

It is not true that we are individual. In body and mind, we are endlessly divisible, and we do become divided when our experiential worlds and the spoken, agreed upon reality are consistently incongruent. Nor is it true that we are alone in this world; isolation is one of the greatest tools used to disempower people(s), and within the cult of the individual we as people, as communities, remain fragmented. (Arnott, 1995: 18).

University of Alberta

**Hegemonic Heterosexuality, Moral Regulation and the Rhetoric of Choice:
Single Motherhood in the Canadian West, 1900 – Mid 1970's**

by

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Abstract

Single motherhood has been socially constructed as a deviant identity category. Up against the master societal framework of hegemonic heterosexuality, single mothers, as a social group, have been systematically discriminated against and subjected to moral regulation.

The single mother has consistently been depicted as either criminal or victim, and she has almost always been cast as an individual actor whose lot is explained in individualized, apolitical terms. The current rhetoric of choice feeds the idea that single mothers in need deserve their hardships because they have freely and singularly chosen their sexual and reproductive behaviors and circumstances. In light of the historically constructed identity position of the single mother, it is evident that a more sociologically sensitive analysis of single motherhood has been culturally suppressed. Feminism has long been adamant about the significance of the role that reproduction plays in gender inequality. Queer Theory, with its critique of the sexualization of social life, is amenable to such a perspective and is employed here to illuminate how familial, sexual, and/or reproductive realities rigidify into overarching identity categories that shape and restrict rights and freedoms.

Preface

Think about pregnancy for a moment. Consider a situation in which a young married woman announces to family and friends that she and her husband are expecting a child: imagine the joy, the celebration, the satisfaction and elation that it brings. Consider, on the other hand, a young *un*married woman announcing to family and friends that she is expecting a child: think about the potential turmoil, the questioning, and the decisions that might be involved in such a situation. From the perspective of mainstream society, the very same condition – i.e., pregnancy and motherhood – can be seen either as woman's ultimate goal and achievement, or it can be seen as one of the most atrocious forms of female deviance. Granted, there are many individuals and groups within Canadian society who are supportive of single mothers and whose value systems do not allow for a devaluation of these women. Furthermore, there are many factors that could potentially play into the social perception of such a situation: the individual characteristics of the mother such as economic security, social standing, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, race and age. However, there is a strong, prejudicial, hegemonic thread running through our society that devalues and seeks to control single mothers. According to this thread, the base difference between these two scenarios is the woman's relationship (or lack thereof) to a man.

I have been thinking about single motherhood for some time now. Indeed, I've been thinking about it for longer than I myself have been one. You could even say that I began thinking about it 60 years ago. Let me explain . . .

There was a night in the early 1990's, when I was in my early twenties, when I had what you might call a spiritual experience. This was during a particularly spiritually enhanced time in my life – odd things, for some reason, were happening, and what happened to me this particular night was one of them. I lay awake, late into the night, with my mind racing. I was going over in my mind a stimulating, unrelated, conversation I had had with a friend earlier that night on the topic of gender and relationships. Suddenly, somehow seemingly out of nowhere, I had the distinct sensation of being whacked across my head – like the old expression, “it hit me like a ton of bricks”. Inexplicably, in that instant, I realized a truth, a secret that had always been diligently kept, about my family. I knew then that the woman whom I had always known as being my maternal aunt, was in actuality my mother's biological mother, my grandmother. It was an astounding realization, one that, upon later investigation, turned out to be absolutely true. It was a fact that changed my relation to numerous individuals within my family. As realization began to sink in as I lay there that night, I began to travel far into the abyss of my mind, opening up to a window on the past:

It was a dark, cold, winter night and two figures below me were trudging. They were engrossed in discussion as they made their way along a plain, snow-covered, country road. The couple, wearing old-fashioned long black trench coats, came upon a gate, led up to by a simply made wooden fence bordering a

farm land. I, floating, followed the (now apparently) middle-aged couple into a farmhouse. There, below me, in the corner of the warm lighted living room lay a baby. Two couples, the first having been greeted at the door by another, now proceeded to embark on a lively discussion over what was to be done with the baby. In the back of the room, sitting on a dark staircase, not participating, shyly watching the proceedings, was a young woman: The baby's mother.

The baby in this journey was my mother. What a feeling it was to be floating there, looking down upon her as if a guardian angel, long before my own birth: a strange leakage of present onto past. And I wonder, in my more eccentric moments, *was I seen?* I have no doubt that the two sets of grandparents, engrossed as they were in debate, did not see me. But perhaps the *baby* saw me? One would be inclined to think that possible, if you are willing to accept that the young, being closer to the spiritual source of life, have greater powers of sight. William Wordsworth and the Romantic poets thought so at least.

I knew how the debate had been decided, how the identity of the baby had been changed from granddaughter of the couple who owned the house, to daughter. Indeed, that new identity has remained intact for a lifetime. After my realization, I focused in on that baby and who she eventually became for some time to come, readjusting myself to the facts of her life. I felt her rage: I identified with that grown-up woman's pain and (what had previously seemed to be) strange attitudes in a way that I never had before. Don't get me wrong. She had, by all accounts, a lovely childhood. Raised by her maternal grandparents, whom she simply adored, she spent her youth on that rural New Brunswick farm, romping with the farm dog in the fields by summer, being driven off to her studies in a tiny one room

schoolhouse by horse and sleigh in the winter. But still, despite the rosy picture, the shame lingered on for her. She never told me how her life began, by whom she was raised.

Much of my subsequent ill feeling surrounding this secret was directed at my “aunt” – or, I should say, my “grandmother”. Oh, I was polite to her, to her face at least. But I was lost for understanding, and certainly for respect. I fancied her as weak-willed and unable, through lack of moral character, to stand up for what she wanted and for what she must have known was “right”. I went over and over her story, told to me by my mother at long last, of that time in the early 1940s, attempting to find a way that I could empathize. I couldn’t find that hole in the fabric of the woven story: I simply blamed her.

I was wrong about blaming her of course. I see things differently these days . . .

A few short years later, in my mid twenties – indeed, I was the exact age that my biological grandmother had been – I too became pregnant without being married. The initial, important parts of the stories are the same: we both were unmarried and both fathers were absent, refusing participation from the onset. Somehow it took all of that, being placed in the same situation, for me to be able to see my grandmother’s position, to see the situation more clearly.

Now I wonder what *she* – my biological grandmother – saw, sitting silently in the dark, in the loneliness of that staircase on that fateful evening in 1941. Did she see an angel hovering over her baby? Did she know that everything was going to be all right after all?

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This project would never have been completed without the assistance, love, support and friendship of many people. I could write pages thanking individual people and telling why they are special to me, but this project spans too many years and kind, helpful acts. To detail them all is impossible in this small space.

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My family has been there with me, growing as I've gone along, throughout this whole project. First, there was the life altering Noah, without whom the topic of this dissertation would never have been conceived. My beautiful and talented partner Hanif Chatur entered into our lives, bringing my step-son Zakariya with him. Then there were the lovely Suraiya and Simran. These special people have brought me an abundance of joy and make my life worth living. Juggling time spent with them and finishing this dissertation has posed the greatest challenge of my life. I still have not accomplished this (professional/private) balancing act with great grace, but I do know that figuring it all out together is an adventure that I wouldn't give up for the world.

My parents, Ken and Donna Ritcey, have been a rock. Our values and our opinions often differ greatly, but despite that, they have always been there for me.

I would also like to thank my committee members for their interest, their helpful suggestions, and the considerable time and patience they have dedicated to this project.

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Joanne Ritcey
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Chapter 1. Introduction

[T]he single-parent family is a synonym for moral breakdown and social disorder. It is not just that their personal troubles have become public issues, but that the way in which they are seen and dealt with by public agencies rebounds to re-frame their personal experience. The privacy of the family is a privilege of the conventionally married and the behavior and relationships of women marginal to marriage are more closely scrutinized and carefully policed...(Chandler, 1991:6)

Ignoring all the data which shows how skillfully loving single mothers parent with very little income whether they receive state assistance or work for a wage, patriarchal critiques call attention to dysfunctional female-headed households, act as though these are the norm, then suggest the problem can be solved if men were in the picture as patriarchal providers and heads of households . . . No anti-feminist backlash has been as detrimental to the well-being of children as societal disparagement of single mothers (hooks, 2000: 76-7)

It is clear that single mothers in Canada are struggling. According to many authorities, single motherhood is a problem in Canada. While looking at the entirety of Canada is too large a scope for this project, I will be focusing on Canada's two westernmost provinces: Alberta and British Columbia. By looking back over the 20th Century, at the way that the single mother has been culturally depicted and socially treated, I hope to shed light on the way that this "problem" has come into existence. Single motherhood has been socially constructed and the violence done in the form of moral condemnation and poverty is a result of ideological bias. Because single motherhood has been subject to moral regulation and this family form has been depicted as a deformity, it is easier to ignore both the healthy aspects of these families, and their variable needs for assistance. Until we as a society can unite, both on institutional and cultural levels, to accept and support "the family" in its various forms, including that of the lone parent, female headed family, the problems related to single motherhood are going to persist.

It is my assertion that single mothers have faced a great deal of social and cultural discrimination because, historically, they have violated the norms of what I will call the "hegemonic heterosexual family". In falling outside of what has been the acceptable heterosexual family form, single mothers breach gender expectations, including the economic role they are expected to fill or not fill, and as a result,

they and their children are punished. I believe that by looking back in history the negative social construction of single motherhood will become all the more clear.

* * * * *

As a sociologist, I am fundamentally interested in how society influences and structures human behaviour. On the other hand, it is clear that human agency also plays a role. Some important questions become: do individual entities “exist”; how much agency do they have; does society create the individual or do individuals create society? In short, what has primacy: the individual, process and agency; or society and its macrostructures? Sociology is a large field, and multiple theories address each of these extremes and everywhere in between. I bring this up here because I have chosen to approach the issue of single motherhood through an historical lens and I would like to put historical research within the context of sociological meta-theory on the way that we think about social nature.

I think that it’s impossible to get past the so-called process/ structure or agency/structure debates without making an appeal to history, which, like the nature/nurture debates, most certainly set up a false dichotomy. There is process and there is structure: society is alive, people do indeed act with free will, they actively create their social world in significant ways – and yet, they do so within the confines of society.

Agency and structure are both at work and history affords us the luxury of both points of view. Through an historical lens, we can see that, while social structures certainly exist, social change does indeed occur over time, forged through the agency of individual human beings or, more likely, by social movements such as the Women's Movement.

In comparing my own experience of single pregnancy with my biological grandmother's experience in the early 1940's, we can see that agency and structure are both operating. My initial frustration with what I perceived to be decisions that she had made, was a folly born from placing too much weight on agency. Indeed, I saw the decisions that *I* made as being a result of *my* own agency. I was forging through, as if my situation was all up to me on my own, believing that I could make my experience whatever I wanted it to be.

What I did not immediately see was the structure: the structure then and the structure now, very much the same structure, both moral and institutional, of what one is to do or not to do in such a situation, but at different historical points on the same continuum. Perhaps it is itself a sign of my time that I at least *believe* that I act out of my own personal freedom. In reality, I did not behave differently in the same situation than my biological grandmother did because I am morally superior, or because I have a greater will or endurance. Indeed, there was a remarkable show of human strength and character on behalf of my relatives back in the 1940s, taking into consideration the decision to keep the baby within the family, the loss

of face within the community that must have accompanied this decision (lots of gossip to be sure) and how embracing her within the family would have meant a lifelong reminder of mistakes, and of blessings never to be had on behalf of the child's biological mother and for other family members. It was not, certainly, individual morality or strength of character that made the difference between my own experience with unwed pregnancy, and the experience of my grandmother.

Indeed, it may successfully be argued that I exercised a great deal of agency in deciding to keep and raise my son in the absence of his biological father. I did after all make a choice, if the options available to women can truly be called "choices". Being faced with more choices (such as safe and available abortion) than were available in my biological grandmother's time, I was determined beyond all else to succeed in my endeavor, never knowing the meaning of the word *quit*. However, when it comes down to it, there is ultimately one reason and one reason only for why I kept my child and my biological grandmother, in the same situation, same age, same everything, did not: because my social world is structured differently than was hers. Within that relatively short span of time of 50+ years, it had become more socially acceptable and financially feasible for a woman to have and keep a child "out of wedlock". Within two generations, it has become *possible* for a woman to have and raise a child without a man.

It is this social-historical trajectory that I am interested in exploring in terms of the intersection between structure and agency. Things have evidently changed

when it comes to single motherhood, yet in many ways they have remained the same. To many people, the single mother is still the object of moral condemnation, she is still considered deviant, and still faces many practical problems, not the least of which is poverty. Being born female is the number one risk factor for facing poverty in this country and the largest single poverty ridden group in Canada is composed of single mother families (National Council of Welfare Reports, 2000).

In my own case, along with the personal agency, were a number of other issues that I had to face once I had my child. One of the serious problems faced by single mothers is social isolation: it is not immediately clear what one should *do* in such a situation. My first inclination (after a year spent in my parents' home) was to set up house on my own with my child. It did not initially occur to me that I needed other people or that there were other options to explore. I was miserable in my isolation, yet because of my isolation, I saw it as an individual problem rather than what it was – a social problem. Alternatives to the nuclear family form are not yet a mainstay of our collective cultural storehouse of acceptable family forms.

In a piqued moment of crisis, when the very trees outside began to appear sinister, I finally realized the depth of my depression in my isolation. In my despair, I asked myself the following question: *how come I don't know what to do?* Sure, I could have my baby, but there was very little assistance, either culturally or

socially to light the path for me, to make it any easier, to give me acceptable choices for a comfortable lifestyle. As Carol A. Stabile (1997) has characterized the situation, single mothers today “raise their children in a society that has in effect *abandoned them*”(404, emphasis mine).

I began to look around my university “family residence” neighborhood; there was the single mother and her baby next door, whose sister lived with them; there was the single mother and her small child across the street who had recently added a boyfriend to the household. Some people were obviously forging alternative living arrangements. I gradually came to realize that I needed to take a proactive stance, to find what was right for us, and I experimented with different arrangements: first a live-in boyfriend and then housemates. More recently, I have veered toward a more nuclear arrangement, albeit with a complicated blended-family twist. However, a salient fact remains for me; there is a widespread cultural fear of and contempt for a woman raising a family on her own.

At long last I began to move away from my individual situation and from looking at the issue of single motherhood in terms of personal agency. I kept looking to the past, but not so blatantly at that one baby and her mother crouched in the shadows waiting for the future to be decided for her. I began to shed my angelic mantle and my family legacy, or at least to push it aside for a time. This predicament is not about me, just about me, or just about how one person could or should proceed when she is pregnant or a parent outside of the bonds of

matrimony. And so I seek the larger picture of how society has constructed the single mother and where single mothers find themselves within the larger structure when they step into this situation. I believe that the past holds the keys to the present. By looking back to see what it was like then, we can more clearly see what it is like now. It is for these reasons that I turn to the past to gain a better understanding of single motherhood. I have seen individually where I have come from: now it is time to see, collectively, where I have come from . . .

* * * * *

Feminists have long been adamant about the significance of the role that reproduction plays in gender inequality. In short, a woman's world and her relationships with her self and others shift dramatically at this time, with unvalued domestic and childrearing tasks often becoming the sole responsibility of the woman and the role of mother canceling out other aspects of a woman's identity. Because of the centrality of motherhood in women's lives, it is clear that the way in which we as a society think, define, and treat mothers is indicative of the status and value of women in our society.

The entrance into motherhood is a landmark in women's lives. Feminists argue that it is during the shift to parenthood that, even previously egalitarian, relationships develop a power imbalance, with the new mother (as opposed to the new father) suffering great losses in this respect (Oakley, 1980; Fox, 1998; Fox, 1997; Wolf, 2001; Crittenden, 2001). This is clearly a gender issue. It is this shift

from non-motherhood to motherhood that introduces mother-work, as well as (for many women) wife-work, into a woman's life. The ways in which women's reproductive lives unfold have momentous effects on all other aspects of their lives. The ways vary, depending upon a given woman's choices and circumstances (social status, family relationships, financial position, cultural background, etc.). Nevertheless, for a great many women who are in large part responsible for the daily care and raising of their children, the onset of motherhood and its life long repercussions represent a sea change in lifestyle, priorities and relationships. Motherhood is often viewed as being a matter of course, as something that naturally falls upon women and that is welcomed as being the main goal and fulfillment in life, what they want above all else. Nevertheless, what has become increasingly clear throughout the course of this research, is the unmistakable changeable nature of motherhood: its meanings, ideologies, practices and experiences (Ehrenreich & English, 1978; Badinter, 1981; Thurur, 1994). All of the care giving activities that women perform when they have a baby are not exactly a natural outcome of female anatomy. Like all else, motherhood is wholly subject to culture. That is, motherhood makes no sense outside of the meaning that we, as members of our various human societies, impose upon it.

Cultural explanations of motherhood are often suppressed in our society. The dominant view of motherhood includes a belief in women's "natural" self-sacrificing, care-giving character and we assume that this makes women natural

mothers. This logic is seldom questioned in mainstream society. As feminists pointed out years ago (Chodorow, 1978: 33; Oakley, 1974: 234), our ideas about gender and gender roles are reproduced, generation after generation because of how we are mothered and, in particular, by the socialization of girls into maternal identification. In many societies, the idealization of the heterosexual, nuclear family form and its variations, and the gendered division of labour within it, continues to shape our understanding of the world in gendered terms. Whether or not women become mothers themselves, the dominant form of childrearing (with mother as primary caregiver) ensures that all of us who have been mothered clearly understand the value of woman in our society. Mothering is intricately tied into gender roles beyond motherhood itself, and is specific in dictating proper gender and mother-role behavior:

If society valued the biological mother-child unit rather than the idealized image of the married-woman-and-child, then no improvements in the unmarried mother's situation would be needed (Oakley, 1974:196).

The transition to motherhood is not the only time in a woman's life where such a shift in the balance between herself and significant male others occurs. Dalma Heyn (1997), for instance, called her book *Marriage Shock: The Transformation of Women Into Wives* to emphasize her message that many women, upon marriage, actively lose a sense of self while suddenly becoming acutely aware of a myriad of wifely role expectations. Anne Kingston, in her book *The Meaning of Wife* (2004), described the role of wife as emblematic of female oppression. Critiques of women's experience within marriage have been a mainstay of the

women's movement. It has been the subject of countless great feminist works, from Betty Friedan's great treatise on the American housewife, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963); to the more recent, contemporary work *The Second Shift* (1990) by Arlie Russell Hochschild which looks at how women juggle the responsibilities of both home and work.

Kingston (2004) pointed out that the role of wife is culturally and historically variable, and is tied into women's social value in a given society. It is a role that affects all women, whether they are married or not, because it influences the meaning of what it is to be a woman. Optimistically, she asserted that "Wife has become the axis around which the next social revolution is fermenting" (Kingston, 2004: 269). Based on shifting cultural attitudes toward wifely roles and behaviors, she suggests that a great social transformation is imminent. In her view, the tides are going to change toward recognition of the inherent value (as opposed to the traditional devaluation) of a wife, whether that supportive individual is a man or a woman. Nevertheless, to Kingston (2004), being a "wife" necessarily connotes subservient, submissive behavior, no matter how positive a gloss you may want to give that grouping of actions and characteristics. Her point was that society will increasingly understand how important the "woman behind every successful man" really is¹.

¹ Indeed, since more men are taking on the role of the supportive spouse, it will, no doubt, become more highly valued.

The onset of motherhood is an even more poignant transformation and signifier of identity than that of becoming a wife. A baby demands as great a commitment and dedication as one is ever likely to encounter in life. A woman is most likely to conform to society's female role expectations at this point, with the constant needs of her little loved one perpetually in front of her². That there are great demands placed on a woman at this time is a well known social fact. That these demands are placed disproportionately on the mother (as opposed to the father) is well documented in feminist research. Indeed, it is a social fact that is often cast in a romantic light, presenting motherhood as the ultimate in female fulfillment. Most significantly, feminists point out that in western society motherhood provides a most staggering barrier to women's attainment of equality. In her (2001) book *The Price of Motherhood*, Anne Crittenden analyzed what it means for an American woman to have a child in terms of the career and financial costs to women. She discussed the concept of a "mommy tax", the loss of income which she estimates as being "easily greater than \$ 1 million" in losses for college educated women, and which puts working-class women at greatest risk for poverty in the U.S. and elsewhere (Crittenden, 2001: 88). Anne Kingston (2004: 263) pointed out that according to some calculations, using fees charged by an

² Naomi Wolf stated that it was when she had her first child – and when her husband drove off to resume his normal workday shortly thereafter – that she looked out of her kitchen window and saw the world pretty much the same way that Betty Friedan had when she wrote *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 (2001: 225-6). That is to say that women's roles and rights – particularly where reproduction is concerned – have not changed so much, despite popular belief otherwise. Ann Crittenden (2001) echoes this sentiment, stating that despite the great leaps and gains forged by feminism in recent decades, traditional female reproductive roles remain remarkably intact: "...once a woman has a baby, the egalitarian office party is over"(88).

employment service for tasks performed, a wife/mother is worth as much as \$674,700 annually³.

Aside from cool, calculated financial costs, it is clear that the price of having children extends to various aspects of life and that it is being paid primarily by mothers, not fathers:

A relative lack of power also leaves mothers, especially those who resign from full-time jobs, with most of the menial household chores. Unmarried couples living together tend to share the housework fairly equally. But after the first child arrives, traditional gender roles have a tendency to harden like concrete (Crittenden, 2001: 235).

Naomi Wolf (2001: 264) found this phenomenon – of new mothers taking on the burden of childcare and housework and of making sacrifices in other aspects of their lives – most perplexing, particularly as it remained standard practice even in the case of pro-feminist men, until one of her male informants confided the reason: men know that their wives will not leave them at this juncture – women would endure great injustices for the sake of their newborn babies, particularly with a pregnancy planned out and greatly desired by the couple, and when the couple agree the baby is in need of a father.

³ Interestingly, this has translated into the fairly odd practice of employers paying wives a salary for the wifely support work they lend their husbands in their work. For instance, The University of Toronto paid Mary Catherine Birgeneau, the wife of U of T President Robert Birgeneau, a salary of \$60,000 annually to be a professional wife – or, as she is officially termed, a “university relations officer”. Ms. Birgeneau’s job includes entertaining, going on business trips with Mr. Birgeneau, and serving as an unofficial ambassador to the business. The job was not advertised or offered to any candidates but Mary Catherine (Kingston, 2004: 253).

