteen months old. Similar legislation was introduced in British Columbia in 2001, requiring mothers to return to work when their children turned three years old. This mandate does not take into consideration the quality, affordability or availability of child care that would be open to these families, nor the discrepancy between the average hourly wage and the cost of living in British Columbia.

The justification for fair and supportive social policies for families, and literacy education for women, need not be based on the rationale that such policies help women fulfill their domestic literacy roles. As the findings of this research suggest, the more that mothering work is central to children's literacy success, the more narrow the pathways to literacy become for diversely situated children and families. This has important implications for the increased regulation of mothering practices, particularly the mothering practices of working-class women. This point is made by Walkerdine who pointed out how social concern has shifted from the well-being of women themselves, to the abilities for women to mother well, in current public discourse on women and mothering:

> Oppression as an issue in the understanding of the position of working class women has disappeared from the agenda (that is, if it ever appeared) and is replaced by the targeting of such women (only when they mother) as the psychopathological cause of the threat to the bourgeois political order itself. (Walkerdine, 1994, p. 4)

Moreover, the hope that if mothers are better supported they will be better able to carry out social ideals rests on an assumption that mothers alone can effect the social changes that are so desperately sought. These hopes rest on ideals of family life that no longer exist, if they ever did. Carrington and Luke (2003) made this point as they argued for more expanded views of family life, and of literacies in the Twenty-First Century.

> It would be exceedingly naïve to assume that if we just wait long enough, we will experience a return to traditional values and practices. ... [T]he presumption that home can and should be made to resemble school is

> increasingly problematic. It is not just a question of the dubious ethical position that the state, the institution, and the corporation can tell people how to raise their children, or how to configure their families, or whose cultural version of childhood should count. It is, moreover, a question of whether and how we can in good conscience reconfigure homes and communities in the image of an institution that is showing all the signs of becoming a creaky anachronism, in relation to new economies, cultures and technologies. (Carrington & Luke, 2003, p. 250)

If our goal as a society is to create conditions for all children to have access to "powerful literacies," then the definition and criteria for a "literate" child needs to be de-linked from mothering discourses and re-connected to broader literacy and learning opportunities in social settings. This requires a commitment to building social and cultural capital in the public realm and will be a long time in the making. One step along the way is to better integrate the fields of literacy research, and family literacy research in particular, with the expanding sociological and historical literature on mothering, and indeed to heed Griffith and Smith's (2005) call for literacy researchers to take a much keener interest in the relationships between mothering, education, and social inequality. Another step is to include in instructional settings, and advice, a broader repertoire of "what counts" as literacy. This is central to broadening the paths through which children and youth participate in their culture and their community. This study has shown the many ways in which children's reading practices, in all their shifts across the past century, have been considered a threat to the social order, to schooling, to learning and to "success". In the digital worlds in which children are now born, "modernist" attempts to

uphold the traditions of school literacy in the face of rapidly changing social worlds needs to be reconsidered (Luke and Luke, 2001). Work is already under way in this vein, in the scholarship of Marsh, Brooks, Hughes, Ritchie, Roberts, & Wright (2005) and the work of the Multiliteracy Project in Canada (Multiliteracy Project, 2005)

While education, whether in schools, adult or family literacy settings cannot be seen as the only strategy for addressing social inequality, it is nevertheless important to build upon the social and cultural capital that is created in participatory and inclusive education settings. Community-based literacy programs are places where literacy advice is circulated. But they are also vital sites for mediating advice, critically reflecting on the intersections between institutional expectations and situated experiences. Perhaps most importantly, these projects share with this thesis the hope of bringing women's domestic literacy work out of the private domestic sphere and into the realm of debate and social action.

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