Of course, there is more to the disproportional workload of mothers aside from men being jerks who think that they have their women in a spot where they can't escape and therefore must shoulder an unfair burden of the childcare. As one local father of twin toddlers recently told me, "I wouldn't want to be a woman for anything". He went on to explain, while I bit my tongue, just how busy his wife is, how he doesn't know how she does it, and how he likes to give her a break every now and then by taking the twins out for a stroll. In this way he was posing himself as the new age sensitive guy who understands how difficult it is for women to mother small children and is ready to praise them for it. I did not suggest to this man that he could, indeed, be a "woman" in the sense that men can be primary caregivers too – I know two other men in my community, both physicians' husbands, who are the primary caregivers to their children (one of whom recently invited me, out of sarcastic frustration, to be a part of the single parents support group that he jokes about starting up). The fact is, despite living proof otherwise, "mothering" activities are widely perceived to be a natural part of being a woman along with the idea that only women can do them, or do them well enough.

Perhaps predictably, many women are choosing to remain childless – or, alternatively, to defer childbearing to later years – rather than risk losing careers they have worked toward, other leisure time activities that they enjoy, or to avoid the unhappiness that they witnessed their own mothers living. This particular strategy has become a demographic fact in Canada as statisticians find that

“[t]rends in fertility patterns suggest that young women are delaying having a family to concentrate on developing their careers”(Statistics Canada, May, 2002).⁴ Women’s suspicions that the timing of childbearing interferes with workforce activities (and financial gains) have been shown to be accurate. Statistics Canada finds that “[t]he timing of motherhood appears to have a significant bearing on the wages of Canadian women . . .”: Specifically, there is a 6% wage gap between women who have children early, and those who choose to wait until their careers are established (Statistics Canada, May, 2002). This trend has been the most significant factor in the declining birth rate in Canada – because delaying childbearing results in fewer overall children being born. Reports show that “fertility among young Canadian women has declined substantially in the last 20 years”(Statistics Canada, July 3, 2002). By the year 2001, the fertility rate was at an all-time low of 1.5 children per Canadian woman – a far cry from the “baby-boom” high of 3.9 children per Canadian woman recorded in 1959 (Statistics Canada, March 16, 2004)⁵. In short, women are taking notice of the great sacrifices involved in having children. Nevertheless, women do continue to have children and to bear the brunt of their care, along with the majority of the household chores as well.

⁴ This article in Statistics Canada’s publication *The Daily*, is based on the Statistics Canada Research Paper, “Wives, Mothers and Wages: Does Timing Matter?” by Marie Drolet, 11F0019 No. 189, May 1, 2002. This Research Paper utilized the Statistics Canada *1998 Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*.

⁵ This Statistics Canada e-Book report (11-404-XIE) is based on the 2001 Canada Year Book (11-402-XPE).

Nancy Chodorow (1978) suggested some solutions to gender stratification within the private sphere. Chodorow, along with others (see Richardson 1993, for example), suggested that we can change our gender stereotypes by changing the structure of our parenting. In short, our children will be raised with a different view of women and men insofar as their fathers become full participants in their lives and upbringing. Indeed, this may be the ultimate feminist goal, and the results of such an implementation of social behavior may indeed change the gender make-up of the sexes. However, given the extent to which mothering as well as gender roles and gender stereotypes intersect with other aspects of society, it is unclear how such a significant change in parenting techniques could come about.

Women may not be able to convince their husbands/ partners to increase their domestic participation, even where those same men profess to be champions of gender equality. As bell hooks (2000: 81) pointed out, the response of even the most enlightened of the lot is most likely to go along with their female partner's efforts to hire and supervise another woman to perform various tasks. Similarly, in her extensive study of the domestic division of labour, Hochschild (1990) found more egalitarian thinking than action: "most of the men and women I interviewed...believed men 'are doing more at home than before.' In *small measure*, this is true" (Hochschild, 1990: 266-7, emphasis mine). And, as Wolf (2001) reported, time and again she observed new mother after new mother, plunged into confusion and postpartum depression when her previously

egalitarian, dual career marriage was transformed into a houseful of nappies and dishrags for her, while her husband continued on his merry Hugo Boss-outfitted way as if the world had not, after all, come crashing down around them: “The baby’s arrival acted as a crack, then a fissure, then an earthquake, that wrenched open the shiny patina of egalitarianism in the marriages of virtually every couple I knew”(226). With a view to widespread social change, it is naïve to suggest that individual women, “fed-up” with taking on the bulk of the childcare and domestic work, could make a difference worthy of being called a wide-spread social transformation.

Does the onset of motherhood necessarily mean that a woman becomes slave to the private sphere and the stereotypical wifely duties that come along with it while losing touch with the public sphere world of work and politics? One would think it was not inevitable or at least not permanent, but perhaps it is to varying degrees for different women. For instance, in what way does a woman experience the shift in her identity that accompanies motherhood if that woman is not also a wife or in a common-law marriage to a man? And what are the repercussions on the health and well-being of mothers, children, and society as a whole if alternative arrangements, with women having more power and authority, are put in place?

Ann Crittenden (2001) discussed the empirical evidence that suggests that women simply take better care of their children than do fathers. At the same time, she pointed out anthropological, primatological and historical research that indicates

that in societies where women have economic and political power, fathers are more involved in childcare.

While conservatives in western societies fret that increasing female power and, thereby, decreasing male power as household heads would harm “the family”, the opposite seems to be true: “Depriving women of an income and influence of their own is harmful to children and a recipe for economic backwardness”(Crittenden, 2001: 130). In short, female independence – e.g., having money at her disposal, having a valued social position and resources – benefits children in the form of the provision of things like material necessities, education and, where a father is present, paternal attention. Crittenden (2001) stated that

Studies conducted on five continents (Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Indian subcontinent) have found that children are distinctly better off when the mother possesses enough income and authority in the family to make investing in children a priority . . . Even more provocative is the considerable evidence that children’s welfare is enhanced not just when mothers have their “own money” but when no man is able to challenge maternal priorities . . . [and furthermore], when mothers are educated and have some control over the family income, children are healthier, get more schooling, and will eventually have a greater earning capacity, with all that implies for economic prosperity (Crittenden, 2001: 120-1)⁶.

⁶ Crittenden (2001) cites many studies to support such an argument. These include the following: Judith Bruce and Cynthia B. Lloyd, “Finding the Ties That Bind: Beyond Headship and Household”, in *Intrahousehold Resource Allocation in Developing Countries: Methods, Models, and Policy*, ed. Lawrence Hadad, John Hoddinott, and Harold Alderman (Baltimore: International Food Policy Research Institute and Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); N. Cagatay, D. Elson, and C. Grown, “Gender, Adjustment, and Macroeconomics”, *World Development* 23, no. 11 (November 1995); World Bank, *Toward Gender Equality: The Role of Public Policy*, Washington, D.C., 1995; John Hoddinott and Lawrence Hadadd, “Understanding How Resources Are Allocated Within Households”, paper presented at the Canadian Economics Association Meetings, Ottawa, Canada, 1993; Nicolas D. Kristof, “Asia Feels Strain Most at Society’s Margins” *New York Times*, June 8, 1998; Nicholas D. Kristof, “As Asian Economies Shrink, Women Are Squeezed Out”, *New York Times*, June 11, 1998; J. Bruce, C.B. Lloyd, and A. Leonard, *Families in Focus* (New York: Population Council, 1995); Duncan Thomas, “Intra-Household Resource Allocation”, *Journal of Human Resources* 25, no. 4 (fall 1990).

In terms of the health of and advantages for children, and thereby of society in the long term, the two-parent, heterosexual, male head-of-household model may not be the best model to hold up as an ideal. At the very least, these studies seem to suggest that family alternatives which feature female independence may be the most functional and healthy for the individuals involved and for the society as a whole. As Crittenden observed, “matriarchy, the original family arrangement, may turn out to be the optimal one after all” (2001: 120). Evidently, female power makes a healthy difference in the family.

As discussed above, western feminists point out that married women lose power when they have children. However, this does not occur in a vacuum. As we have seen, new mothers lose power vis-à-vis their husbands. When I first became a mother, I lacked a male partner. Not having a husband or partner, I did not experience a power shift, obviously, between myself and a husband or partner.

Ultimately, my single status dramatically modified the way in which I mothered my child, our relationship to each other and the way that we lived our lives. I was clear (of one mind, if you will) in matters of discipline, rules and expectations and there was the closeness, intensity and strength afforded by our dyadic structure. However, at the time of my pregnancy, I did not see the benefits of being single. Society certainly did not lead me to believe that my single status was in any way something to celebrate. While select individuals praised my bravery, for the most part, my situation was deemed, at best, a difficult one.

I agree, in large part, with Oakley's (1980) assertion that (social) womanhood accompanies motherhood. However, it is important to point out that gender is a relational opposition. Without a man, I do not believe that I fully became a "woman" when I became a single mother, at least not in so far as "womanhood" in this society translates into an unequal, devalued social position in opposition to "manhood". In a macro-societal sense, I lost power and social respect, but in my personal microcosm, I actually became *empowered*. I may have become somewhat impoverished, but I had no husband whose career and financial prowess suddenly took the priority over my own. Indeed, my career seemed all the more important once I had a child to support. I may have been bogged down by childcare activities, yet I had no husband who was above such "womanly" tasks, thereby leaving me to feel that I was shouldering an unfair proportion of the unpaid labour. I paid others to help me with childcare, and if the housework didn't get completed, well, who was to care? My responsibilities and decision-making scenarios indeed multiplied, but I was supreme in such matters. I could not fully become "woman" in this situation – for there was no "man" against whom I could become "woman".

Perhaps fear of female independence is the true root of the widespread discomfort with single motherhood and the discriminatory attitudes and behaviors towards single mothers in this society. When it comes to the family – those microcosms that provide the building blocks for the larger society – the obvious bias within

the dominant culture and within the ruling structure is in favour of the heterosexual, male-headed nuclear family. To the extent that this model is adhered to, gender inequality is destined to remain intact, with male dominance in both the micro and macro level society being virtually guaranteed.

* * * *

Only by looking back at history can we clearly see social change. It is through a historical lens on social change that both ends of the agency/structure debate come vividly alive: social change illuminates society's rigidity and resistance to change, for social change does not come easily but only through great struggle over time; and yet, it also illuminates the degree to which human agency is effective, for history gives us many fine examples of people effecting and changing their environments. We can point to the great social movements of the 20th century, including the civil rights movement, the peace movement, and the feminist movements. These social movements provide evidence that although people are indeed born into a particular social environment, through their efforts and their organization, they somehow garner the power to change the structure of society. They are history in the making. Far from being a dead science, history is a lens that opens our eyes upon society as a living organism. In a very real way, without its history, nothing is as it seems.

Single motherhood is not as it seems. As a sociologist, I could look at the current conditions of single mothers: at their economic status, the welfare apparatus, their childrearing practices, public opinion, living arrangements, etc. All of this, I believe, would be a fruitful endeavor. And yet, I am almost instinctively aware that none of this would be sufficiently informative outside of its historical context. Speaking as someone who has been a single mother, I cannot help but ask the question, in reference to my shift in identity from single woman to single mother, “how did I get to this place?” It seemed to happen so suddenly and so completely. And yet, perhaps because it was so sudden and complete, there was a dizzying sense of falling into a social category, which was very much rigidly entrenched. In this way, I set off to see where “I” as a single mother had come from because I believe that single mothers today are, in many ways, and largely unknowingly, experiencing the past. I am interested in single motherhood as an identity category – with how the “single mother” as we know her, has come to be. Central to this formulation is *moral regulation*, a concept that refers to the ways in which the personal lives, values and beliefs, and behaviours of individuals are subjected to social controls⁷.

This project clearly focuses in on the “unwed single mother”, on her image and the social construction of her identity, how she has been viewed, treated, supported or not supported in the two westernmost Canadian provinces in the first three quarters of the 20th century. While there are various routes to, or ways of,

⁷ The concept of moral regulation is discussed more fully under the title of “Moral Regulation” in chapter 2.

being a single mother in contemporary society⁸, the focus of this project is on the *unwed* single mother who has been so maligned throughout recent history. It is the unwed mother who was the main target of social agencies and actors and of various social policies that are the purview of this study. It is, in large part, the unwed mother who has been so worried about and pitied and referred to as “fallen”. It is the unwed single mother (especially when teamed up with categories like “poor” and “young”) on whom the negative single mother stereotype rests its greatest weight.

However, this project is not only or narrowly about the single mother. For to locate single motherhood as an alternative and/ or deviant family form, is also to comment on that which has been deemed “normal” or even “ideal” by society. In short, we must also acknowledge the ideal form against which the deviant form is being measured. This project, thus, addresses two sides of the same coin: the recurring good woman/ bad woman dichotomy. As such, this is a story about the regulation of all women in one of the most significant areas of their lives, reproduction and motherhood.

One thing that became clear from my research is that what is needed is more social structural change if there are to be changes in cultural attitudes surrounding women, sexuality and childrearing. There need to be alterations in family and

⁸ Over the course of the century, the demographics have changed. More women are becoming single mothers by choice, there is more separation and divorce, and more common-law marriages that could, in some forms, or stages, be viewed as single mother situations. See Chambers (2007) for a discussion of ‘informal’ marriage as an alternative to divorce and remarriage among working class women, which led to single motherhood at the termination of these common-law unions.

labour laws, changes in social service provision, and in the implementation of universal, affordable daycare initiatives (with worker-wages high enough to attract men, as well as women, into the field). Changes such as these, which presume a mandate of equal rights for women, could lead to situations in which women are empowered and lead independent lives (whether there is a husband/partner involved or not) and where there is real equality and real reproductive “choice” for women.

We currently live in a cultural environment where, despite ongoing debates and violence, there is a degree of agreement – or at least a feminist or pro-woman platform and philosophy penetrating the culture – over women’s right to choose in matters of reproduction and childrearing. Women can sometimes alter their own behavior and choose “when” and “if” they wish to reproduce. However, it is important to point out that the freedom to exercise “choice” is only possessed by those with the means to exercise it. Women do not always have access to adequate medical care, to abortion, to autonomy, to education, to financial independence (Solinger, 1998; Richardson, 1993). Furthermore, as Richardson (1993) pointed out, what we see as choice, may not be a choice at all, depending on a woman’s social status:

It is perhaps not difficult to understand why women should ‘choose’ motherhood in a society in which the efforts to socialize girls into wanting babies are so pervasive. However it is important to recognize that the social pressures to become mothers operate on women to varying degrees. For example, being childless by choice is seen as selfish in a married couple while to choose to have a

child as a single heterosexual woman or as a lesbian is to invite disapproval (xi).

Ann Crittenden (2001), while discussing the cultural attitude that stay-at-home mothers need not be adequately financially compensated upon divorce because it was the woman's "choice" to have children and forego career opportunities, opined that

the big problem with the rhetoric of choice is that it leaves out power. Those who benefit from the status quo always attribute inequities to the choices of the underdog. The current rhetoric about choosing motherhood sounds suspiciously like the 1950s rhetoric about "happy" [housewives] (Crittenden, 2001: 234-5).

Many factors may be at work restricting a woman's freedom from or to motherhood and the conditions under which her "choice" will play out, all of which often turn the notion of "choice" into something of a farce. It is clear that what is needed, for those who are concerned about women's reproductive freedom, is not a fight for "choice", but rather, a full scale fight for women's rights (Solinger, 1998 in Ladd-Taylor; Richardson, 1993).

I argue – and hope that this dissertation adds to an understanding – that an environment in which women have full autonomy in their lives, including true reproductive freedom, goes hand in hand with egalitarian gender roles and women's rights. The issue of women's reproductive rights and freedoms, that which is most securely nestled in the bosom of the private sphere, is intricately

tied to women's rights in all of life's arenas. Women's place within the home, structured along the dictates of hegemonic heterosexuality and its gendered division of labour, its practices and values, continues to shape, regulate and restrict all aspects of women's lives. It is only when women are free to exercise true reproductive choice, to choose motherhood if they so wish, to structure that experience in comfort while remaining true to their pre-motherhood selves and interests as they deem appropriate, that they will be able to function with dignity as full, independent, adult citizens of this society. But this change cannot come fully from within – the onus for this sea change cannot be on individual women, although individual women, and men, may indeed help to forge such a change. Ironically, the impetus for such a change – that is, that women gain true equality in the public sphere through alterations in mothering and domestic practices – must come, in large part, from the public sphere.

It is in this spirit that I present this project on single motherhood: I believe that the widespread social condemnation and regulation of single mothers is an example of how women's sexuality, reproduction and mothering is at the core of the fight for women's rights. Throughout the last century, society has, on mass scale, done the following to single mothers: shamed them, infantilized them, forcibly removed their children, abandoned them, condemned them to poverty, deemed them mentally ill, sterilized them against their will, and blamed them for all of society's ills. Evidently, single mothers have been violated, punished, and controlled because of their position outside of a heterosexual marital union.

However, it is equally evident that these women have been in this position because of women's lack of power in general. In other words, our society operates on the assumption of socially dependent women attaching themselves to socially independent men and anything outside of this arrangement has been deemed deviant and has been dealt with accordingly.

As women gain more power in the public sphere, single motherhood becomes less condemned. The single mother family is a growing demographic in Canada, with single women in their 20s and 30s bearing children at a higher rate than ever before (Statistics Canada, 2001)⁹. Indeed, there is a strong contingent of "single mothers by choice" a group comprised of women who have managed to approximate the white, middle-class, nuclear family ideal most closely – all without the presence of a man. That is not to say that this is a universally accepted alternate family form, but that it is at least tolerated and that, possibly, fewer charges are laid against such women by society as a whole. This being said, it is still the poor, young, "incapable" single mother who comprises the prototypical single mother of the social commentator's criticism. We have come to the point where there is a division between these two types of single mothers, with "single mothers by choice" attempting to distance themselves from the despicable, typical single mother (Ludke, 1999).

⁹ Specifically, it is more mature women (in their 20s and 30s), as opposed to teenage girls, who are contributing to the rise in lone parent families. Since 1993, the most common outcome of a teenage pregnancy has been abortion, with a concomitant decrease in live births (Statistics Canada, *Health Reports*, Vol. 12, no. 1, Oct 1, 2003, "Teenage Pregnancy" by Heather Dryburgh).

To take such a divisive stance, however, entirely misses an essential point: a platform of true reproductive rights and freedoms for women must apply to all women, and not just an elite few. The divisive stance only serves to extend the bad woman/ good woman dichotomy, a concept that has long separated women from each other and has prevented a potential community of women from attaining conscious awareness of their collective inequalities. And in this case, where single mothers by choice gain a modicum of respect, it may be less to do any form of sexual or reproductive respect, than a simple matter of neo-liberal reverence for financial self-sufficiency: “At this point in history, the valorization of self-reliant single mothering dominates, and thus the single-mother family presents a fairly limited challenge to the nuclear family”(Juffer, 2006: 5). Where there is any type of state dependency, for instance, this respect is not quite so forthcoming: a result of what Juffer (2006: 22) calls the “demonization of dependency”, a neo-liberal imperative of financial autonomy that limits the subject position of single mothers. Therefore, it is my hope that we can make connections, not divisions, between women and the way that they experience mothering and that we can, thereby, conjure a vision of the twin goals of attaining women’s rights and reproductive freedoms.

Chapter 2. Theoretical and Methodological Base

Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the eighteenth century; but there was also a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility (Foucault, 1975: 169).

Every woman, in whatever circumstance, who does not submit to the norm and who does not conform to prescribed behaviour slips into social deviance (Levesque, 1994: 74).

Isn't queering really the moment when a norm is not exactly repudiated, but rather subverted – if not ironically (as in Butler), then through being realized slightly askew? (Malone & Cleary, 2002: 273-4).

Single mothers in Canada comprise a deviant societal group whose members are subject to moral regulation. Focusing on single motherhood, I ask the following questions in this dissertation: How has the image of the “single mother” been historically created? How does the social identity of the “single mother” differ over space and time? How do various discourses and practices produce various policies surrounding single mothers?

I will address these concerns by placing single motherhood within a broad, theoretical context, beginning with the more abstract epochal viewpoint of Michel Foucault’s criminological theory and social constructionism, and proceeding to the theoretical implications of Queer Theory, using the concepts of Hegemonic Heterosexuality and Patriarchy. From there, I will focus more specifically on the practical application of moral regulation movements to single motherhood. Finally, I will briefly discuss methodological issues and outline the specific historical framework of single mothers in British Columbia and Alberta throughout the first three quarters of the 20th century.

This history will contribute to the growing scholarship surrounding single motherhood and illustrate how “single mothers” have been created as an identifiable group and, thereby, systematically controlled through the various processes of moral regulation. My hope is that this will lead to a fuller understanding of the position held by single mothers in western society at the present time.

This project originates from an unabashedly feminist perspective, a perspective that I personally view as being, in many respects, indistinguishable from human rights activism as it relates to discrimination based on gender and/or sexuality in their various forms. At base, I contend that true social or political freedom is contingent upon true personal freedom at the minute level of sexuality and the family. While my notion of “freedom” connotes a reasonable degree of social responsibility, it also involves a reasonable degree of “freedom from” persecution and control.

“Single motherhood”, like other forms of familial and female deviance, breaks away from normative formulations of proper social organization and behaviour: yet it is unique in the respect that it is not yet – or is only beginning to be – adequately politicized. Gay activists have made great headway into mainstream society in arguing for and forging their rights to be married and to raise children. Sex trade workers, while by no means universally accepted, have gained a great deal of respect and attention in recent years, at least by some societal groups (such as human rights initiatives and feminist scholars). Both of these groups – gay/lesbians and sex trade workers – face some of the harshest criticism and cruelty that society can hand out. They most likely endure more discrimination than the single mother. Nevertheless, the causes represented in these groups are often readily recognized as legitimate cases in the human rights movement.

It is still difficult to look at “single mothers” as being a political grouping, rather than a host of unfortunate or naughty little girls. Single motherhood has long been depicted as a problem linked to the individual mothers. The root of the “problem” has been attributed to a defect in, an injustice done to, or the deviance of, the individual woman in question. “Single mothers by choice” has made inroads into politicizing single motherhood, but at the expense of demonizing the vast majority of “other” single mothers who are too young or too poor or too non-conformist to conform to an upper-middle class, mainstream lifestyle (see, for example, Juffer, 2006: 209-214). “Single mothers by choice” fight for their own individual rights to be parents without politicizing the issue as a whole: They play on the laissez-faire politics of “choice”.

Michel Foucault and Social Constructionism

While the philosopher Michel Foucault did not focus his analysis on gender, there are aspects of his work that are, from a feminist perspective, appealing. It is with his theoretical perspective that I begin, eventually melding it with a feminist and sociological view of the “Family”. Feminists in particular have been drawn to Foucault’s work because of his conceptualization of power as non-hierarchical, which allows for an examination of various forms of power without privileging one over the other; power is figured as an inter-relational process, not an individual crusade (Mills, 1997). From such a framework, power can be examined in relation to long-time feminist concerns surrounding the body, feelings, and consciousness (Weedon, 1987).

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault examined the history of the western penal system and, in so doing, brought insight into the power relations within society. In his discussion of “docility”, he looked at how, around the 18th century in western societies, forms of discipline were transformed into calculated methods of manipulation and control of the body. These methods eventually penetrated society through its various institutions such as the army, the schools and the hospitals. The body, Foucault argued, was brought under two types of intense examination: on the one hand, there was the useful or manipulatable body, of interest to the technico-politico community, people like the government and personnel of armies and prisons; on the other hand, there was the intelligible or analyzable body, of interest to the anatomico-metaphysical community, people like physicians and philosophers. The development of these two distinct strains of interest in the human body was unique in this time period, not because of a prior lack of interest in either form, but because of how the two overlapped and combined with one another to lead to what Foucault called the creation of “docile bodies”:

...an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful . . . In short, [discipline] dissociates power from the body; on the one hand it turns it into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’, which it seeks to increase; on the other hand it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection ...disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination (1975: 137-38).

This ushered in an epoch in which social control of the body became part and parcel of social organization. Through the various means of organizing space and time, through the regulation of bodies and forces into specific exercises and tactics, a social body exceptionally subject to disciplinary control was created. While humans could become highly skilled and efficient, this was accomplished through a loss of individual agency. The power relations inherent within this formulation of human organization are profound and are still very much a part of the functioning of our society, and tied in with notions of morality.

Foucault suggested that the religious origins of disciplining the body reveal the degree to which morality is tied in to the collective ordering of society. He said,

The ever-increasing rigorous exercises that the ascetic life proposed became tasks of increasing complexity that marked the gradual acquisition of knowledge and good behaviour; the striving of the whole community towards salvation became the collective, permanent competition of individuals being classified in relation to one another. Perhaps it was these procedures of community life and salvation that were the first nucleus of methods intended to produce individually characterized but collectively useful aptitudes (1975: 162).

In this way, efficient obedience to orders became a matter of being a good and virtuous community member. Foucault used the example of the good pupil at school who will, after having learned the proper signals, respond on cue in true religious form. Upon the ringing of a bell to signal the start of lessons, for instance, the good pupil will obediently and automatically set himself to task. We are all, in this society, trained to behave in this manner. As Foucault pointed out,

the prison environment is simply a reproduction of the disciplinary processes present in the wider society, brought to emphasis in the isolated setting.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) laid the groundwork for his ideas on the power of normalization and of the ways in which knowledge operates in contemporary western society (Foucault, 1975: 308). His work explains our (frequent) unconscious complicity with the forces of our own domination. This is a modern type of discipline, where the soul instead of the body *per se* is the object of management and site of power relations. The notion of the docile bodies of the public, which touches the various aspects of our lives, encompasses the arenas of sexuality and family organization as well. For Foucault, sexuality is an historical and cultural construct.

Foucault's approach to sexuality, (*The History of Sexuality*, 1978) is compatible with the social-constructionist approach to sexuality that is also a part of gay liberation theory. As Lynne Segal (1994) explained, "Gay Liberation embraced a new theoretical paradigm for understanding and explaining sexuality as mediated by society, rather than as biologically given" (178). The experience of gays and lesbians was a natural site for this line of thinking to develop, considering their experience of discrimination. Indeed, a great deal of theoretical work surrounding sexuality has emerged from gay liberation theory for this reason.

Mary McIntosh's (1968) essay, "The Homosexual Role" is considered to be the seminal piece of work for the field of gay liberation theory. In her essay, McIntosh stated that cross-cultural and historical research revealed great variations in sexual practices and meanings. This, she argued, pointed to a social, rather than a natural basis for sexual desire and practice. For her, the important project became studying how homosexuality had been created as a stigmatized social group. Drawing from sociological deviance theory, McIntosh (1968) stated that "[t]he way in which people become labeled as homosexual can now be seen as an important social process connected with mechanisms of social control"(35).

Previously, the dominant school of thought on issues of sexuality had been the psychoanalytic perspective. In short, the psychoanalytic conception of sexuality implicated biology and instincts in their explanations of human sexual behavior, placing the causal onus for sexual behavior upon individual bodies and private experiences. The emerging social-constructionist school, on the other hand, worked toward an understanding of sexuality as being determined and defined by shared social meanings.

Michel Foucault (1978) elaborated on the social constructionist perspective on sexuality, providing the most significant argument for this new, more sociologically based school of thought. According to Foucault, 'sexuality' as we know it, was created through discourse. In the west, over time, we made the exercise of telling and confessing our intimate sexual selves into a requirement for

being a good Christian. In so doing, sex itself was transformed. More specifically, according to Foucault's "repressive hypothesis", the Victorians were encouraged to transform their sexual desire into discourse through a "nearly infinite task of telling – telling oneself and another, as often as possible, everything that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations, and thoughts which, through the body and the soul, had some affinity with sex"(1978:20). In this way, sex was politicized and publicized as something in need of being managed. As Foucault put it, sex became a "police matter"(1978: 24). Centres of power became involved in creating discourses on sex, particularly in the areas of demography, biology, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, ethics, pedagogy, and political criticism (Foucault, 1978). As a result, Foucault argued, sex became a highly regulated system.

Foucault emphasized the ability of power to be both productive and repressive. His conceptualization of sexual control, therefore, was not a theory of absolute top-down control. While it is possible to state with some accuracy that our society has created and enforced a sexual system of monogamous heterosexuality, it can also be argued, along with Foucault, that that our society has created various so-called perversions – such as homosexuality – in so doing. In short, in keeping strict watch over the sexuality of the public, the "perversions" were identified, drawn out, and perpetuated. The policing of sexuality is a mechanism of power, but it is, simultaneously, a mechanism of pleasure: the gaze of the authorities who were attempting to control sexual behavior, in Foucault's formulation, created a

space in which the perversions became a fixed site of attention and pleasure. A type of play came into being between authority and evading or transgressing it, a game that Foucault explains as providing “perpetual spirals of power and pleasure”(1978: 45). Thus, rather than only providing barriers to sexuality, the Victorian era created a multiplication of sexualities and connected them to the body and the individual. While a variety of sexual practices existed prior to the seventeenth century, Foucault argued that after the seventeenth century, the “perversions” were “rigidified” and tied to the identity of the individual. In this way, sexuality as we know came into existence and sexual personas, such as that of the “homosexual”, were created.

With emphasis placed on the productive ability of power and with the notion that sexuality is tied to the social and is a historical process, the idea emerged that sexuality could be liberated (Segal, 1994). This became a fundamental tenet of gay/lesbian liberationist theory. The ideas of subverting power and of gaining liberty from oppression have also been a mainstay of feminist theory and activism. For example, within feminism, there has been a great deal of focus on motherhood as a site of oppression and a site for liberation. Before delving into the literature surrounding the sociological study of motherhood, however, I would like to introduce the notion of hegemonic heterosexuality into the present theoretical context. The concept “hegemonic heterosexuality” comes out of the work of gay/lesbian social- constructionist scholarship which has in turn evolved

out of Foucault's work on sexuality, dovetailing nicely with a group of scholarly work which is loosely gathered under the rubric of "Queer Theory".

Queering Sex, Gender and Sexuality

Consideration of the scholarship that examines heterosexuality is important from the perspective of this thesis, not because a binary formulation of sexual orientation (heterosexual/homosexual) is central to a discussion of single motherhood per se, but because such a point of view questions the institution of heterosexuality and its role in the organizing and structuring of society and its various institutions, of which single motherhood is a (misfit) part.

Gary Kinsman (1987) coined the term "heterosexual hegemony" to refer to

the relations of ruling class morality, sex and gender, the gender division of labour, family and kinship, State policies, and sexual policing, and it relies not only on consent, legitimation, and 'common sense', but also on moments of denial, silencing, and coercion(Kinsman, 1987:34).

Power relations come to be viewed as normal and natural even to those among the subordinate groups. Discrimination in society, then, is based on the historical, discursive development of homosexual verses heterosexual identities. In short, heterosexuality became something of a *regime*, the whole of social life is built up around its rules.

This is the point of view taken on by theorists such as materialist feminist Monique Wittig (1976, 1981, 1989, 1992) and queer theorist Judith Butler (1990a, 1990b). Wittig described heterosexuality as a political regime. According to her, heterosexuality is not an institution *under* the system of patriarchy but, rather, it is the system itself. This argument is tied to critiques by radical lesbians of models of patriarchy (see, for example, Rich, 1980; Bunch 1972, 1975; Jeffreys, 1990).

According to Wittig, oppression creates sex. In other words, society's belief in sexual difference is necessary in order to maintain the oppressive heterosexual regime. Wittig (1989) argued that women are oppressed because they are created that way under the "heterosexual contract". Within this contract, women are positioned in the same way that slaves are positioned. And as with any good political regime, the oppression is explained with reference to *natural* differences. To Wittig, naturalized identity categories are the problem. In her analogy with slavery, she equated the term "woman" with the term "nigger" and asked how we could continue to condone the use of these terms and abuse of these peoples (1981). The enslavement of black people was justified on the basis of their alleged natural, biological differences from white people that made their formidable social oppression acceptable to average white people. In the same way, Wittig argued that women's oppression gained widespread popular approval on the basis of the belief that women are biologically programmed to serve individual men within the institution of marriage. For her, sexual difference is a cultural myth constructed to uphold the heterosexual regime. The heterosexual contract is so all encompassing

that it touches every aspect of our lives, it dictates our roles and our behaviors.

According to Wittig, we need a new contract and the way that we can do this is by fleeing our current heterosexual arrangements: “We are doing it. Lesbians are runaways, fugitive slaves; runaway wives are the same case . . .” (1989:45).

According to radical lesbians (and other feminists), patriarchy – a system in which men hold the power in society, and use it to oppress women – not heterosexuality, is the oppressive force in society (Rich, 1980; Bunch 1972, 1975; Jeffreys, 1990).

The early Radicals were sensitive to multiple differences among women, and as a means to counteract the potential divisiveness of this, consciously forged a notion of female sisterhood (Evans, 1995:65). In this unifying endeavor, the concept of patriarchy was used to delineate the common enemy (Ibid). Patriarchal

domination was seen as a natural result of the biological division of labour

between the sexes. For example, Shulamith Firestone (1970) argued that nature dealt women the “fundamental inequality” of being the child bearers and rearers and that this resulted in women being in a subordinate social position:

specifically, she viewed women as being the “slave class” (Firestone, 1970:192).

From the radical feminist perspective, patriarchy is the root cause of all

domination in society and heterosexuality is an institution under the system of

patriarchy. From such a viewpoint, discrimination (i.e., sexism) is the result of

sexual difference. That is, men oppress women because they are men. In other

words, male domination is taken to be natural and static. It is something that, at

best, can be managed by society.

Wittig, unlike her radical lesbian feminist sisters, did not look at men as the enemy. Indeed, she argued that there is no such thing as men, at least not in the way that we understand that category. Men and women, masculinity and femininity have been socially constructed within the framework of the regulatory regime of heterosexuality. Heterosexuality has such a deep cultural hold on us that we see these categories as being natural. This is what Judith Butler (1990a: see page 151, n6 for a straightforward definition) termed the “heterosexual matrix”: the stabilizing of the categories of sex and gender in such a way that sex (male and female) is expressed through gender (masculinity and femininity), in order to conceal the fact that heterosexuality is a hierarchical construction that produces these very categories¹⁰. It is the causal unity of the categories of sex and gender – that is, the belief that to be born anatomically female necessitates the feminine gender roles, behavior, life course – that is the problem. In short, it “naturalizes” gender difference.

The causal unity of sex and gender itself reveals the entrenchment of essentialism within our thinking in reference to men and women and their behaviors. Sex is the touchstone that we use in this society as a ready reference to the natural world that will give us clues as to how an individual will behave. Nowhere is this more

¹⁰ Indeed, it is remarkable how often the categories of “sex” and “gender” are used interchangeably. For example, I recently heard a CBC radio personality ask a guest on her show if she would like to be informed, after having a prenatal ultrasound test, of the “gender” of her unborn baby. It is often possible to determine whether an unborn fetus has male or female genitalia (sex), but surely the scanning of a tiny body does not give conclusive evidence of the future complex human behaviors that we have attached to the meanings of masculinity and femininity (gender) in our culture.

obvious than in reference to sexuality and reproduction. *Normative heterosexuality which conforms to accepted gendered roles and behaviours in the areas of sexuality and reproduction is construed as being natural behaviour. Sexual and reproductive arrangements that fall outside of this norm are deemed unnatural, animalistic or morally defunct.* Homosexuality is one sexual/reproductive choice that has long been deemed *unnatural, deviant, sick* in our society. Scholars like Kinsman, Wittig, and Butler recognized that this behavior is not stigmatized to this degree because it defies the laws of nature (male/female), but because it defies the laws of society (gender). The fundamental building blocks of western society are heterosexual relationships that lead to nuclear family units. The naturalization of this process (Butler's Matrix) serves to hide the ideology behind the practice.

It is not the homosexual act itself that prompts moral condemnation in our society. Indeed, homosexuality and heterosexuality were not coined as terms or as identity categories until the late nineteenth century (Kinsman, 1993; Jeffreys, 1990). Historically, there was no distinction between the two. They emerged in a social, historical, and relational context within industrial capitalist states and along with the development of professional and bureaucratic relations. Heterosexuality, based on the polarization of masculinity and femininity into separate public and private spheres was a part of nation building. Heterosexuality depends upon dichotomized gender differentiation for its meaning. For women, it is tied into desire for men and the roles of wife and mother; for men, it is tied into

masculinity and the breadwinner role (Kinsman, 1993; Richardson, 1996). Our society, from capitalist relations and consumerism to the military apparatus and welfare programs, to mass culture and the workforce, rely upon, reinforce, and just simply pre-presume a heterosexual, gendered order to social life.

To think that all of the intricacies of how we organize and carry on our lives on a personal and social level (sexual, familial, reproductive) are somehow *natural*, that they stem from our (male or female) biology, is completely shortsighted, even ridiculous. And yet, that is what we think. But gender – masculinity and femininity – are not things unto themselves, they are socially constructed in binary fashion. They derive their meaning within relational contexts and they exist only in reference to one another. That is why, while it seems to many feminists that gender is the master category from which all oppression arises, I along with the Queer theorists, think that heterosexuality is the underlying organizing principle, or the ruling political regime, of society. To say that gender has an ultimate meaning on its own makes it an essentialist, natural category: it makes it sex¹¹. What makes a woman is not her biology but her relationship to a man. Gender is employed in the service of – and ceases to have meaning outside the context of – its relational aspect. Gender would not make sense, or even exist, if there was no such thing as heterosexuality.

Patriarchy and Hegemonic Heterosexuality

¹¹ Judith Butler drives this point in a step deeper in her (1990a) book *Gender Trouble* in stating that perhaps sex “was always already gender” (Butler, 1990a: 7): that is, perhaps “sex”, biological maleness or femaleness is also socially constructed, like “gender”.

Perhaps the most contentious concept that I have employed in this project is “hegemonic heterosexuality”. For example, the question “What does single motherhood have to do with lesbianism?” has been asked and the point, “Single mothers are not necessarily lesbians”, made. Lesbians and single mothers have an affinity with one another in that they both pose an opposition to the hegemonic heterosexual ideal, the two parent – one male, one female – nuclear family. In this sense, lesbians and single mothers are deviant familial/sexual groups for the same reason, because they both represent a rejection of hegemonic heterosexuality. Judith Halberstam (2006) suggests that single mothers could be considered to be “queer” in the sense that not “all those people who reproduce participate in the normativity of parenthood, bourgeois family and heterosexual scheduling practices”(104).

The feminist concept of *patriarchy* has been suggested as an alternative to the queer concept of hegemonic heterosexuality. Now, I realize that patriarchy has been employed in this area, particularly in the context of the patriarchal welfare state, as well as in many other contexts – it is the quintessential second wave feminist blanket concept employed for the purpose of putting a name to the cause of women’s oppression. But the concept, patriarchy, has been criticized within feminist theory, and along with related issues surrounding difference, has become a divisive issue within feminism, a debate that some claim has torn the movement apart (Evans, 1995). It is not a simple matter of claiming that women are

disadvantaged in this society and that therefore “patriarchy” is to blame. While our society may well be “patriarchal”, saying so may not go much further than aptly describing the situation because “the only activity with which patriarchy as a system is involved is male dominance and exploitation of women, which is what we are trying to understand”(Fox, 1988: 169).

The current project on single motherhood involves a consideration of the economic position of the single mother. This is a field in which socialist feminists have appropriately applied the concept of patriarchy. Of course, in its strictest sense patriarchy refers to “father rule”. This easily fits with scholarship and debate surrounding the welfare state, as the welfare system can be interpreted as the state stepping in and performing the role of the male family head. Indeed, some arguments have focused on the sexual policing of female welfare recipients in this light and many fine studies, as well as theoretical work has been done with an expanded notion of patriarchy and how it works in society. The concept of patriarchy has come a long way within feminist theory. While radical feminists such as Kate Millet, in her groundbreaking work *Sexual Politics* (1969), understood patriarchy to be an historical construct that arose along with the rise in private property, she did not elaborate on a Marxist interpretation of such a theory – as later, socialist feminists would do.

Socialist feminists began to examine the relationship between patriarchy and the capitalist system – that is, what they viewed as being the two most essential

societal institutions governing social life – an endeavor that led to debates over whether patriarchy and capitalism were two parts of a single system or whether they were separate systems. It was the European feminist Christine Delphy (1970) who first developed the theory of patriarchy as a separate system from capitalism and it was Heidi Hartmann (1979) in the U.S. that first developed the dual systems model of patriarchy and capitalism in which the two systems worked in a more intertwined manner (McDowell & Pringle, 1992: 127; Fox, 1988: 168). One example of the dual systems approach to studying society in Canada is the work of Jane Ursel (1992) in which she defines patriarchy as “the hierarchical structuring of reproductive relations, operative in most known societies as *the means of controlling reproduction*”(5). For Ursel, then, patriarchy is most concerned with controlling reproduction: which is what this thesis, in short, is examining.

A unified systems approach to studying patriarchy was developed, which became the basis for a materialist feminist theory of patriarchy: this grew out of the wages for housework debates that began in the mid-1970’s, in which it was argued that human society revolved specifically around human productivity, the social relations of production and reproduction and the interdependence thereof (see, for example, Eisenstein, 1979; and Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978). The work of materialist feminists, such as Iris Marion Young, emphasize that any understanding of the social world must be rooted in materialism and take into account social production, familial reproduction and the ways in which they work together to

oppress women and others (Young, 1980; Fox, 1988; Hennessy and Ingraham, 1997; Ehrenreich, 1992).

My objective is not to undermine such arguments, but to add to recent theoretical initiatives that have focused on overcoming rifts between feminist and queer scholars. Richardson, McLaughlin and Casey (2006), for instance, point out that there is a great deal of overlap in these competing theoretical models and that debates tend to cause more damage than progress. One such area of overlap is the respective critiques of heterosexuality (Richardson, 2006: 30). Of Adrienne Rich's (1980) feminist work on compulsory heterosexuality, Richardson (2006) points out that "[a]lthough Rich does not explicitly mention the heterosexual/homosexual binary that is the focus of much queer theory, her work can be seen as an early attempt to disrupt (queer) the boundaries of sexual categories"(30).

Feminist and queer theories can be complementary. Considering that feminism can be defined in part through its emphasis on materiality and bodies, while queer theory has a strong focus on identity and non-material entities, at this most basic theoretical and empirical level, they can be seen as sporting their own strong aspects which could be potentially interwoven. In looking at single motherhood, for instance, these two aspects of the issue are equally significant: it is the material deprivation faced by single mother families that provides the motive for investigation, whereas I have hypothesized that it is the negative identity

categorization that has created a situation where single mothers are discriminated against to such a degree that material deprivations follow. The concept of hegemonic heterosexuality ties these facets together. Indeed, Kinsman (1987), who originally coined the term, based his work on a Marxist model and he explained that the “approach stresses the importance to capitalist and patriarchal rule of the cultural and moral regulation of social identity”(1987: 32). Kinsman refused to reduce social life to one or the other of these elements and was attempting to build a comprehensive model of historical materialism that included the non-material aspects of human interaction and stratification.

The welfare state, and its aid agencies, is oriented toward providing aid to children rather than toward equipping their mothers with the ability to provide for them (and for themselves). Women’s dependent, nurturing roles are thus, consciously, preserved. This may be patriarchal, yes, but more than that, it is the political entrenchment of a particular heterosexual form – the nuclear family form and the father breadwinner/ mother housekeeper ideal – in action. That is, heterosexuality serves as a basis and support for many of society’s institutions. Such *hegemony* is suspect because it discriminates against women by reinforcing sexual difference and subservient roles and social positions. It also delegitimizes other forms of sexual and human reproductive organization and is implicated in class and racial discrimination.

For example, in the Canadian case, “single motherhood” can be understood within a wider societal context of moral reproductive and population control as colonial governments asserted their sovereignty over Native lands, their people, and their traditional cultural and societal organization. We know that the poor, people of colour, and single mothers were targeted by eugenicists, in the first half of the twentieth century, on the basis that they were morally and intellectually inferior (being labeled as feeble-minded) and thus, that they should not be allowed to reproduce. But they were being labeled as such because they fell short of the white, middle-class, nuclear ideal.

Using the term, “moral regulation”, I refer to the sanctions and constraints put on people who fell outside of the acceptable societal norms and the pressures put on them to conform. Andree Levesque (1994) illustrated the concept of moral regulation nicely in her historical study of women in Quebec, *Making and Breaking the Rules*. She began her study by setting out the “norms” of feminine behavior, as laid out by those in power (particularly the medical profession and the church leaders) and then went on to describe how those who fell outside of these norms (prostitutes, unwed mothers) were treated.

I have adopted the “Queer” concept of hegemonic heterosexuality because it points to the fact that single motherhood finds itself positioned as a deviant social form in western society. Within this context, single motherhood finds itself in connection with other powerless groups like those in the subordinate position via the category of race, class and sexual orientation. Thus, for instance, I am not

equating single motherhood to lesbianism but I am, in a sense, placing them both in an uneasy relation toward hegemonic heterosexuality because they both breach or fall short of the socially supported master ideal. The heterosexual nuclear family has been socially constructed as the only normal, natural way in which people should organize their sexuality, reproduce and raise children. As such, lifestyles that deviate from this ideal – like a single woman raising a child on her own, or a lesbian or gay couple being together, or even more suspect, raising a child together – are viewed as being abnormal or morally defunct. It is not only sexual difference that is of interest. There are multiple differences among women (and men) and *in order to understand how women's identities have been created*, we need to be aware of those differences and the relationship between them.

Today, single mothers by choice – that is, those who are well into adulthood and who can afford to make a choice to have a child on their own, are quick to differentiate themselves from poor teen-age, perhaps black or native girls, who give birth out of wedlock. Essentially, two separate identity categories are created. Melissa Ludtke (1999), for example, conducted several interviews, with the goal of making an informed decision to become, or not become, a single mother. The outcome of her research was to construct a differentiation between appropriate and inappropriate single mothers. At times Ludtke seemed to be rallying against the moral disrepute of single motherhood: after all, it is a demographic that she herself was considering joining. However, in the end, she strongly contributed to the moral imagery of the deviant single mother by forging a rightful place for

some single mothers – i.e., those like herself who are mature (at the end of their childbearing years), professional and affluent, and reproductively responsible (i.e., not promiscuous). In this way, divisions are being created between “single mothers by choice” and poor, often young, often non-white, single mothers. Single mothers by choice bolster their own social position by criticizing the “other”. They secure their own moral right to exist by contrasting themselves against a deviant type of single mother – the good twin and the evil twin. In creating two separate moral paths, they do, in effect, reinforce the immorality or the deviance of single mothers as a whole. This is exactly what *I do not want to do* with this project. I wish to deconstruct rather than reinforce single motherhood as a negative identity category. In doing this, I want to move towards social difference rather than reinforcement of the heterosexual hegemonic ideal that Luttké’s research ultimately accomplishes. To do otherwise would simply reinforce the master category.

This is precisely how Queer Theory itself emerged in reaction to the mainstream gay liberation movement working toward white, middle-class respectability, by seeking straight society’s approval by stamping out and degrading the “deviant” gays (Seidman, 1997). In other words, the gay mainstream bought into notions of their own deviancy. In order to gain social acceptance, they then began to distance themselves from that deviancy by seeking the respect of the dominant (heterosexual) group. They did this by attempting to become as much like the

dominant group as possible. The result was a split within the deviant (homosexual) group itself.

Steven Seidman (1997) described this dialectic in reference to the history of the gay liberation movement: “A revolt transpired of the social periphery against the center, only this time the center was not mainstream America but a mainstream gay culture”(121). “Queers” began to challenge the simple binarism of the heterosexual/ homosexual categories. They knew that such binaries served to create identity categories, which in turn were used by the dominant group as a means of social control. Those in power will use binary categories in order to normalize oppression¹². In this case, Queer activists and theorists placed homosexuality within a social constructionist framework which took the form of a “radical politics of difference” and attacked the “assumption of a unified sexual identity”(Seidman, 1996: 11).

Queer theorists examine the way in which power operates through the organization of society into identity categories:

Queer theory is suggesting that the study of homosexuality should not be a study of a minority – the making of the lesbian/gay/bisexual subject – but a study of those knowledges and social practices that organize ‘society’ as a whole by sexualizing – heterosexualizing or homosexualizing – bodies, desires, acts, identities, social relations, knowledges, culture, and social institutions. Queer theory aspires to transform homosexual theory

¹² Alternatively, those being oppressed will mobilize around the category (e.g., homosexuality) and use it to fight their oppression, inadvertently also benefiting the dominant group by reinforcing and giving credence to the binary itself (Butler in Fuss, 1991: 13-14).

into a general social theory or one standpoint from which to analyze social dynamics (Seidman, 1996: 130).

The beauty of the concept of *hegemony* is that it includes the elements of both coercion and consent, thus revealing the mechanism of power. In other words, both the dominant group and the subordinate group support the oppressive regime. As with the “single mothers by choice”, those members of the subordinate group which most closely approximate the hegemonic ideal, cleave to and attempt to align themselves with the dominant group, setting up an opposition to more deviant members of the subordinate group. Some get absorbed into the dominant group by virtue of their good behavior (i.e., behavior approximating that of the dominant group itself) but in so doing, the process reinforces the power of the regulatory regime and reinforces the deviancy of the oppressed population. Dissent is all but lost, unless activated by the “moral dregs” of the society. The mainstream society becomes something out of a 1970’s futuristic science fiction novel – a huge, all engulfing, greedy organism *eventually* devouring everything in its midst that does not conform – whether this be through fear (of belonging to a deviant group) or through more drastic regulatory measures (e.g., eugenic sterilization of single mothers, gay bashing, etc.).

Rather than attempt to stabilize a positive image for deviant social identities, Queers instead assert that identities are multiple, and endlessly intersecting. Attempts to stabilize identities are unavoidably exclusionary. This is what has happened with single mothers. Being created as an identity category, against the

normative category of the nuclear family, single motherhood remains stuck in a negative position.

Moral Regulation

Where women are in a structurally and/ or financially subordinate position, like that created by the two-tiered welfare state, you have a situation where women are subject to moral regulation by the state, as well as being vulnerable to moral regulation from other social actors. Little (1999: 125) uses “moral regulation” as follows: “the concept of moral regulation is used to examine how the state has scrutinized and attempted to shape its citizens’ personal and intimate behaviours and subjectivities . . .”

As Little (1999: xvii) pointed out, most welfare scholars associate the moral concerns surrounding the poor with pre-twentieth century charity work and assume that such regulation was abolished along with the modern welfare state. However, as her work on the Ontario Mothers’ Allowance Act demonstrates, such moral regulation is alive and well right up to the present day, in large part exercised by social workers through institutionalized state agency and augmented by other agents in other sites of regulation such as school teachers and neighbors (Little, 1999: 164). Moral regulation has not been adequately examined in relation to the Canadian welfare state (Little, 1999).

Alan Hunt's (1999) work provides a comprehensive, working theory of moral regulation movements. He pointed out that moral regulation is an important and interesting angle of study for several reasons. Firstly, it is a social phenomenon that stems from "below" or from the middle classes rather than from political elites and government institutions (Hunt, 1999: 1-2). Further, it has, over the course of the 20th century, been significantly activated through the agency of women while representing the interests of non-state agencies (Hunt, 1999: 2). Secondly, moral regulation also gives us insight into the intimate relationship between the "governance of the self" and the "governance of others", that Foucault discussed (Hunt, 1999: 2; Foucault, 1989:296, cited in Hunt, 1999:2). Such concerns tie in with Foucault's (1975) theorizing about "docile bodies" and modern forms of disciplinary techniques. This is also an important concern within queer theory in reference to the operation of power through the means of both coercion and consent. Finally, moral regulation is highly topical (Hunt, 1999: 2). In recent years, we have witnessed a return to moralizing within the public arena, particularly in terms of "family values".

Alan Hunt's (1999) concept of moral regulation challenges traditional notions of power. In studying the moral regulation of single mothers, we are not simply examining the laws surrounding them as set out by the state. The moralizing agents were more diverse, in some cases humble, and in others intellectual and in positions of considerable societal power. They were, in addition, often successful in influencing the regulatory powers.

The concept of moral regulation moves beyond a top-down notion of power in which the elite govern the masses and into a more complex playing field where the participants have varying levels of resources, influence and opportunities. Hunt emphasized the potential strength of moral regulation movements. He contended that “moral regulation movements form an interconnected web of discourses, symbols and practices exhibiting persistent continuities that stretch across space and time (Hunt, 1999: 9). They become entrenched and diffused across the culture, linking up with diverse elements to form an “umbrella” effect by linking together and lending each other support.

The cultural significance of moral regulation movements should not be underestimated: “These processes are socially constitutive in so far as they form the identities and subjectivities which render social relations natural or taken for granted. The sum of these processes sustains forms of social life” (Hunt, 1999: 15). Hunt, in agreement with Corrigan & Sayer (1985: 194), emphasized the dual, permeating essence of moral regulation as both “externally regulative” and “internally constitutive” through an ongoing process of social contestations with varying levels of coercion, that suppresses some forms of behavior and identity and discourages others (Hunt, 1999). Thus, moral regulation is a process, involving the agency of regulators and the regulated, where identities and subjectivities are contested and negotiated (Hunt 1999; Little, 1998; Corrigan & Sayer, 1985).

Moral regulation involves the policing of others as well as the policing of the self. As such, it is a distinct type of regulation, working separate from, although in conjunction with, political and economic forms of regulation (Hunt, 1999). Hunt (1999) pinpointed a framework within which moral regulation movements work. I will outline this framework, applying it to the current research on the moral regulation of single motherhood:

1. they construct a moralized subject (the single mother)
2. they construct an object or target that is acted upon (the health of “the nation”, “the race”, “the family”)
3. an informal or expert knowledge base is invoked (parlance of experts working in support of charities, maternal feminist writings/ speeches, scholarly work)
4. the knowledge discourse is given normative weight: it seeks to alter conduct that it defines as intrinsically wrong or bad (the unfit, defined here as the unmarried woman, should not be allowed to reproduce)
5. a set of morally acceptable practices is laid out (“proper” gender roles, hegemonic heterosexual family norms)
6. a harm is made explicit and warned against (social instability, loose morals run rampant, unfitness prevails enslaving the fit to their care, downfall of the “race”)

The “moral” aspect of this formulation is that a behavior, or set of behaviors, is deemed to be intrinsically bad or wrong (Hunt, 1999). As such, moral regulation is often paired with a utilitarian movement aimed at improving conditions. In the case of this research, the negative evaluation of single motherhood is paired up with charity work, the development of the social welfare state, and the brave new science of eugenics. It is the complex of moral regulatory behaviours and ideas that reinforce the hegemonic heterosexuality of a patriarchal society.

Research Methodology

The specific focus of my research is an analysis of the construction of single motherhood throughout the 20th century in the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. This has narrowed my focus substantially from what I had originally planned, that is, I have narrowed the geographical area down from the whole of Canada to Canada’s two westernmost provinces and I have eliminated a specific comparison between aboriginal and non-aboriginal single mothers. I have done this to make the project manageable and in order to allow myself to focus on local records and to tease out the minute details that form a moral regulatory regime of hegemonic heterosexuality¹³. Alberta and British Columbia are interesting cases for at least two distinct reasons. First of all, they were the only two Canadian provinces to legislate eugenic sterilization. At the time, such legislation was

¹³ Sarah Carter (2008) has published fascinating research on monogamy and marriage in the Canadian West, and has shown how great efforts were sustained in the imposition of monogamous marriage on the Plains Aboriginal peoples. She argues that so-called traditional marriage was a construct of nation building endeavors.

viewed as being progressive by many of those who were in power. It was part of working toward a healthy nation. Secondly, these two provinces are of interest because many women (as well as men) were migrating or immigrating to the Canadian west in the early 1900s. They went west in search of greater opportunities (many of them fleeing farm life and seeking a better life in the cities of Edmonton and Vancouver) or following husbands or seeking marriages, either willingly or coercively, as in the case of the “slave girls” from China (Prentice et al., 1988). This is not to say that federal considerations, particularly federal laws surrounding welfare legislation, family allowances, etc. are not important to this project. Indeed they are, and I will also be looking at national information where it is feasible, although I will be giving a more concentrated examination to local records in Alberta and British Columbia.

In this study, I examine the manner in which a variety of “discourses” have structured the concept of the single mother. These discourses reveal how the structures of knowledge/power in a given historical and social locality come together to create meaning surrounding a particular topic (Hall, 1997). A discursive formation is a cluster of ideas, images and practices that delineate the rules and conduct surrounding that topic as well as our general understanding of it (Hall, 1997). Discursive formations, particularly when they involve the production and maintenance of subjectivities (or identity categories), become the tools of regulatory regimes (Butler, 1991).

Subjectivities are produced through discursive formations. Michel Foucault, for instance, examined the social creation of the identity of the homosexual and of the madman (Foucault 1976; Foucault 1965). These “types” have been socially constructed as deviant social subjects and, in the process, each has produced its concomitant “normal” type (i.e., what it means to be heterosexual and what it means to be mentally healthy, respectively). Single motherhood or “the single mother” can also be examined in this way.

Single mothers are perceived as being abnormal or deviant as against the “normal” white, middle-class, married mother within a nuclear family unit. While we have come to perceive this “normal” ideal type of reproductive organization as being *natural*, social organization – including a great deal of the experience and practice of motherhood – is socially, rather than naturally, determined. Even within the social sciences, however, the study of motherhood is one of the last bastions of adherence to biological essentialism. While some scholars have skillfully demonstrated the social nature of maternal behavior (see for example, Badinter, 1981; Ehrenreich & English, 1978), more often than not, lay people and social scientists alike view mothering as being a set of skills and social practices which are “naturally” assumed by women in relation to their bodies and the changes which take place during pre/pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, and so forth. For some theorists, their social imagination and academic work goes so far as to

project current nuclear family ideals in reference to motherhood and sex role differentiation backwards into our evolutionary past.¹⁴

Both social and cultural discourses have been examined, with particular consideration to the intersections between sexuality, gender, class and colonial and nationalistic context. I have examined the ways in which laws and social discourse surrounding the sexual and reproductive lives of women were part of the building of the daughter nation of Canada. Focusing on the Canadian West in the “pre”, “inter”, and Post –World War periods, I will be 1) analyzing regulatory responses to single motherhood in the form of an examination of welfare ideologies, newspaper articles, eugenicist legislation and the sources of support for this legislation (for example, in the work and writings of Emily Murphy), and the records of charitable organizations such as the Beulah Home for unwed mothers of Edmonton; and 2) analyzing female and feminist activists’ roles in promoting and implementing these responses through an examination of maternalist feminist discourse (writings, newsletter, etc. by female activists and organizations). In this way, I have focused on 3 major regulatory approaches to single motherhood: the eugenics movement in Alberta and British Columbia (chapter 4), the Beulah Home for unwed mothers in Edmonton, Alberta (chapter 5), and the Children’s Aid Society of Vancouver, B.C. (chapter 6). In addition, I have analyzed the role of female reformers in western Canada in constructing

¹⁴ For two excellent feminist critiques of biological explanations of women’s social behavior see Bleier, Ruth. *Science and Gender: A Critique of Biology and Its Theories on Women*. New York: Pergamon, 1984; and Wiber, Melanie. *Erect Men/ Undulating Women: The Visual Imagery of Gender, “Race” and Progress in Reconstructive Illustrations of Human Evolution*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier UP, 1997.

these 3 forms of moral regulation, with particular emphasis on Emily Murphy as an exemplar of western maternal feminism (chapter 7). By focusing on the reforms and activities of Emily Murphy, I hope to illuminate the contradictions, strengths and weaknesses of early (maternalist) feminist and female social activism in this period in western Canada.

Particularly I am asking how single motherhood, and unwed motherhood specifically, has come to be constructed as a negative identity category. How is the moral regulation of an identity group accomplished? Who had a hand in creating single mothers as a deviant subgroup? What were their motivations? How were women who deviated from the “ideal” role of married motherhood treated? How did the women’s advocates at the time, the female reformers, contribute to the social construction of single motherhood and the notions of ideal femininity? How should we understand their actions? What about the social agencies, charities, and other social actors? What were their motivations, and were they helpful to these women or were they restrictive and regulatory? How did they figure women’s own agency into the picture of unwed motherhood: did they see these women as being in a position of agency and dignity? What did their responses and regulations for unwed mothers say about society’s views of female citizenship?

I have conducted a content or textual analysis, or close reading, of the various documents that I have uncovered. In researching single motherhood I have

conducted searches, in addition to the University of Alberta libraries, at the following archival sites: the City of Edmonton Archives (COE Archives), the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAB Archives), the University of Alberta Special Collections, the City of Vancouver Archives (COV Archives) and the British Columbia Archives (PBC Archives). In addition to these, I have several references, particularly for the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver (CASV) from the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Families (BCMCF). The records that I originally found at the City of Vancouver Archives, many of which were under restrictions (see Appendix 1), were subsequently sent by the COV Archives to the BCMCF Records and Forms Operations. In double-checking my references, the COV Archivist referred me to the BCMCF with whom I then communicated. The BCMCF mailed me copies of CASV reports and provided me with the new reference numbers for my citations.

I selected these sites to give equal representation to Alberta and British Columbia; because they are rich in provincial records and in information on the major city in each province (Edmonton and Vancouver); and because they were most accessible to me.

At each archival site, I did a general search for any information that could be deemed relevant to single mothers, such as documents from charity or government organizations that may have worked with them, and prominent local female reformists. I spoke with archivists at each site for assistance in locating

these materials, informing them of my project and requesting any assistance or advice they might have. Over the course of several trips to Vancouver, Victoria and Edmonton, I spent many days at each archival location taking extensive notes and/or photocopying materials pertaining to various agencies and their policies and practices. For examples, please refer to Appendix 2 on page 336.

Similar processes were undertaken at each of the archival locations that I visited, although the majority of the material that I have used came from the City of Edmonton Archives and the City of Vancouver Archives. I filed any photocopies and notes taken from the archives, as well as newspaper clippings and journal articles of interest, by subject and/or organization, in labeled files within file folder boxes. The particular material that I selected to examine in detail – i.e., the eugenics material, the Beulah Home, the CVAS and the Emily Murphy – were chosen on the basis that there was a great deal of material available for each that was relevant to unwed motherhood and that these particular foci together seemed to encompass a reasonable variety of social segments. Certainly there are other subjects that could have been examined (other female reformers or the Edmonton Creche and Day Nursery Society, for instance) that would have proved relevant and instructive, but my aim was to concentrate in some depth on a few subjects that fell within the purview of society's treatment of unwed motherhood. This survey is not exhaustive but, I hope, representative of society's attitudes and actions surrounding unwed motherhood.

One aspect of the story of unwed motherhood that is particularly lacking is the role of race and ethnicity and the experience of different immigrant groups and aboriginal peoples. Certainly this is lurking within the commentary of nationalism and colonialism, which the eugenics movement and female reformers chapters both touch on. Nevertheless, one area of inquiry that I think would be of great interest for future study is the experience of aboriginal women with unwed pregnancy during the period under study. This was omitted, however, because it is a vast area that would likely entail a research project all of its own.

After extensive note taking, dividing the relevant materials from the irrelevant and placing materials into file folders, I revisited each selected topic and organized the notes and photocopies topically, thematically and temporally. I then reviewed each section and typed the information, by chapter, in an orderly narrative until each comprised a coherent story.

This is the process of content analysis as described by David Gray (2004: 327-8) in which the breaking down of findings into smaller parts is revealing of a greater structure or characteristics. As he says, "Descriptions can lay the basis for analysis, but we need to go beyond description: we want to interpret, to understand and to explain. Through analysis, however, we can also gain new insights into our data. Data can be broken down into their constituent parts, and connections made between these concepts, providing the basis for new descriptions"(see also Dey, 1993: 30, cited in Gray, 2004). In this way,

describing leads to classifying, which leads to making connections. This method is very cost – effective because the data is readily available, but on the down side, we must rely on what is already there without being able to access fresh data (Gray, 2004: 329), although with much historical research, first person observation is impossible in any case. It has also been pointed out (Gray, 2004; Flick, 1998) that one danger of this type of analysis is that the conceptual structure of data analysis may obscure other possible interpretations of the data. In this case it is important to keep an open mind to alternative explanations in the data, and I hope that I have managed to accomplish this in my work.

In this research, my findings are tipped heavily toward the voices of those in governing or otherwise more active positions (i.e., the charities, social agencies, and reformers). I have very little data that comes, unfiltered, from the mouths of single mothers. This has both positive and negative consequences. While it is being delivered in this manner, it is impossible to take unwed mothers' accounts of their experiences at face value. It is, however, informative from the point of view of understanding those who are in the governing or more active position. Certainly, sticking to accessible texts for data analysis is more time and cost effective, but the voices of the unwed mothers are in short supply as a result. However, the motivations, attitudes and actions of the “regulators” were intended to be the central concern in this study, and the data on them is not in short supply. For this reason, I felt that the data that I had uncovered was more than sufficient for the present purposes. If I pursue more historical research on unwed

motherhood and societal moral regulation, uncovering first person accounts of the experiences of unwed mothers would be an appropriate starting point.

Taken together, these discourses point toward the constant work of the social construction of the single mother throughout the 20th century. The task is not to find the rightful identity position of the single mother and to correct the wrongs done to her but, rather, to find the societal positioning, or positionings, of the single mother and to dissect by whom and for what reasons she has been thus positioned in the past and in the present. Following Foucault's (1975, 1978) theoretical lead, we can place the single mother within the context of a modern society that is fundamentally capable of demanding obedience and of exercising a great deal of control over the individual, at the same time as it allows for resistance to oppression in the process of the rigidification of identity categories.

Jeffrey Weeks (2003) has discussed the role of identity in working toward a healthy state of social and sexual diversity in contemporary society. He points out that sexualities are intricately tied into social identities in such a way that, in recent western history, has "brought together class, race, gender and sexuality into a potent brew which locked normality and sexuality into a fixed hierarchy that few could escape from even if not so many lived up to it"(Weeks, 2003: 124). As queer theorists such as Judith Butler (1990a, discussed above) have also pointed out, he says that identity politics can be used (negatively) in such a way as to strengthen the dominant positions within sexual and social hierarchies. However, he makes a distinction between myths and fictions: while the dominant sexual

myths connote “naturalness, eternity and truth”, fictions “offer narratives of individual life, collective memory and imagined alternatives which provide the motivation and inspiration for change”(Weeks, 2003: 130). In short, fictions can be used as tools to challenge the dominant myths that have rigidified sexual and social hierarchies and new narratives can draw out alternative historical viewpoints that challenge the old and give hope for a more equitable and diverse future. In this way, Weeks (2003) points out that human agency can be exercised through oppositional identities that challenge dominant historical views of what is Natural, Eternal and True.

Weeks (2003) says that it is not surprising that “one of the first signs of the public emergence of new identities is the appearance of works that detail the ‘roots’ of those hitherto obscured from recorded or respectable history: history [can be] a way of legitimizing contingency”(128-9). In looking at the history of unwed single motherhood, we can, perhaps, gain insight into less dominant sides of the story, denaturalize reproductive arrangements, promote respect for differences and imagine a way that single mothers can demand dignity and social support.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

Every feminist knows that welfare is demeaning, sexist, racist, heterosexist, and stingy. It harms the people it claims to help, arranges loveless marriages between impoverished women and their governments, and, through the gaps it maintains between rhetoric and reality, turns a damning spotlight on to a society's neglect of its female and minor citizens (Kornbluh, 1996: 171).

On Proper Womanhood: Gender Roles at turn of century

From the late 1800's through to the 1920s, the early period of the current research focus, western notions of gender were polarized into specific gender roles. In order to understand the social position of the single mother throughout the 20th century, it is essential that we first understand the social position of women in general. As Chapman (1985) points out, the ideal notion of womanhood was specific to her role within the family.

In the journals and newspapers of the time, gender was often a topic for public discourse, from warnings of the vice of fashion, to the praise of womanly purity and virtue, to outlines of the role of the perfect wife and mother, to horror stories of what can go wrong if you don't follow your proper gender script. In part fueled by the suffrage movement, there was a growing interest in women at this time, and woman's proper role was an obsession about which journalists wrote prolifically and, not for the first time, "Women were told what it meant to be a woman and the proper way to behave" (Prentice et al, 1988: 111). Women's attempts at gaining rights were often reported in sarcastic tones and edged with dire warnings. One such article, in an Ontario newspaper, reviewed legislation passed in the Ontario Legislature which gave married women rights to their pre-nuptial property, to any monies earned by them, plus the right to become stockholders or members of banks, insurance companies or other corporations, as well as awarding women various other rights such as the right to hold a bank

account and to be liable for her own debts, etc. The journalist sarcastically summed up the situation at the end of the article as follows:

Who will say, after this, that women have not “equal rights” in Ontario. Oh, Woodhull, Claffin, Logan, cease your clatter! Come to the land of the free. Shake from your sandals the dust of the Republic; unite your voices in obtaining for the ladies of Ontario the right to thrash their husbands, free love, and female suffrage, and, among women, blessed indeed will be the mothers, wives, daughters, and sweethearts of the free and independent of this enlightened Province. (*Sarnia Observer*, April 26, 1872).

Similarly, an article covering an Englishwoman’s strike, held to protest the high price of meat, milk and potatoes, describes one result of the 500 woman strong protest as follows:

Groups of men were walking about, evidently waiting with great anxiety for their dinners, as none had been cooked (*Sarnia Observer*, July 19, 1872).

Fashion, or putting too much stock in looks, was considered to be an evil of the time. One newspaper article demanded the reader’s attention to the following query: “Who ever heard of a fashionable woman’s child exhibiting any virtue and power of mind for which it became eminent? Read the biographies of our men and women. None of them had a fashionable mother” (*Stratford Beacon Herald*, Nov. 1, 1872).

Stepping out of the proper female gender role could earn you the following title, “Strange Freak of Tennessee Girl” (*St. Mary’s Argus and North Middlesex*

Review, Oct. 3, 1872) involving the case of a girl who ran away from home and attired herself in boys clothing, only to be captured by police and escorted home by her father. Other reports show that women would masquerade as men in order to gain the same rights. For example, Prentice et al (1988: 119) tell of one Prairie woman who dressed up as a man after her husband's death in order to be able to continue on with her dream to raise horses and have access to public lands to do so.

As a poem printed in the *Hamilton Spectator* (July 24, 1871) demonstrates, woman's role at the time was to be a helpful, supportive, submissive wife:

But always seem cheerful and happy,
And always look pleasant and gay;
Than a frown there is nothing more potent
In driving a husband away.
And thus you must ever keep striving;
You'll find it an excellent plan'
But whatever you do, dear, remember
That your husband is only a man.

At the turn of the 20th century, women in the Canadian West were hard working and capable, many of whom worked in tandem with husbands or fathers on the family farm. They were also the first women in the country to gain the vote: the provincial enfranchisement of women in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1916 came about as the result of a long campaign by western women (Prentice et al., 1988: 207). Nevertheless, women did not, to any notable degree, challenge their lack of social and sexual autonomy at this time. Indeed, middle class women's organizations often reinforced the male-defined notions of true and

proper womanhood. Both socially and legally accepted notions of what constituted women's appropriate behavior was tied to the idea of woman's "proper sphere" within the home and marriage (Chapman 1985; Cook and Mitchenson, 1976). Women's role was to be a good, modest, wife and mother, and to keep their somewhat unruly (but understandably so) husbands in line. The ideal path for a woman, that which alone would lead to happiness, was to get married, have children, and maintain a home. When a woman worked outside of the home for pay, she was expected to stop at the time of marriage: "Consequently, for the majority of Canadian women, the words marriage and career were synonymous" (Chapman, 1985: 1), your marriage *was* your career.

Illicit sexual activity – defined as seduction, birth control, abortion, degrees of wife beating, bigamy, infanticide, prostitution – were regulated by the law and by society alike. Sex outside of the sanctity of marriage was viewed as being unnatural and a sure path to misery; not having children within marriage was viewed as a prescription for divorce. In short, the institution of marriage provided the legally and socially sanctioned framework within which women's activities of all sorts (sexual, economic, and personal) were regulated and controlled by individual men.

It was largely middle class morality that revolved around the upholding of the sanctity of the marital institution and, as a consequence, a woman who acted outside of the bounds of these rules was looked upon harshly by society. Women

were divided into two groups: good and bad. Indeed, women were expected to be sexually passive, being acted upon by their husbands, and for purposes of reproduction. Displays of female sexual agency were not acceptable. As Linda Gordon (1977: 22) has pointed out, women's sexual choice came down to that between motherhood and prostitution. That is, sexual activity that stood apart from the role of motherhood was deemed prostitution. At the time, then, appropriate sex was marital sex that occurred for the purposes of reproduction: "Women were taught that sex was something to be endured in order to propagate the race and men were taught to control their ever lurking sexual passions" (Chapman, 1985: 4). Choice, within this context, was reduced to being a euphemism for delinquent behaviour.

While situations such as pregnancy out of wedlock did occur at this time, they were deemed to be serious offences. Indeed, an event such as an unwed pregnancy undermined society's most strongly held moral values – those of marriage, motherhood, and family life (Chapman, 1985). More to the point, it undermined the entire framework that was set in place to control the sexuality of women and to ensure women's dependence upon men.

During the late 19th and early part of the 20th centuries, women's movements became more prevalent and vocal. The National Council of Women of Canada was formed during this period, providing an umbrella organization to unite the women's groups of the nation (Prentice et al, 1988). The women's movements

responded to the nationalism and imperialism of the time. Groups such as the Imperial Daughters of the Empire were formed during the late 1800s in support of Canadian troops overseas. Many women shared a concern with supporting Britain, with militant views that involved nativism and eugenics. Some women, although not all (notably, socialist women), shared the concern over the strengthening of Canada as a significant part of the British Empire. Underpinning the “patriotism” of many women’s groups was the popularization of Darwin’s views on evolution, especially the “truth” of natural sex differences.

The 19th century notion of Separate Spheres was a widely held ideology, and one that women were up against if they were to enter the work force with any strength at all. It was not until WWI that it slowly became acceptable for a woman, other than working class or farm women, to work outside of the home before marriage and a small, elite group were beginning to forge lifelong careers (Prentice et al, 1988). At the same time there was a great alarm that women were abandoning their proper domestic sphere, and that the country would suffer as a result: “Since motherhood was so inextricably linked to the image of the ideal woman, it was with great consternation that many realized that women were apparently abandoning this role and having fewer children” (Prentice et al, 1988: 143). This consternation was often shared by the reforming middle class women who made up the majority of the members of the various women’s movements.

Feminist and welfare scholars have developed a considerable amount of historical and contemporary investigative research in the areas of reproduction and

motherhood, particularly in terms of charitable assistance, often done by women, parental instruction and welfare provision. No project which focuses on society's views and treatment of mothers is complete without a comprehensive consideration of this research as it applies to mothers in general and single mothers specifically. Below is a review of some of the most valuable, pertinent work done in this field. But first, it is necessary to outline the major historical changes in legal and cultural stances toward social welfare in Canada.

In the early 1900s, a drastic change occurred in the way in which family poverty was approached (Christie, 2000; Rice and Prince, 2000; Guest, 1980). Prior to this period, and following in line with the old British and French Poor Laws, "poverty was considered in all quarters as exclusively the outcome of flaws in individual moral character"(Christie, 2000: 116). Poverty was seen as a result of drunkenness, laziness, immorality, or other such "personal" flaws. As Dennis Guest points out, "[p]erhaps it is not surprising that in a society where the liberal, individualistic values dominated, where the life and living conditions of the colonists owed so much to personal effort and initiative, individualistic explanations of poverty should abound" (Guest, 1980: 16). Between colonial times and the 1900s, it was up to local family and charity groups to assist individuals or families in need. This changed as social life changed: as people left their farms for towns and cities and they left behind the social network of families and local communities that had been their support prior to mass urbanization.

With urbanization, lifestyles and individual problems changed. Issues such as health, sanitation, delinquency, children's care and poverty became more serious and more obvious. As such, new sources of dealing with these problems became a necessity and municipal governments turned to provincial, and eventually federal, governments for support (Rice and Prince, 2000: 34-40). In the 1880s, the urban reform movement began, in which the new urban community began to argue for an organic interdependence and collective source for solving social problems (Guest, 1980: 30). This movement represented a move away from the laissez faire attitudes toward social problems and towards the collectivism we eventually see in Canada (Guest, 1980: 31). Between 1914 and the 1930s, governments expanded their roles:

New programs and organizational structures introduced into one province were soon copied or adapted in several other provinces and then followed by the rest, often with a lag of ten to twenty years. This pattern of social policy innovation, diffusion, time lag, and convergences was to be repeated numerous times throughout the twentieth century. (Rice and Prince, 2000: 40).

As the population grew and as Canadians began to encounter great strife, in the form of war and depression, poverty and struggle became much more commonplace:

Canadian women were at the forefront in disengaging concepts of poverty from immorality. Their campaign on behalf of respectable motherhood gained particular force after demobilization, in the wake of the slaughter on the battlefields, when it was tragically demonstrated how widowhood and desertion ignored class boundaries...As the problem of poverty began to reach the 'average family', the notion that immorality and poverty were linked lost much of its sway (Christie, 2000: 119-20).

The great depression in particular stripped away the old notions of individualism and ushered in a new 'social contract' under which people believed that government could and should play a vital role in leadership, protection and assistance in helping individuals in times of need (Rice and Prince, 2000: 48). After the Second World War, these ideas became more entrenched and the modern welfare state developed (Rice and Prince, 2000: 55).

Despite this progressiveness, the link between female poverty and immorality remained strongly linked and was well ingrained within the provincial children's aid societies (Christie, 2000:120). While widowed mothers were long seen as worthy recipients of aid, they were only one part of the larger single parent population of women who were unmarried, deserted or otherwise left alone. This situation was exacerbated by urbanization as well:

The anonymity of city life weakened the informal sanctions operating in small, closely knit communities to reduce the incidence of family breakup and to remind husbands and wives of their responsibilities to one another and to their children. By drawing more women into the labour force, industrialization broke down the conventional male-female roles, while the economic security of the breadwinner, now increasingly both male and female, was made dependent upon the state of a labour market which fluctuated unpredictably. Divorce became more common, as did desertion (the poor man's divorce), leaving many women and children without financial support"(Guest, 1980: 49).

This situation predicated an interest in child welfare in the United States and helped to fuel the mothers' pensions movement both there and in Canada (Guest,

1980: 49-50). Fear of the loss of the nation's youth during WWI and the Influenza breakout in 1918 also fueled concern for single mother families (Guest, 1980: 50-51). Mothers' Pensions were also helped along by the granting of the franchise to women both federally in 1918 and in some of the provinces (Guest, 1980: 51).

The Mothers' Pension movement represents a move away from the stigma attached to traditional poor relief and toward relief based on entitlement because of the status of being a mother (Guest, 1980: 51)¹⁵. This explains why the private charities were against such provisions: "Behind this opposition...lay the deeply held conviction that unless the dispensing of outdoor relief [opposed to "indoor relief" within an institution] was carefully controlled, the initiative and independence of the poor would be undermined. The mothers' pensions concept not only represented a major expansion of outdoor relief, but it created the expectation among poor families headed by women that they were entitled to receive help"(Guest, 1980: 52). Guest points out that in the Canadian west, where the private charities were not as well established, the mothers' pensions were more quickly implemented, Alberta being one of the first (Guest, 1980: 217, note 12)¹⁶. The British Columbia Mothers' Pension Act was passed in 1920, with a great deal of popular support, in the same year as women were granted the vote (Guest, 1980: 53-4).

¹⁵ This translates to a distinction between "pensions", or relief purportedly based on entitlement, and "allowances" based on a, purportedly undeserved, charitable hand out. In this way, the language itself becomes very political.

¹⁶ Guest cites the following sources: British Columbia, *Report on Mothers' Pensions*, (Victoria, 1920) pT4; and "Canadian Cavalcade", *Supplement to Child and Family Welfare* 11, no. 1 (May 1935): 23.

The view that financial support for single mothers must be accompanied by investigation and supervision in order to be effective was a remarkable tenet of the social work movement in the 1920s (Guest, 1980: 52). Such a view supported the rise of an entire profession whose job was to assess eligibility and deservedness for financial assistance. The opposing view, of those who supported the mothers' pensions as a matter of entitlement, "defined the problem more in terms of mass poverty arising from a complex of social and economic conditions quite beyond the control of the individual family" (Guest, 1980: 52).

In 1931, the government of British Columbia asked the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare to review the Mothers' Pension Act. The executive director of the Council, Charlotte Whitton, held traditional private charity attitudes, namely that too many people were receiving assistance. She recommended, among other things, that the name be changed from a "pension" to an "allowance" and that it be moved from underneath the administration of workers' compensation, to the welfare department, stripping the recipients of their status and worthiness (Guest, 1980: 57)¹⁷. In short, the effect of the report was to significantly cut back the aid going to mothers and children in need. This attack on the mothers' pensions in BC had strong ideological undertones: "The opposition of the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare to a widening of social security protection in British Columbia in 1931 marked the continuation of

¹⁷ Guest cites the Whitton report: British Columbia, Provincial Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Report on the Administration of Mothers' Pensions in British Columbia 1920-1 to 130-1: Summary of Findings and Recommendations, [n.d.] ppgs, 21,1,49,42-45, 26 and 17.

a traditional commitment by private welfare agencies to the values of individualism and localism” (Guest, 1980: 58).

In the early 20th Century, there was a lack of emphasis on individual rights when it came to single mothers (Christie, 2000: 122). Individualism was cast in terms of duties. Because of this, motherhood was an issue, not due to political action to help these individual women, but because it was understood that the nation was at risk if these babies were not properly taken care of (Christie, 2000: 122-125). For this reason, Christie (2000) argues, the male breadwinner role was upheld, and female social reformers went as far as forging alliances with organized labour and fighting for a (male) family wage. This goes a long way in explaining why women in need were given a modicum of financial support without there being any widespread feminist institutional change being won.

Motherhood, Maternalism, and the State

Many authors have argued that welfare policies grew out of charity work done largely by middle class women, especially middle class Protestant women, who wanted to preserve their own class interests in the face of the immigrant influx. These middle class reformers and philanthropists hoped to persuade other ethnic groups and economic classes to adopt their own ideals of cleanliness and morality. However, as Gordon (1988) asserted, specifically in cases that involved abusive

relationships, clients were also active in seeking help from charitable sources, and workers were not simply meddlesome and controlling of “weak” individuals:

In their struggles to escape the control of a patriarchal family, women not only used the professions and the state but helped build them. The social work/social control establishment did not arise out of the independent agenda of the ruling class, or even of the middle class. Rather it developed out of conflicts that had gender and generational as well as class “sides” (Gordon, 1988: 296).

Smith (1997) examined the activities of social workers in the inter-war American south and points out that home visits and attempts to improve home life was an important focus of welfare reform for black mothers. Most of this social work centred on the teaching of modern home economics skills surrounding cleanliness, food preparation, necessary daily habits, etc. The goal of these reformers was to raise the standards of poor black women:

[The social workers] believed that it was necessary to involve themselves in the most private family and household details of the so-called ignorant lower class. They attempted to enrich the lives of the poor through inculcating habits of consumption and middle-class manners (Smith, 1997: 54).

While such intervention may be viewed as a type of meddlesome moral regulation, Smith (1997) pointed out that the rationale for such home projects was to bolster the current living standards among poor black families. This, in turn, would lend support to arguments in favour of black entitlement and justify demands for further programs designed to improve housing, health and education in these communities. Whilst recognizing that such charity work could be considered ethnocentric and geared toward cultural integration, there were

nevertheless tangible, positive outcomes of their efforts. It is clearly unfair to charge all such reformers as acting out of malevolent, as opposed to genuinely charitable, intentions.

Nevertheless, there is also much evidence that this concern over the children was one based largely on a social control strategy, wherein they believed that changing the childrearing practices of the mothers and socializing the children on the basis of their own value systems would result in benefits for the society as a whole. Indeed, many American charity workers held out aid as a reward for immigrant and poor mothers who would allow their children to be “Americanized”, and had the power to refuse aid to those who did not conform to their standards of motherly behavior (Gordon, 1994: 46).

Attempts to influence or control maternal practices and behavior were not a uniquely American phenomenon. The Ontario Mothers’ Allowance (OMA) social workers, working under the authority of legislation passed in 1920, that Little (1998) examined were involved heavily in the moral policing of poor single mothers. While many methods have been used to monitor the behaviour of single mothers, one notable example is captured by the title of Little’s book, that is, “no car, no radio, no liquor permit”, to indicate that single mothers receiving financial support should depict themselves as both needy and morally upstanding in order to continue receiving financial support.

Outside of the realm of welfare provision itself, Katherine Arnup (1994) found that there was a virtual barrage of governmental and media advice given to Canadian mothers in the early decades of the 20th century:

New standards of mothering, based largely on an Anglo-Saxon, middle-class family model, attempted to dictate a way of life for modern mothers and their children (Arnup, 1994: 117).

“Educational” campaigns or “child-saving” initiatives like these were a form of “social control as well as charity” (Gordon, 1994: 44). The largely female reformers may have ‘had their hearts in the right place’ so to speak, and many genuinely beneficial measures were implemented. At the same time, it is clear that many of their attempts to help were also laden with race and class bias.

The success of the early maternalist reformers, particularly the white women reformers, in advocating and establishing welfare policies for single mothers was fraught with contradictions. As Gordon (1994: 142) pointed out, they were successful at assisting women in their homes, but were sufficiently wary of female independence, that their successes superceded any greater goals that first wave feminism could, potentially, have aimed at attaining, such as workplace supports and equal wages. In the end – and we can see the evidence of this even today – aid based on a sense of real “entitlement” was defeated. Then and now, welfare programs aimed at single mothers tend to provide financial assistance that is consistently below subsistence levels, that offer narrow eligibility criteria, and that lend large discretionary powers to the welfare workers. Contemporary politics

seem to guarantee that this situation is only worsening. This leaves poor single mothers with no money, power, or dignity, within a highly stratified modern society that provides no platform on which these women could propel themselves into self- subsistence. All in all, the welfare system, as it has evolved, could more readily be described as middle-class condescension rather than as a victory for the single mother and other poor people.

Ladd-Taylor & Hagemann (1997) referred to the institutionalization of such social control strategies as “social rationalization”, a process that they observed and described occurring in the United States and Germany in the 20th century. For them, social rationalization is:

...the organized efforts by employers, the state, and private agencies, as well as less formal mechanisms such as marketing and advertising, to structure the living and working conditions of ordinary people in planned and systematic ways (Ladd-Taylor & Hagemann, 1997: 1).

The concept of social rationalization can be applied to a wide range of social-political issues. Indeed it is similar to the notion of hegemonic heterosexuality in which a program of nation building, encompassing the whole of social life from conformity to middle class sensibilities, consumerism, capitalism and gender norms forming a unified, coherent whole reaching toward the rational goal of a smoothly functioning society. In this context we can see that the “moral regulation” of single mothers is but one instance of social rationalization.

Historically, social rationalization was in part predicated upon pronatalist ideologies that were based on strict gender roles that influenced both the private and the public sphere. Pronatalism was a widespread and influential force that impacted upon paid and unpaid (domestic and childcare) labour, sexuality and reproduction and the attendant gender roles, as well as more cultural phenomenon such as standards of housing, leisure and capitalist consumption (Ladd-Taylor & Hagemann, 1997). It is evident that social rationalization was influential and that the moral regulation that many scholars have observed in relation to single motherhood is a part of this larger program which became established with the modernization of the welfare state. Beyond the issue of individual agency, the work being done by the middle-class female reformers must be understood within this context.

The concept of “social rationalization” reinforces the important point about single motherhood, that it is to be understood within the context of larger social processes such as the workings of racial, class and political power, some of which we have touched on already. While gender is acknowledged as an important factor in much of the scholarship, it is also at times subordinated to, or buttressed by other forms of social stratification. It is clear that female deviance is not a clear-cut case of good versus bad women.

Studies show that mothers’ allowances were meted out on the basis of moral deservedness that ran along various lines of social categorization (Little, 1998;

Gordon, 1994: 51-2; 298-9). For instance, a woman who had been married but who lost her husband to death was deemed deserving of state support, whereas a never married woman was not.

When it comes to public assistance, single mothers have historically been divided up by marital status, specifically as widows, as deserted women, as unmarried, 'illegitimate' mothers or, rarely, as divorced women (Gordon, 1988: 89; Gordon, 1994: 51-2; 298-9). The distinction in status is important, as some of these categories of women were deemed more deserving than others. In general, single motherhood was viewed as being a serious contributor to social breakdown and, further, it was argued that financial assistance would contribute to this degeneracy by allowing and supporting further cases of family breakdown. This group has, throughout the last century, continued to be viewed as both the cause and the effect of larger moral concerns (Little, 1998; Fox-Piven, 1995).

Perceptions of moral deservedness are also related to race and ethnicity. These perceptions shift as the emphasis placed on race, ethnicity and class, are geographically and historically specific and somewhat variable. Nevertheless, single mothers who fall into any of these social categories where social power is at a minimum are bound to be most harshly regarded.

Maternalism and Class Bias

In examining the origins of social structures such as the welfare state, it is important to look at the role of historical actors (Little, 1998). Feminist researchers have been interested in the degree to which women were involved with and shaped the welfare state – particularly in relation to the care of other women. Numerous issues emerge from the feminist welfare state literature in relation to women as historical actors. It is clear that charitable and activist women were an integral part of the provision of support for women in need and, more specifically, for single mothers. There has been enormous debate surrounding the motivations of bourgeois women activists (Little, 1998; Brush, 1996; Lewis, 1994; Skocpol, 1992). Particularly important in this debate has been the relationship between feminism and maternalism and the utility of revitalizing maternalism within feminist work (Brush, 1996). Brush defined “maternalism” as:

... arguments that support women’s personhood and claims to integrity, autonomy, dignity, security, and political voice on the basis of what Molly Ladd-Taylor calls mother-work. Maternalists claim entitlements to citizenship rights and benefits on the basis of mother-work as a source of women’s political personhood (Brush, 1996: 430).

Feminist approaches to welfare systems which utilize the concept of maternalism have yielded contradictory results. While, on the one hand, maternalism seems to have benefited women and contributed to female power and agency, at other times it has resulted in elevating children’s rights over and above those of women. In addition, reformers have often gravitated toward alliances with nationalistic and

racist agendas, and have reinforced gendered inequalities and contributed to women's subordination (Brush, 1996). Clearly, many women activists were bound by race and class alliances, and the very fact that many of these women had the means, time and connections to effectively work toward the reform of societal institutions and of other women, is a clear indication that they were working from a position of some power.

Questions arise as to whose interests the maternalists were working towards and in what ways their own alliances – as well as their personal lives – influenced their activism. Research bears out the fact that there was, in many cases, a great distance between what these women adopted in their own lives and the stringent conventional morality they thought appropriate for the women they sought to help. There was frequently little solidarity between privileged and poor women (Lewis, 1994).

Ladd-Taylor (1994) discussed feminist efforts in the U.S. in the 1920s, that broke from earlier “sentimentalist” and “progressive” maternalist efforts. The maternalist feminists attempted to protect women and children through the welfare state and other educational or charitable measures, on the understanding that women were unique or special based on secondary sex characteristics. The new feminists of the 1920s, on the other hand, supported women's rights to autonomy and economic independence and challenged the view of womanhood based on women's special sphere within the home and their dependence upon

men. However, the efforts of this latter group were less successful than the efforts of the maternalists – who were supportive of and instrumental in the establishment of mothers’ pensions and who frowned upon women’s activities outside of the home – and failed both to mobilize the collective activism of women and to implement legal changes. This, Ladd-Taylor (1994) argued, was a result of a lack of class power. Many of these women were pacifists and socialists and were working on behalf of their class interests (including the interests of working class men) as well as in the interest of women’s rights. Without a strong political voice, these working class feminists, operating on a platform of women’s rights, simply were not successful (Ladd-Taylor, 1994; Brush, 1996).

Similarly, Canadian Cynthia Comacchio (1993) discussed public health campaigns in Ontario between 1900 and 1940 with a view to class interests within a capitalist society. While it has been argued that Comacchio did not go far enough in her analysis of maternalism in relation to class relations by not pursuing the class privilege of female activists, she did make inroads into the health and poverty issues inherent in capitalist industrialization, pointing out that the interests of some (doctors, capitalists) overrode the interests of others (women and children), arguing that this shaped the public view of motherhood and that it shows how women have been used to cover up the public health hazards of the capitalist system (Comacchio, 1993; Brush, 1996). Furthermore, she argued that nationalistic agendas, or the desire to construct the strongest nation possible, led to strong pronatalist policies (Comacchio, 1993; Howe, 1996). The control of

motherhood was targeted as the means to ensure that Canada's full promise as a nation would be attained in the future (Howe, 1996). Comacchio's (1993) work highlights the way in which nationalistic agendas, directed by the power elite, have had widespread cultural repercussions on women's roles in general and mothering and reproductive practices in particular.

In Linda Gordon's (1994) work *Pitied But Not Entitled*, as well as her (1988) work, *Heroes of Their Own Lives*, she examined single motherhood, social charity and the rise of the welfare state in the United States in the early 20th century. She pointed out (1994: 3) that the assumption that women marry, are supported by, and remain under the care of their husbands, is an almost universal assumption of state welfare programs. This creates a unique situation for single mothers who are on social welfare because they do not fit into the normative family mold, producing a disjuncture between their life circumstances and the assistance that is provided for them.

Gordon (1994: 24-35) explained that the concept of single motherhood as we know it arose during the first two decades of the 20th century, with social reformers creating alarm over what they described to be a significant social problem. In the early decades of the 1900's, social reformers argued that single mothers were both cause of and result of social breakdown. Coupled with this concern over increasing numbers of single mothers and of social breakdown in general, came the concern that providing welfare would only contribute to, and

not alleviate, the problem. With the decreased public visibility of the women's movement during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, public discourse surrounding single motherhood declined. While many issues surrounding the "single mother problem" are different now than they were then, there are some similarities. One unifying concern was the idea of a linkage between family and social breakdown. Some social commentators during the early and middle part of the century believed that supporting single mothers would only lead to more of the same; that is, more divorce, more out of wedlock births, more single motherhood. As Gordon rightly pointed out, this fear is telling in the fact that it reveals the underlying perspective that "proper families must be enforced precisely because they do not always come 'naturally' and are not always inherently desirable" (Gordon, 1994: 34). Single motherhood, then, is an ideological problem because it deviates from the nuclear family form, whose hegemony depends upon a public perception of naturalness, and there is a resultant panic when it is assumed to be out of control as evidenced by single mother rates. The same arguments under debate in the early 1900s recur in contemporary debates:

...concerns about how to help single mothers without encouraging single motherhood and about the proper role of women, as well as the most fundamental questions about what entitles a person to help. Who is deserving? Who should be required to work for wages? What if wages are too low? Does the state have an obligation to police the behavior of those who receive public funds? What is entitlement, and what is charity? (Gordon, 1994: 37).

Current debates have historic roots in the pioneering of the welfare state and a concern for single mothers. No one was more concerned with such altruistic issues than white middle-class women and the maternalist reformers who worked diligently in the service of helping poor women and children and in establishing aid policies for them. Central to the concern of maternalist reformers and legislators was the connection between single motherhood and citizenship.

Gender and Citizenship

The concept of social citizenship is a development peculiar to the twentieth century. It is linked to the development of the welfare state, and it plays an essential role in social democracy in capitalist societies. T.H. Marshall (1965), as well as contemporary mainstream welfare analysts, focused on the economically independent worker as the subject of social provisions (Benoit, 2000). In this context, the wage earner/ breadwinner/ citizen is almost always, either implicitly or explicitly, male (Pateman, 1988; Benoit, 2000): “The assumption remains that economic independence is essential for full citizenship and that employment is the chief distinctive feature of the [male] worker”(Benoit, 2000: 21)

Feminist welfare scholars highlight the gendered nature of welfare provision, pointing out that sexuality, reproduction, and women’s unique caring roles hamper their ability to participate fully in the economy and civil society (Jones, 1990). Many women, therefore, are not full citizens in the same way that men are

and this places them at a disadvantage in welfare states in which provisions and policies are oriented toward citizens (Benoit, 2000).

Feminist scholars (Fraser, 1989; Sainsbury, 1993; Baker, 1995; Christie, 2000) have pointed out that there is a two-tiered welfare system in western states. One tier is geared toward individuals (workers), while the other is geared toward households and their failure to secure a male breadwinner (Fraser, 1989). In Canada, the origins of this system lie in 20th century shifts in the focus of welfare initiatives away from entitlements based on reproduction to a view of welfare citizenship based on the rights of male workers (Christie, 2000: for example, p.4). This shift, beginning at the onset of World War One and well entrenched within the development of the modern social security state in the 1940s, was based on fears of the breakdown of the family (Christie, 2000). There was an emphasis on supporting the male breadwinner, who in turn was to support his dependents. Thus, there was a preoccupation with defending the role of the male breadwinner in both the private and the public sphere. While this had implications for women's status in relation to the state, it also shaped male gender roles. In response to what was perceived to be a growing problem of male breadwinners not fulfilling their proper duties, the breadwinner role was promoted:

Because these culturally constructed male citizenship rights were in turn predicated on a conception of masculinity which stated that a man's primary duty was to work in order to sufficiently maintain his wife and children, they effectively barred women – especially married women – from independent access to welfare entitlements (Christie, 2000:5).

This shift reinforced what came to be defined as the “traditional” nuclear family and its attendant gender roles. The focus on the breadwinner ideal emerged during the First World War and took full sway when working class wives lobbied for state support during the absence of their soldier husbands. During the Great Depression, this trend was reinforced as the overwhelming problem was seen to be the lack of male jobs and this was thought to threaten social stability. This is the other side of the coin to fears of single motherhood threatening social stability. In other words, the perception is that a stable society is predicated on women being dependent upon men who are breadwinners.

In this context, welfare initiatives focused on the rights of male workers rather than social provisions such as Mother’s Allowances that are tied to women’s rights in the home. During the Second World War, women again lobbied the state for family supports during male soldier absence. This informed the creation of the family allowance system enacted in 1944, again bolstering the view that male breadwinners had a responsibility to their dependents: a role which the state fulfils in their absence (Christie, 2000: 48).

In short, the welfare system in Canada, as well as in other western states, was never designed to foster female independence. Social support for women and their children has not been based on women’s economic rights within the home but, rather, on the rights of the male worker. Priority has been placed on male

citizenship rights. This is a grave commentary on the rights and status of women in our country and on the type of treatment and respect that they are entitled to. Women, situated as dependents in the eye of the welfare state, simply do not have equal citizenship rights. Because of this, poor women, including many female heads of household, particularly those dependent upon welfare, are not adequately provided for and are subject to regulation by the state.

In sum, both on an ideological and a legal level, women do not have full citizenship rights. In the first place, women are viewed as being confined within particular gender norms and roles situated within the private sphere, under the head of the husband, who is viewed as being the protector and provider. This cultural ideal is institutionalized within the modern social welfare state. Women are not entitled to an adequate living and lifestyle because of their perceived, unique position within the home, they are subject to substandard (in comparison with male/worker based welfare initiatives such as veteran and employment benefits) compensation that secures a position for them which is below the poverty line. To illustrate, consider that the average weekly Canadian employment benefit in 2003 was \$293.63¹⁸, whereas the maximum amount of social assistance afforded a single parent with 2 children in British Columbia is currently \$203.37 per week¹⁹. According to research performed by Sainsbury (1993), in the countries which she examined (U.S, UK, Sweden and the Netherlands), the two tiers of a dual welfare system differ in respect to benefit

¹⁸ Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM, table 276-0016, last modified 2004-09-06.

¹⁹ I calculated this figure by punching various numbers (rent, heat, hydro and utilities) into the Government of British Columbia's Online Income Assistance Estimator.

levels, work incentives, political legitimacy of the recipient, visibility and support, level of administration and the intervention into the private lives of recipients (Sainsbury, 1993; Baker, 1995: 91). Insofar as rights and citizenship go hand in hand – that is, insofar as an essential element of citizenship is the allocation of rights – the two-tiered welfare system defines women as lesser or even non-citizens.

While the state may step in and play the (partial) economic role of the “father” in the family – and while it may play a moral, regulatory role in this capacity – it is nevertheless clear that it does not intend to fully compensate for the absence of the patriarch. The state certainly does not intend to support a woman to such a degree that a woman on her own, as head of household, could operate as if she had resources that served as adequate replacement for a male head of household.

While the state and the public may not view single women as full citizens or as adequate heads of household, there is evidence to suggest that single mothers have often exhibited a degree of dignity despite their position, fighting to retain their rights to raise their children on their own. Much debate surrounds the issue of how much agency women exercised in structuring support for single mothers, but Gordon, in the U.S., clearly attributed agency to single mothers, as they fought for their right for support:

The behavior of these single mothers ... demonstrates another major theme: that the clients were not merely passive recipients of

help, advice, or punishment, not merely manipulated, but also manipulators, active in attempting to get help according to their own values and goals (Gordon, 1988: 83).

Gordon (1988) pointed out that single mothers were infringing upon the 19th century view of women as “natural” mothers. If women did not mother well, according to the standards of the charitable child protectors, this was not viewed as a result of social deprivation or environmental obstacles but, rather, as a character flaw in the mother. Indeed, in this early period, single mothers were regarded as being permanently, genetically flawed (Solinger, 1992) – an essential point that made them vulnerable to the agenda of the eugenics movement. There was much opposition to the establishment of mother’s pensions or other measures of assistance. Social workers wanted to abolish the class of single mothers and financial support of these families was viewed as promoting single motherhood. Nevertheless, single, poverty stricken mothers pushed their case for assistance, demanding support, most often in the form of separation and maintenance orders. Not only is the record of such demands indicative of women’s agency at the time, but it also shows the degree to which they viewed themselves as independent heads of household:

These requests reveal something crucial about the single-mother ‘problem’: most of the women did not want husbands. This is not to say that they sought out single motherhood; most of them had been married. Rather, they often appeared embittered and exhausted from the efforts of holding together a two-parent family...(Gordon, 1988: 105).

Women, whom the charity workers believed were indifferent or hostile toward their children, would nevertheless fiercely refuse to let the authorities remove their children. Thus, even where incompetence (or perceived incompetence) on a mother's part was observed, these mothers wanted to be with their children. Evidently, these women felt that they had the right to raise their children by themselves and that they deserved societal support to do so.

This is not to say that single mothers were completely successful in their attempts to take control over their lives. While many women may have rebelled against social expectations of them, there were real constraints placed on their behavior and on their attempts to survive. The seriousness of these constraints is evidenced in the penalty for breaching such codes of conduct – removal of the child. As Gordon (1988: 94) pointed out, only one factor, beyond single motherhood itself, was a better predictor of child removal in the early part of the 20th century, and that was poverty. Poverty, of course, often went hand in hand with single motherhood. Another factor that contributed to a single mother being labeled as an “unfit mother” was the presence of a boarder in the home to earn money, with allegations of a sexual relationship with such an individual being very damaging indeed (Gordon, 1988: 97). The most lucrative home based work that a woman could engage in were the very jobs which were illegal, such as prostitution and bootlegging, but which many single mothers engaged in nevertheless (Ibid: 97). To be caught engaging in these activities was also to garner an almost automatic charge of child neglect (Ibid: 97).

The issues of child neglect and single motherhood go hand in hand. Standards for adequate parenting have been based on the nuclear family ideal and supports put in place have been arranged around the assumption of a family being a two-parent family with a male breadwinner present. As Gordon (1988) and others have observed, social financial support, available, adequate, affordable day care options, and women's wages are still inadequate for promoting the appropriate conditions for raising children. This creates a situation in which women who have children are dependent upon men in order to survive:

A lack of social support for single mothers makes marriage coercive. If mothers must be supported by men to be good mothers, then it would appear that good mothering is dependent on women being dependent; yet child protectors know that women's dependency on men is likely to promote family violence (Gordon, 1988: 113).

Personal Agency, Social Structural Power and Immorality

On the Canadian scene, Little (1998) offered a view of the development of the welfare state in which women were (and are) given little agency in terms of their own lives. In *'No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit': The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997*, Little outlined the origins of the Ontario Mothers' Allowance policy, its principal actors, and practices. While Little may not have intentionally downplayed the role of OMA clients in forging a fair policy

for themselves (Little, 1998, 1999) this has more to do with lack of historical evidence detailing the feelings and perspectives of the single mothers themselves:

Little painstakingly relates how maternal feminist ideology, combined with bourgeois women's sentiments of racial and class superiority, firmly planted the roots of a policy that was less meliorative for single mothers than restrictive and regulatory (Dobrowolsky, 2000: 149).

Setting aside the issue of the women affected acting for their own benefit, it is clear that middle and upper class women fought to secure economic support for single mothers and, importantly, that this work provided a political arena for women who previously had no political voice. According to Little's research (1998), this newfound power of middle and upper class white women was established at the cost of less fortunate women (Dobrowolsky, 2000).

The discursive context that middle and upper class reformers operated in, as Little's research documents, illustrates the pervasiveness of hegemonic moral categories that are a result of the naturalization of forms of sexuality and reproduction. This is *power*, the power to make ideology look like nature. For example, Kunzel (1993) applied the analysis of the "fallen woman" to the single mother. Fallen women are those who fall outside of normative womanhood, like the prostitute. She examined maternity home policies in the United States and the fight for control between evangelical Protestant volunteers and the newly forming professional social workers (Kornbluh, 1996).

In the homes for unwed mothers that were set up by evangelical women reformers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, single mothers were viewed as basically good, but victims of male sexuality. Through an ethic of sisterhood, these Christian ladies sought to reform unwed mothers. The Evangelical reformers encouraged unwed mothers to keep their babies, thereby advancing what Kunzel called a “potentially radical alternative to the patriarchal family”(33; quoted in Ladd-Taylor, 1995: 178). In short, they wanted to redeem the “fallen woman”.

Chambers (2007) examined the Ontario Children of Unmarried Parents Act from 1921-1969, and found that common-law or “informal” marriage was practiced extensively, even in the earlier parts of the twentieth century, as an alternative to divorce and remarriage in working class communities. This was another route to single motherhood, as these unions broke up, off of the official record.

With the onset of the professionalization of social work, however, the maternity home became a battleground of ideologies, with social workers redefining unwed mothers as problem girls, stressing their unfitness for motherhood, and encouraging adoption of babies born out of wedlock. The professionalization of social work ushered in a fundamental shift in the way that unwed mothers were viewed and in the way that those in the helping positions dealt with these women and babies. While this shift did not remain constant from the early part of the 20th century to present, Ladd-Taylor pointed out that “many aspects of the early social work approach influence attitudes and policies today”(1995: 178).

In Canada, Andree Levesque has also studied a religious-based institution that predated the professionalization of social work. Her book, *Making And Breaking The Rules: Women in Quebec, 1919-1939* (1994), is a study of the degree to which actual female behaviour deviates from the norms laid out by those with moral and social power (the church, the State, the medical establishment) and enforced by the power structure's agents and institutions. Levesque dissected the ways in which male power and privilege delineate female behaviour and roles, thereby controlling women for their own benefit and at the same time illustrating the way such power is resisted. Levesque examined the structures of oppression from the vantage point of those who do not, for whatever reason, conform to the strictures of proper feminine behaviour and sexuality. Levesque discussed the criminal behaviour, illegal use of contraception and prostitution of those subjected to moral regulation.

In 1920s and 1930s Quebec, the patriarchal family was the cornerstone of society. Unwed pregnancy was a disgrace, proof that daughters were not being adequately controlled and guarded. The solution was to hide the problem. The unwed mother was removed from view, sent off to be reformed and placed back into society once the "crime" was dealt with:

Concealing both the pregnancy and the child was the only way in which she might hope to resume a 'normal' life, to marry and to become a mother once again, but this time in the only approved way (Levesque, 1994: 116).

Levesque (1994: 101) examined the archival records of the Hopital de la Misericorde in Montreal and Quebec City, where approximately 40 per cent of all births to unwed mothers, province wide, took place during the 1920s and the 1930s. These women were largely a deprived group, as evidenced by their poor health and their need of medical services. Their numbers averaged at over one thousand births in a given year during this period. Upper class women who had unwanted pregnancies were dealt with in private clinics and establishments.

For the less privileged, once inside the hospital, which they signed themselves into, these women were subject to an erasure of identity, large amounts of labour and discipline, and were treated as sinners, minors (despite the fact that over half of them were above the age of 21) or even criminals. The absent father was often referred to by the nuns who ran the facilities as the “accomplice”; the mother was called the “penitent”(cited in Levesque, 1994: 104, from the Archives of the Hopital de la Misericorde, AHM). These terms are informative in reference to the attitudes held toward unwed motherhood in this time and place. The inmates were given new names upon entrance into the institution. These were either bizarre, uncommon names such as Potamie or Rogata, or more morally fraught names like Huimiliane or Fructeuse (cited in Levesque, 1994: 104, AHM). These women were completely cut off from the outside world and even from each other, at least in terms of personal identity. The records show that some women even wore a veil for the duration of their stay. They were expected to work for their keep and for the services rendered them, with a period of 6 months labour for the Hopital,

performing domestic tasks like laundry, cleaning and wet nursing the infants.

Communication with the outside world in the form of letters and parental visits were severely monitored and restricted. Those who attempted to escape were captured by a detective and returned to the home.

The treatment of the young women was indicative of the public views of unwed motherhood at the time. In this way, the women were kept working in the interest of a moral recovery (Levesque, 1994: 110). Indeed, even if a woman was in her predicament due to sexual abuse, she was still considered to be a sinner and in need of atonement (Levesque, 1994: 108). She was viewed as being either wicked and willful, or weak and feeble-minded. Levesque (1994) pointed out that unwed mothers were often deemed to be dull-witted, with records showing many to be labeled as “stupid” or “idiots”, although the researcher did not find any evidence of low intelligence in her perusal of the letters written by these women and intercepted by the authorities. Whether a woman’s “sin” was seen as being a result of her being too strong or too weak, it was agreed that she was in need of reform.

While these women were, purportedly, encouraged to keep their children, only one eighth of them actually left the Hospital with her child (Levesque, 1994: 112). While many of these women vowed to marry and some day return for their children, more often than not these mothers signed their babies over for adoption. Nor did these women have the financial means to care for their children on their own. Work was difficult to find during the Depression years and many employers would not hire a

woman with a child. Furthermore, in 1937, the city of Montreal, by Provincial decree, removed all single mothers from the welfare roles (cited in Levesque 1994, from *Le Devoir*, 18 May, 1937).

Thus, large numbers of children were left with the nuns at the Hospital, often to be raised by them until adolescence, their “illegitimate” status following them for the rest of their lives. The mothers themselves were then “free” to pursue normative female behaviours – the pursuit of marriage and motherhood. In the eyes of the powerful and the public, the familial, patriarchal foundations of society were left intact. It would seem that no threat to the existing patriarchal order was tolerated. There was no room for alternative social structure, least of all one based on female agency of any kind. Unwed pregnancy was always, in this instance, interpreted as female deviance or illness. Again, she was a fallen woman.

The Eugenics Movement

Aside from popular attitudes and moral values, there were three major institutional means by which single mothers were regulated during the 20th century: through the manipulations of charity organizations, through the welfare system, and through the eugenics movements. Indeed, these strands of moral regulation were connected with one another. Ladd-Taylor (1997), in the U.S., compared government funded maternal and child-health policies and compulsory sterilization and argues that welfare system issues, rather than racial concerns, dominated the eugenicist

programs. She pointed out that the eugenics movement was a wide and diverse movement encompassing differing and conflicting aims within its own umbrella. On the whole, however, the movement embraced modernity, industrialization and enlightenment thought, and under this rubric, endeavored to improve society and assist society in its natural progression through the rational control of the population, all of which was exercised upon the advice of the ‘experts’. As Ladd-Taylor (1997) asserted, sterilization itself – as opposed to the option of long-term welfare dependence for a given individual – was presented as being a bargain for the taxpayer, who was freed from the future costs of supporting an ‘unfit’ population.

Ladd-Taylor discussed the continuation of the contrasting image of the “good” versus the “bad” mother that is used for political reasons:

While ‘good’ mothers (who are white and not on welfare) are applauded for staying home with their children, media images of black teenage mothers and welfare ‘queens’ reinforce the all-too-common perceptions that the poor and unfit are having too many children. Once again, in a period of social stress, ‘science’, along with powerful images of ‘bad’ motherhood, is manipulated to control women’s sexuality and cut welfare costs (Ladd-Taylor, 1997: 150).

In this way, public perception is carefully influenced toward support of inhumane treatment of those who are demonized. While Ladd-Taylor (1997) was, in this instance, referring to contemporary America, she was pointing to a recurring historical pattern conspicuous in the case of eugenic sterilization.

Most welfare scholars who study female delinquency and ‘feeble-mindedness’ view eugenic sterilization as an attempt to control female sexuality (Ladd-Taylor, 1997). While there were other indicators of feeble-mindedness, unwed motherhood was a dominant one.

Those who advocated eugenic sterilization painted a picture of the fallen, deviant woman who was sexually active and unfit to bear or raise the children of the nation (Ladd-Taylor, 1997). They warned of the dangers of charity – the promotion of ‘race degeneracy’, or the weakening of the nation’s citizenry. This was contrasted with an image of the ‘good’ or deserving mother and children who could genuinely benefit from the assistance of welfare. Here we see evidence of a hierarchy of single motherhood. As both Little (1998) and Gordon (1994) have pointed out, there was, early in the 20th century, a system in which benefits were handed out depending on a host of demographic characteristics of a given mother.

Racial Stratification

There was a split along racial lines between single mothers, both in the United States and in Canada (Solinger, 1992; Ladd-Taylor, 1995; Little, 1995). As Kornbluh (1996) pointed out, feminists are only beginning to understand the impact of racial categorization and power relations on the structure of policies and the relations between social welfare workers and clients. She has encouraged more study of the interconnections between gender, race, empire and sexuality. In

her (1994) book *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930*, Ladd-Taylor looked at the centrality of race and racism in U.S. maternalist politics. She argued that maternalism was inextricably tied up with racist politics. The maternalists praised white healthy mothers for being the mothers of the future citizen-soldiers while simultaneously censuring women whose bodies or lives did not live up to the white middle-class ideal (Ladd-Taylor, 1994: 49). Evidence of this is given in the failure of state pension programs to provide benefits to many black women, unmarried and divorced women and deserted women²⁰.

There is evidence that the “good” mother, “bad” mother divide was also racially delineated in Canada. Margaret Little discussed the highly racialized nature of the introduction to Mothers’ Pensions in British Columbia. Little (1995) pointed out that, at least at its inception, the British Columbia Mothers’ Pension Act (1920) was a highly popular Act, indeed among the most popular. Many groups from women’s charities, politicians, labour unions, and church leaders were involved in the lobby for this Act, which received widespread social support when it passed in April of 1920. Many newspapers praised the progressive nature of British Columbia’s social services. The B.C. Mother’s Pension Act, despite contemporary charges of racial selectivity, was touted as one of the most inclusive and progressive of its kind in all of North America. Little explained that over the first

²⁰ Black reformers cannot be called “maternalists” because they had drastically different motivations from the white middle-class maternalist reformers. Gwendolyn Mink (1995), for instance, argues that the black reformers were not racially motivated in the same sense that the white reformers were: they did not have eugenic concerns.

decade of its inception, the generous nature of the Act was increasingly modified, as restrictions were added to its eligibility criteria. By the Depression years, the Act had dramatically changed its face.

Most interesting, however, is Little's focus on the highly racialized nature of the Act. Evidently, the B.C. case differed from other provinces and the United States not just in its *inclusivity*, but also, significantly, in its *exclusivity*. Many racial minorities and immigrants who were non-British subjects – particularly Asians – were consciously excluded from the Act and denied the Pension. Indeed, Little suggested that it was the desire to ensure the superiority of the white “race” which drove legislators and social activists to sidestep moral concerns over white unwed pregnancy and motherhood: “It seems possible that B.C. lobbyists were willing to include all types of White Anglo-Celtic mothers (be they widowed, divorced, or unwed) in an effort to increase this racial group at the expense of other racial/ethnic groups”(Little, 1995: 101).

Little (1995) argued that during the time of the introduction of the B.C. Mothers' Pensions, the lobbyists, as well as the supportive philosophy of the Pensions Act differed from that in other provinces such as Ontario. Most fundamentally, the historical record shows an advocacy for, rather than a moral diatribe against, white unwed mothers. Indeed, she quoted one religious advocate admonishing listeners to keep in mind that Jesus Christ himself was an illegitimate child. There did not seem to be a clear cut hierarchy of eligible white mothers in the case of

British Columbia as there was elsewhere. Little's work on Ontario, for instance, clearly shows that some mothers were deemed eligible for support (widows, for example) while others were not (unwed mothers, for instance). Her research did not reveal this type of clear cut hierarchy of eligibility, based on *moral* criteria, in the B.C. case. In short, the case of the B.C. mothers' pensions shows that the system there seemed to be less encumbered by the stigma attached to many welfare provisions. The tone was set in the very title of the awards – these were pensions not allowances – and the recipients, by Little's (1997) account, seem to have believed, while still required to qualify, that they deserved the financial assistance as a right.

Solinger's (1992) work examined the race issue in the United States in *Wake Up Little Susie* (1992). Her book was a “case study in the plasticity of the social construction of ‘unwed mothers’...”(3). Solinger pointed out that the meaning of unwed motherhood changed after WWII. In a general sense, the unwed mother was, as before, deemed immoral. As before, she was the “fallen woman”. While Betty Friedan (1963) had pointed out that the only way for a woman to become a heroine was to have a baby, this was far from the case for the unwed mother:

An unwed mother was not part of a legal, domestic, and subordinate relation to a man, and so she could be scorned and punished, shamed and blamed. She gave birth to the baby, but she was nobody's heroine (Solinger, 1992: 4).

The religious and charitable elements were largely weeded out of the social work system which had become secular and professionalized with a work force of professionals well trained in psychological theory.

The social construction of the single mother was different for whites and blacks in the United States after WWII. Specifically, these women were assigned political value by race. Prior to WWII, unwed mothers were deemed genetically deficient and their neurosis was viewed as being in the body. Eugenicists, for instance, viewed these women as being biologically, and thus permanently, inadequate. However, Solinger argued, after WWII, this view shifted the neurosis of the white, unwed mother to the brain. Her sin was no longer biological and, thus, no longer inheritable. She was psychologically ill and she could be individually treated and rehabilitated. This was, in part, a reflection of the burgeoning population and power of the white middle class, who could no longer justify labeling larger numbers of its young women as permanently defective. Under the new regime, these young women were indeed maladjusted, but it was a relational maladjustment:

...it was her psychological inability to form a sanctioned relationship to a man that proved her anormative. Under these conditions a girl or woman could transcend her maladjustment simply by marriage, or by preparing herself for a marriageable future (Solinger, 1992: 16).

This was not the case for the black unwed mother; the “biological stain” remained intact for her. Academics, politicians, and the media portrayed Black unwed

mothers either as sexually lascivious breeders or as money-scheming breeders out for their own self-interest.

Solinger (1992) linked this racially specific divergence of the unwed mother into the post-war baby boom adoption market. The stereotypes took hold in the public mind until there was widespread acceptance of black and white unwed mothers into their respective typologies as “naturally occurring, racially specific subjects”(Solinger, 1992: 9). This went so far as to develop into a conflation of race and class, despite the fact that many white unwed mothers were poor and not all black unwed mothers needed state assistance or wanted to keep their babies. Race thus became the salient factor in the value of these women and their babies. In short, anybody’s white baby was of value because there was a large demand for white babies, by white middle-class married couples, on the adoption market.

For the black unwed mother, class was taken for granted. It was assumed, by many, that a young black woman would be poor, would keep her baby and go on welfare, thus fulfilling the stereotype of the black matriarchal welfare family. These women were normally defined as if their class were embedded within their race. In the public and academic perception, Black unwed mothers were viewed as “unrestrained, wanton breeders, on the one hand, or as calculating breeders for profit on the other”(Solinger, 1992: 9). In the public discourse, the white American patriarchal family was affirmed: the Black “matriarchal family” demonized.

While class was fused with race in the case of the black unwed mothers, it did play a role for some white women involved. Middle class white girls (as opposed to upper and lower class women of either race), for instance, were in the unique position of not being able to turn to their families for assistance. The outside maternity agency, and the white unwed mother's need for it, was the mark of middle-class standing. The role of the family was to uphold the image of raising chaste daughters, and the role of the agency was to put the erring young woman straight by morally reconstructing the white middle class girl and to bring her into conformity with middle class and gender norms. While the upper classes had more resources, and thus more choices, when faced with an unwed pregnancy in the family, and the lower classes had little to lose in terms of social standing, the middle class, evidently, was bound to social conformity:

By allying themselves with these agencies, white unwed mothers and their families acknowledged their ties to gender and class codes of behavior, and systems of redemption mandated by middle-class status (Solinger, 1992: 10).

This is not to say that the white middle or upper class unwed mother was acceptable, but that she was treatable and that her baby served a positive purpose in post-war society. Generally, the white unwed mother was viewed as being re-trainable after her crisis: that is, after the nice white baby was put on the adoption market. This process was, in effect, an “institutional abortion of her motherhood” (Solinger, 1992: 12), a process which rendered her a “not-mother” (Solinger, 1992: 17). In exchange for her baby, she was given a second chance to fit into society. The societal tolerance of the white unwed mother, however, only went so far.

Solinger (1992) pointed out that unwed motherhood represented the most profound violation of post-war population goals. There was widespread fear that women wouldn't settle down after the war and return to their domestic roles. The nuclear, "father-knows-best" family was therefore in need of protection. Ensuring female sexual subordination and the patriarchal family structure were thus high on the post war public agenda. White unwed women were thus put back in their place in the marriage market whereas Black single mothers were blamed for society's ills, from poverty and welfare costs, to juvenile delinquency, to the population explosion.

Both black and white unwed mothers were targeted as being the enemy of "the family". The 1950s was, after all, the heyday of the traditional nuclear family. This was a time when women were encouraged to return to the home, after a period of female labour market activity used to support the war effort. It was also a time of economic prosperity, with the depression years long over. Postwar stability was being built upon the connection between the nuclear family and consumer society. Single motherhood broke the relation of wife/mother/consumer or, in a word, the housewife role which was the proper female role being promoted at the time. Fears ran high that women would not return to their domestic position after the war and that, consequently, males would lose hold of their dominance within the family. Claims were made that "women's misplaced sexuality" (Solinger, 192: 21) would lead to societal breakdown and a host of societal ills such as juvenile delinquency and homosexuality. As part of this, the single mother was a threat to postwar

stability. It was of interest to a white male-supremacist government to attempt to control the fertility of both white and black unwed mothers. Rarely taking real issues and ideological positions into consideration, the state simply blamed and shamed these women for their sexual behavior while protecting the social and economic centrality of males. It is little wonder that single motherhood is a particular societal site that is so heavily morally laden.

Little pointed out that the records kept for the first decade of the Ontario Mothers' Allowances "clearly illustrate that this was, for the most part, an allowance for Protestant Euro-Canadian needy mothers"(1998: 68). For the most part, mothers of various ethnic minority groups were not recipients of the OMA. The Post-WWII era in Canada was a period of intense restructuring of the nuclear family unit and witness to a return to traditional gender roles. As such, there was, during this time, high social anxiety over unwed pregnancy and desertion of women and children (Little, 1998). Biological explanations for ethnic inferiority were downplayed in this period while a heightened emphasis was placed on instructing ethnic minorities, and the considerable influx of post war immigrants, on how to be more "Canadian". As in the U.S., the heterosexual nuclear family unit was viewed as being in danger of decline. A great deal of energy was expended to support the nuclear family unit, and to socialize or coerce individuals to comply with this form of social organization.

The shift we see occurring, then, in the U.S. post WWII era, was a shift from pre WWII unwed-mother-as-victim, to that of post WWII unwed-mother-as-trouble-maker (Solinger, 1992). These women were viewed as taking too much sexual and social license by challenging their traditional subordinate roles. They were in violation of the norms of femininity by breaking the links between femininity, marriage and maternity. The state, in the face of this, sought to reinforce male authority by reinforcing institutional control over female fertility. Because reproduction is at the core of public concern over female sexuality, economics, and racial politics, any discussion of single pregnancy and motherhood, is exceptionally prone to moral scrutiny. Time and place can dictate which of these factors – for example, nationalism, marital status, financial well-being, and racial background – take precedence. It was at this historical juncture that women began to rebel:

There is no question but that the state’s authoritarian, postwar attitude and policies toward single pregnant girls and women stimulated thousands of women in the 1960s and 1970s to construct reproductive freedom as a feminist issue (Solinger, 1992: 39).

As such, the “state’s failure to reverse the upward trends of nonmarital pregnancy” (Ibid) is testimony to the fact that unwed mothers did not conform to the state’s “rigid ideological” (Ibid) stance on female reproductive behavior.

* * * * *

At the turn of the 20th century, in most western societies, the ideology of separate spheres – with its rigid gender role polarization – was firmly entrenched. The ideals of proper womanhood, exemplified by the roles of wife and mother, were integral to the social structure. Scholars have used the concept of “social rationalization” (Ladd-Taylor & Hagemann, 1997: 1) to explain the structuring of western society, through employers, the state and private agencies, into planned and systematic patterns of living. Social rationalization revolved around gender roles that fanned out into both the private and the public spheres to include everything from working life, to consumption, to living styles and conditions.

The ideology of separate spheres, that is a critical part of hegemonic heterosexuality, influenced the charitable organizations, welfare agencies and their workers in regard to their philosophies and the policies aimed at unwed pregnant women, single mothers and other women. According to the male breadwinner/ female homemaker ideal, women were not treated as full citizens in the same way that men were because women were ideally considered to be financially dependent upon men. While women lost social power within this scheme of things, other forms of social stratification played a part in how various women were regarded and treated. For example, nationalism, marital status, class standing, and racial grouping intersect to paint an overall picture of the status and treatment of single mothers throughout the 20th century. One example of how these factors intersect and produce a social movement aimed at the reproductive

control of single mothers (as well as other targeted groups) is found in the history of eugenic sterilization in Alberta and British Columbia.

Chapter 4. The Eugenics Movement

[Feeble-mindedness] was now beginning to take on a specific, technical definition that described the “simple backward boy or girl.” The illness of these simpletons was so subtle and so hard to diagnose that it had never before been noticed. Feeble-minded people could be literate and fully functional in society, easily blending into the population. But their illness gave them weak wills and poor judgment, making them “easily influenced for evil” and susceptible to antisocial, deviant behavior (Bruinius, 2006 :37, making reference to the official tack of the Royal College of Physicians in England; Bruinius cites a quote in Henry H. Goddard, *Feeble-mindedness: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914, p. 4)

Single motherhood is indeed a challenge. In a society such as ours, where we are far removed from any true communal structure, a woman raising a child or children without the children's father is often in a position of doing work that is only comfortably completed by more than one person. Raising a child is arguably the most difficult job in the world. To take on such an undertaking on one's own is not a job for the weak or the "feeble-minded". Women who do it, do not, on average, do it for long²¹, but those who do it successfully have accomplished a great task. It occurs to me that I should be very proud to have brought my son into this world and to have raised him on my own for his first few years, to have *created* this fabulous person. Nowhere in my mind frame is there room for an assessment of myself as weak. And yet, this was the point of the eugenicists and it is the point of numerous critics right up until the present day, who argue that single motherhood is "wrong", that is, that single women are weak and inherently incapable of adequately raising children.

The eugenicists saw single motherhood as being a *result* of mental feebleness. But from a twentieth-first century feminist perspective, what is clear for the early 1900s, is that single mothers are *bad* in the context of proper gender roles. Single mothers are threatening and are condemned because they are strong, not because they are weak; because they must encroach on a traditional male territory of responsibility.

²¹ Lone parents typically marry or form common-law unions. According to Statistics Canada data (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2000), twenty percent of single mothers reconfigure into a form of partnership within one year of being a single mother. After five years, a majority of single mothers (56%) have married, remarried or are in common-law marriages. These rates are substantially higher for single fathers (40% after one year and 79% after five years).

In the 1900s eugenics was a potent means for the entrenchment of hegemonic heterosexuality because it addressed the intersections between sexuality, gender, race and class within colonial and nationalistic contexts²². Fears that the dominant white race was weakening or perceptions that the weaker elements of society were flourishing, were a part of the Canadian conception of nationhood, which was tied into the discourse of British imperialism.

Historical research has focused on the way in which British imperialist enthusiasm, the perception of imperial competition, and concern over the health and competency of British soldiers, brought on fears of ‘race degeneracy’. For Imperial Britain at the turn of the 20th Century, population was power. As Davin (1978) points out, “[t]he result was a surge of concern about the bearing and rearing of children – the next generation of soldiers and workers, the Imperial race(12)”. Britain focused on improving “the race” through incentives to potential mothers of “superior stock” and a powerful ideology of motherhood emerged wherein “good motherhood was an essential component...of racial health and purity”(Davin, 1978: 12). Mothers were praised for raising healthy children but, conversely, were condemned for producing weak or sickly children (Davin, 1978:13) In Canada also various social ills, from criminality to alcoholism, were deemed the hereditary cause for poverty and a range of social problems.

Eugenicist groups targeted, among other types of people, “feeble-minded” women

²² Commentators on single motherhood (Little, 1995; Solinger, 1992) examine how cultural differences in childbearing/rearing became pathologized and regulated in reference to the construction of white hegemonic fears of ‘race degeneracy’ and nation building.

and lobbied to have them either institutionalized or sterilized during their childbearing years (Valverde, 1991). Many of these women were unwed mothers:

[An Ontario] provincial inquiry that included the issue of single motherhood was the study of the ‘feeble-minded’ in 1919. ‘Feeble-minded was a term widely employed at the turn of the century to categorize and segregate those who were considered of low intellect, psychologically damaged, or morally deviant. This commission included unwed mothers in this category and argued that ‘feeble-minded’ women should be institutionalized to prevent them from reproducing other feeble-minded’ citizens (Little, 1998: 6)²³.

These attitudes were particularly evident in Alberta and British Columbia, the only two Canadian provinces to have passed Eugenics laws in the early to mid 20th century.

The eugenics movement is the best example to demonstrate the “divide and conquer” principle which is at work with single mothers. Instead of social support for single motherhood, these women were being individually condemned and punished. While the charity organizations which dealt with single mothers throughout the nineteenth-century can be viewed as operating with the good of society as their motivation, they inadvertently did things that could damage lives.

The Eugenics movement is an example of an ideology couched in terms of social benefit that had terrible consequences. In general, the focus was not on how

²³ Little (1998) cites the following in footnote 17, page 204: “AO, RG 18, B-49, ‘Royal Commission: Care of the Feeble-minded and Mentally Defective and the Prevalence of Venereal Disease, October 18, 1919’, 6. Helen MacMurchy, a medical doctor who was the inspector of the feeble-minded in Ontario between 1906 and 1916, was a leading proponent of this eugenics position. Other social reformers, including the National Council of Women, also adopted this view. See Lykke de la Cour, ‘Dr Helen MacMurchy on “Feeble-Minded” Women and Children: Examples of an Unconstrained Campaign’, unpublished paper, Department of History, University of Toronto, December 1986; and Kathleen McConnachie, ‘Methodology in the Study of Women in History A Case Study of Helen MacMurchy, MD’, Ontario History LXXV, no. 1 (March 1983); esp. 67-9.” (Little, 1998: 204, n. 17).

society can create problems for the individual, but on how individuals are a problem to society, and how to change those individuals so as to remove the problem. These do-gooders ruined lives, but their intentions were, indeed, “noble”.

Eugenics For Dummies: Havelock Ellis’ *Eugenics Made Plain*

The more perfectly the Poor Law machinery works, the more it encourages the evil it seeks to deal with . . . we need to extend our philanthropy to the generations to come”(Ellis, nd: 57-58).

Havelock Ellis, in his explanatory treatise on the responsibility of societies “fit” to “regenerate the race”, defines eugenics as a method of tailoring sexual reproduction on the basis of the best possible social engineering. Ellis feared that the great move toward social reform – the 19th century movements toward societal care for the poor, the sick, or any of those incapable of caring for themselves – was doing more harm than good. For example, what had begun as a labour movement to improve working conditions, had broadened into national education, the care of “defective” children, and poor relief. Scholars like Havelock Ellis and Herbert Spencer began to think about the implications of social reform for society as a whole, and for social evolution in particular. In short, appropriating their ideas from scientific, evolutionary principles, they asserted that in making life easier and safer for the entire population, society was now making it easier for the “unfit” to propagate their kind.

Ellis, and many others of his time, targeted society's "feeble-minded" as being a bane to the rest of the society. The feeble-minded included, in large part, single mothers, as well as criminals, prostitutes, and alcoholics. Feeble-mindedness was not something that could be cured, it was hereditary. The problem of feeble-mindedness could only be stopped – and along with it, unwed motherhood, prostitution, crime and alcoholism – by ensuring that the feeble-minded did not reproduce.

Ellis reminds us that "[i]llegitimacy is frequently the result of feeble-mindedness since feeble-minded women are peculiarly unable to resist temptation"(28). These girls were not considered to be "evil", but "weak", and their sexual behavior was not viewed as being a result of "vicious" intent but, rather, a natural consequence of being "predestined to immorality"(29). Ellis believed that unwed motherhood led to prostitution. Despite being "feeble-minded", these mothers were considered to be intelligent enough to be able to work at some capacity. They could not, however, find respectable employment because they had lost their personal respectability through unwed pregnancy. The result was that they were then drawn into and perpetuated the evil of prostitution.

Eugenics Made Plain is of interest not only in terms of outlining what was viewed as a serious cluster of social problems, but also in terms of its prescription for a cure for these problems. Ellis was highly critical of the movement for social reform, claiming that it "has even had the altogether undesired and unexpected

result of increasing the burden it was intended to remove”(38). He felt that it was a responsibility that went deeper than science, deeper than morality, to regenerate the race that had become infested with “undesireables”. Within the noble, new field of eugenics, “our knowledge . . . is still very imperfect”, yet “there is one point concerning which general agreement may be said to be reached, and that is the desirability of breeding out so far as possible, the feeble-minded”(54). The feeble-minded, he believed, needed to be wiped out, not through executions, but through isolated colonies if needed, or by “voluntary” sterilization for those who were capable of living and working within the larger, normal society.

Ellis’ ideas were thoroughly rooted in Enlightenment thought. He declared that up until the recent past, humans had propagated the race in much the same way as “savages”. That is, with a faith that God is in charge of placing every child on the earth and that He is therefore ultimately in control of humanity. As Ellis put it, the old view was that “the children were sent by God, and if they all turned out to be idiots then the responsibility for this belonged to God”. Society, he countered, could no longer afford to continue operating on the basis of such archaic thought. He argued that humans are responsible for themselves and that it is up to society’s members to control the health of the race. Eugenic science, then, takes the very place of God. Ellis advocated for sexual education, particularly for women and mothers. He also argued that religious and moral organizations should take a

leading role in changing people's attitudes about reproduction. Particularly, Ellis praised the Germans for the leading edge work they had done on sex education.

By way of conclusion in his booklet on Eugenics, Ellis turned his attention to the sticky question of individual freedom. He did not have faith that legislative changes would be sufficient motivation for people to change their sexual behavior. He believed that people would only follow the rules of the state insofar as they truly believed in the principles behind them. Law is nothing without the consent of the people. He thus stated that society's leaders must work through morality, religion, literature and art to change people's minds. He felt this was necessary, in what seems to be a very twisted logic, because freedom, not legislation, is of utmost importance. That is, the state dictates morality that people then "freely" choose to adopt. He truly believed in his cause to "extend our philanthropy to the generations to come"(58) through both moral regulation and surgical means.

Nationalistic Pronatalism

The flip side of the discussion over eugenic sterilization, with its move to weed out the "unfit" in the population, was the move toward encouraging the "fit" to reproduce. Thus, the call toward "racial improvement" was not only geared toward removing society's unwanted, but also toward producing more of the socially designated desirables. In both cases, women and mothers were targeted as being the key to ensuring racial progress.

From the beginning, the birth control movement was tied up with eugenics and population control. As Valverde (1992) points out, for feminists today reproductive freedom is about the individual rights of women and about overcoming collective oppression. At the turn of the 20th century, however, the issue of birth control was fundamentally connected with racial and imperialist politics (Valverde 1992). At this time, women did not just have babies, but, rather, they had babies to reproduce “the race” and, depending on their own status, were either helping or hindering the progress of civilization through reproduction (Valverde, 1992:4; Burdett, 1998:44; Davin, 1978:20). In Canada especially, “the race” which needed preserving, in the minds of the eugenicists, was not a general catchall denoting “the human race”. It referred more specifically to the “Anglo-Saxon Protestant ruling bloc”, which alone was viewed as being really human (Valverde, 1992:5). The social scientific view in this early period viewed social progress as dependent upon true scientific knowledge and the strength of the nation:

Eugenics made procreative sexuality of the first order of importance for the successful nation of the twentieth century and, in so doing, it produced maternity in the modern world as a national and racial imperative (Burdett, 1998:57).

The eugenics movement was given some legitimacy by Social Darwinism. Nevertheless, both hereditary and environmental factors were taken into consideration by many other social thinkers at the time, and many argued that

environment could overcome genes and that even ‘good genes’ were no guarantee of morality. This led to the promotion of ‘moral reform’ (Valverde, 1992). Thus, while a single mother may fit the criteria for the embodiment of ‘good genes’ – white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant – she, by virtue of her evident immorality, could very well have been viewed as being in need of moral reform.

* * * * *

In Western Canada, prominent community figures and social activists in Alberta and BC, including Nellie McClung, Helen Gregory MacGill and Emily Murphy, supported the practice of eugenics. Judge Emily Murphy of Edmonton, for instance, was a staunch promoter of sterilization of the “feeble-minded”. An Edmonton newspaper cited Mrs. Murphy’s support of the decision to sterilize all mental hospital discharges, of marriageable age – the vast majority (70%) of whom were immigrants (June 8, 1926, *The Bulletin of Edmonton*).

Women played a strong role in promoting eugenic sterilization and they did through non-traditional means of exercising power. One woman, for example, Josephine Dauphinee, was a pioneer teacher of the “feeble-minded” child in Vancouver and through her role as a teacher, she lobbied and fought to promote eugenic sterilization, spearheading the “Mental Hygiene Committee” of the Vancouver Local Council of Women in 1923 (Thompson, 2006: 68).

The politics of reproduction in the early 20th century worked toward regulating Canadian families into “respectable” family forms by delineating gender roles. They also made it clear that “race” was intertwined in complex ways in the equation for a “respectable” Canadian family. In these respects Alberta and British Columbia were at the “forefront” in their embrace of state sanctioned eugenic sterilization.

Eugenic Sterilization in 20th Century British Columbia and Alberta

The Alberta Sexual Sterilization Act

The sexual sterilization Act was passed in Alberta in 1928, 5 years prior to the Act being passed in British Columbia, and represented the first such act in Canada (PAB Archives, “The Eugenics Board”, 83.391, file/item GSE, B/G). A Eugenics Board of 4 people was set up, and included one medical practitioner approved by the University of Alberta, one medical practitioner approved by the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and two individuals (non-medical practitioners) appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The board examined 5 types of patient and was required to reach a unanimous decision regarding sterilization for each patient. Consent of the patient was required except in the case of one distinct type of patient, the “mentally defective”. In any case, where a patient was not considered capable of giving valid consent, the consent of a spouse or (where unmarried) that of a parent or guardian was required before an

operation was performed (PAB Archives, “The Eugenics Board”, 83.391, file/item GSE, B/G).

The public record indicates that a strong lobbying effort was launched in 1927-28 prior to the passing of the Act. Support for the Sexual Sterilization Act was directed toward the Honorable George Hoadley, the Minister of Public Health for the Province of Alberta at the time.

On December 14, 1927 Mrs. Emily Murphy wrote a letter to Mr. Hoadley, on “Office of the Police Magistrate” letterhead, pleading with him to consider the cases of young women being admitted to the Ponoka mental hospital with young babies and, being pregnant, and likely to produce more children. One case that Murphy cited in her letter was that of a young widow, with one “crippled” son, and one 5 month old child born out of wedlock:

Needless to say this child [of the unwed mother] is a problem case . . . a child such as this cannot be adopted out and may become a permanent charge upon the rate-payers, as Mrs. _____ does not seem to be certain of its paternity (PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25).

Murphy gave another example of a female in-patient, a 30 year old mother of 7 who was pregnant with another child. There was no mention of this woman’s husband or the children’s father(s), but Murphy described their situation as “a desperate one”. She concluded her letter to the Minister as such,

it is a neglect amounting to a crime to permit these two women Mrs. _____ and Mrs. _____ to go on bearing children. They are both young women and likely to have numerous offspring

unless they are sterilized before leaving the hospital . . . There are numerous cases of this kind at Ponoka. These two have come in 48 hours at Edmonton . . . (PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25).

Murphy was obviously showing her support for the newly proposed Sexual Sterilization Act. She seemed most concerned with young women who were in their childbearing years and who had been deemed, in some respect, mentally unstable and likely to reproduce. She made specific reference to women raising children without the presence of a man, the cost to the tax-payer and the inhumanity towards the children.

Organizations such as the Canadian Social Hygiene Council, of which Mrs. Murphy was elected vice-president in 1927, were lending their support to the Alberta effort, as is indicated in this letter dated December 11, 1927:

The Canadian Social Hygiene Council approves and endorses the proposed action of the Provincial Legislature to enact a law regarding the sterilization of mental defectives and insane persons. We believe that by this means only can this problem be successfully approached (PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25).

Mrs. O.C. Edwards, Vice President of the “Council for Alberta” and the Chair of the “Provincial Executive Committee” also wrote to Mr. Hoadley, urging him to approve of the proposed Sexual Sterilization Act. She said,

[in reference to] the duty of the Province to deal with the appalling increase of the feeble-minded in Alberta . . . segregation or

sterilization seem to be the only two remedies, Segregation is out of the question so there remains only sterilization. An overwhelming majority of social workers who come personally in contact with this great evil to our country are in favour of sterilization as the only possible available means of a remedy . . . I have been personally strongly in favour of it for many years (PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25).

It appears that the argument that sterilization is the only viable solution to the perceived problem of widespread mental defectiveness and societal degeneration was used again and again. Many, like the “Women’s Section of the Dominion Labour Party in Calgary” expressed their support for the act, while making it clear that they hoped it would eventually lead to even more drastic measures. The Women’s Section Secretary, Mary Mayell wrote Mr. Hoadley on February 13, 1928 saying that her organization

Wish to congratulate you on the boldness and initiative you are showing in that you are giving a lead in this province of the Dominion re Social Control of the Reproduction of the mentally diseased or mentally unfit. They wish success to the Bill you are bringing before the Provincial Legislature this session and trust that it will be followed up by still further enactments along the same lines (PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25).

The group that was by far the most forthcoming with letters of support sent to the Minister of Health, was the United Farm Women of Alberta (UFWA). The archival record shows letters which came in from the following branches of the UFWA showing support for the proposed Sexual Sterilization Act: Cayley, local No. 5; Maple UFWA; Keyston UFWA in Youngstown Alberta; East Lethbridge UFWA; Nanton Local Union No. 25; Sefton UFWA; Gleichen Local 101; Horse

hill Local Union, No. 131. In addition to these letters from the individual branches, there was a resolution unanimously passed at the 1926 Annual Convention of the United Farm Women of Alberta which read,

Whereas, heredity plays a most important part in the transmission of insanity and all grades of feeble-mindedness, and

Whereas, under certain conditions many feeble-minded and many intermittently deranged persons could, with safety to themselves and without menace to the public be permitted their freedom,

Therefore be it resolved, by the U.F.W.A. Convention assembled, that we respectfully ask the Government of the Province of Alberta to pass an act by which it shall be compulsory for each and every institution in the Province entrusted with the care of the insane or feeble-minded, to appoint upon its staff, in addition to the regular institutional physician, two skilled surgeons of recognized ability, whose duty it shall be in conjunction with the chief physician of the institution, to examine the mental and physical condition of such inmates as are recommended by the institutional physician and a properly constituted board of manager. If, in the judgment of this Committee of experts, and the Board of Managers, procreation is inadvisable, it shall be lawful for the surgeons to perform such operations for the prevention of procreation as shall by them be deemed safest and most effective (PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25).

The United Farm Women of Alberta were not the only women in favour of sterilization legislation. Dr. Elizabeth Shortt of Ottawa sent a letter (June 19, 1927) congratulating Mr. Hoadley on the proposed Act, stating that "I see no other way but sterilization if we hope to hold or improve the standards of life and living in Canada"(PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25). The Health Committee of the Local Council of Women of Edmonton carried a resolution on February 23, 1922 urging the federal government to sterilize the feeble-minded

men and women of the province and the country who are proving to be such a drain on the rest of the society (PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25).

The Alberta Provincial Women's Christian Temperance Union also wrote to the Honorable George Hoadley stating their support for the proposed Act (PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25).

A sprinkling of men actively voiced their support for the sterilization act in writing or, in the case of some individual physicians, by telegraph. The Director of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene, D.M.LeBourdais, wrote to the Honorable George Hoadley from Toronto on January 20, 1928, commenting on the situation in British Columbia, citing the support that he was given while discussing sterilization at the Women's Canadian Club in Vancouver and sending along a newspaper clipping from the *Hamilton Herald* in which both he, Mr. Hoadley, and the impending sterilization laws in the West were reported on in a favourable light (PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25). Two letters of support arrived at Mr. Hoadley's office from branches of the United Farmers of Alberta (Prairie Grange Local Union No. 752 on February 23, 1927 and Vimy Ridge Local Union No. 506 on January 14, 1928), and one from a preacher (Thos. H. Mitchell, February 18, 1928) which assured the Minister that he often preached at the pulpit about the problem of feeble-mindedness and that he supported the sterilization act and other, more severe actions (PAB Archives, 70.414, item/file 920, Box 25). Various individual doctors across the country sent telegrams of congratulations at the time for the passage of the eugenic sterilization law and

support to Mr. Hoadley, including Dr. J.G. McKay of Vancouver, who stated that he hoped his own province would be joining Alberta in implementing sterilization laws shortly, and he assured Mr. Hoadley that “all men through Canada familiar with conditions are with you” (PAB Archives, 70.414, item/file 920, Box 25).

Among the numerous and enthusiastic letters of support for the proposed Act in the archival records, there was one, lone, letter of dissent. It hailed, oddly, from the Pleasant Valley chapter of the United Farm Women of Alberta. The local’s disapproval of the Sexual Sterilization Act was simply stated and signed by Secretary C.H. Zaczkowski: “RESOLVED, that we express our disapproval of the Sexual Sterilization Act”(PAB Archives, 70.414, file/item 920, Box 25).

The British Columbia Sexual Sterilization Legislation

Angus McLaren (1986) examined the two sides of the debate for sterilization legislation in British Columbia, a debate that raged in the interwar period, years before the implementation of the legislation in 1933. Research at the time was revealing an increase in the number of ‘unfit’ or mentally ill individuals in the population. These findings alarmed those in power, who warned that if this situation was left unchecked, the healthy half of the population would be working to support the unhealthy, institutionalized half of the population. The viewpoint held by the majority of the medical profession as well as by women’s organizations, the government, and the public, was that, due to medical advances,

the health of the population which was once guaranteed by ‘the survival of the fittest’, was now endangered. The argument was that the ‘unfit’ were left to reproduce, while the ‘fit’ enjoyed the limitation of their offspring through birth control methods. The solution, indeed the responsibility of those in power, was to stop the reproduction of the ‘unfit’, so that the offspring of the ‘fit’ could benefit from societal resources instead of these resources being wasted on the ‘unfit’.

This was, however, not the only view being professed at the time of the debates. The alternate, minority view was that societal phenomenon, such as a capitalist economy, led to social deprivation and problems for individual societal members (McLaren, 1986). Those on this side of the debate argued that social conditions caused the social problems that were being interpreted as genetic, irreversible, mental illnesses. In this view, what was needed to solve social problems was social reform, not sterilization of individuals.

Despite there being two strands of thought on this issue, among the medical community and in the helping professions in general, those in favour of sexual sterilization legislation were victorious. As McLaren points out, the salient significance of the passage of the sterilization Act was that it “represented the optimistic belief of respectable members of the helping professions”(1986: 130). Again, whatever the current perspective on this issue, those propagating such ideas and practices passionately believed that they were acting in the best interests of society.

Between 1928, when the B.C. Royal Commission on Mental Hygiene issued its final report favouring sterilization legislation, and 1933 when the Act was actually passed, a massive public “educational” lobby was launched. The *Vancouver Sun*, in November 25, 1925, stated that the legislature unanimously endorsed the resolution put forward by the Honorable Wm. Sloan to look into the immigration policy. Mr. Sloan justified the need to review the policy by pointing out that 67 – 70% of mental defectives in British Columbia hospitals were born outside of Canada. The Minister of Immigration (a federal jurisdiction) was evidently allowing undesireables into the province, and the province wanted some say in this matter. It was stated that the provincial health officers had held meetings concerning this very issue and that this resolution was put forth in order to support the medical community in their attempts to control the influx of the unfit into the province. Both public and private pressures were exerted by doctors, the child welfare apparatus, women’s groups and individual professionals such as medical doctors (McLaren, 1986).

Mrs. Murphy was lending her support for eugenic sterilization legislation to the British Columbia arena as well. In 1932 Murphy published three articles in the *Vancouver Sun* on the topic of what she called practical eugenics. In “Should the Unfit Wed? (Part II)”(COE Archives, Emily Murphy Collection, Janey Canuck, Sept 10, 1932, *Vancouver Sunday Sun*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 68), she defined feeble-mindedness, following the British Royal Commission of the

Feeble-Minded, as a “condition [that] is due to an arrested or imperfect cerebral development” and cited the opinion of one Dr. Goddard, an “eminent authority”, that “Every feebleminded person is a potential criminal”. She did not offer a definition of the characteristics of insanity but instead offered up the example of a Greek philosopher Chrysippus. She says,

He seems to have been no bungling specimen of insanity either; he was the exact thing. This man who was actually held to be very clever, and apparently opposed to eugenics in all its forms, wrote 311 treatises concerning the propriety of a man marrying his daughter and declaring that all dead bodies should be eaten instead of being buried. Ultimately he died from drinking too much wine but others said it was from excessive laughter caused by seeing an ass eat off a silver plate (COE Archives, Emily Murphy Collection, “Should the Unfit Wed?”, Janey Canuck, Sept 10, 1932, *Vancouver Evening Sun*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 68).

Murphy clearly interpreted insanity through the lens of moral judgment. She went on to prescribe the cure for such a morally decrepit person. In this respect, she spoke mostly about birth control and eugenics. She stated that birth control had long been a secret practice with “the intelligentsia” or the “A1 class” while the “poverty-stricken folk” or the “underworld” or “C3 class” had been barred from its usage and benefits. For this reason, she stated that,

the congenitally diseased are becoming vastly more populous than those we designate as ‘the upper crust’. This is why it is altogether likely that the upper crust with its delicious plums and dash of cream is likely to become at any time a mere toothsome morsel for the hungry, the abnormal, the criminals and the posterity of insane paupers – in a word, of the neglected [i.e., those not given birth control] folk (COE Archives, Emily Murphy Collection, “Should the Unfit Wed?”, Janey Canuck, Sept 10, 1932, *Vancouver Evening Sun*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 68).

She argued that birth control should no longer be used only by the upper class but “for the future, must be looked upon as a sacred crusade for the mental, moral, physical and social well-being of all classes and all nations irrespective of their religion, social rank or the peculiar pigment of their skin”. She referred to this plan as an aggressive movement for practical eugenics.

Murphy’s article “Over-Population and Birth Control (Part I and Part II)” (COE Archives, Emily Murphy Collection, Oct. 1, 1932, Janey Canuck, *Vancouver Sunday Sun*, MS2 Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 46 (Part I); Oct 8, 1932, *Vancouver Sunday Sun* MS2 Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 67 (Part II)) was a Malthusian appeal to women to take control of the future of all humanity by practicing birth control.

She advocated opposition to the alarmists who were calling for population growth – the militarists, the life insurance companies, the few gynecologists who feared loss of business. She declared that it was time for women, and mothers in particular, to take hold of the fate of the world:

Women, this is our day to effectively stay the ravages of war, plague and famine. This is pre-eminently, and as never before, the day when the hand that rocks the cradle is called to its mission of ruling the world. This is a high emprise [sic] to which the Creator has called us. Mothers the world over have shown that, as a whole, they cannot be considered as irreligious, selfish or unpatriotic but in these times we have acquired a new slant on world affairs and our relation thereto (COE Archives, Emily Murphy Collection, “Over-Population and Birth Control”, Part I, Janey Canuck, Oct. 1, 1932, *Vancouver Sunday Sun*, MS2 Scrapbook 4 (copy), Emily Murphy Collection, pp. 46, City of Edmonton Archives).

In this article, Murphy ridiculed the warning cries of race suicide. She reduced such concerns to a situation in which social alarmists fear the loss of white supremacy and a concomitant takeover by the Chinese and other people of colour. She pointed out that their remedy was to encourage white women to hastily reproduce the white race: “In a word, they give us a hint – nay, a command – that all white women must engage in an intense and rapid contest of procreation with the yellow, tan and black women in order that we may supply more and more airmen, bombers, trench diggers and other of the human instruments of battle”(COE Archives, Emily Murphy Collection, “Over-Population and Birth Control”, Part I, Janey Canuck, Oct. 1, 1932, *Vancouver Sunday Sun*, MS2 Scrapbook 4 (copy) Emily Murphy Collection, pp. 46, City of Edmonton Archives). In true maternal feminist fashion, Murphy called on women to resist the male impulse toward destruction and war. We will not, she cried, fill the armies of their wars with our sons. All of this procreation would only lead, she argued, to a problem of overpopulation:

All these shrieking sirs are urging upon the womenfolk of Canada, the United States of America, Great Britain and of the other Caucasian countries that we proceed without delay to create a condition that is bound to make infanticide a necessity with us even as in China, India and other of the darker-skinned nations where children are spawned rather than born. Surely, ‘tis a vicious practice to bring children into the world in such numbers that they have to be murdered...(COE Archives, Emily Murphy Collection, “Over-Population and Birth Control” Part I, Janey Canuck, Oct. 1, 1932, *Vancouver Sunday Sun*, MS2 Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 46).

Murphy suggested that the panic surrounding race-suicide, was simply a scare tactic designed to bully “our timid womenfolk” into staying at home, safely away from public life, and having babies. While Murphy’s feminist critique of the idea of “race suicide” seems contradictory, considering her advocacy of eugenics, she was consistent in the importance she attributed to population control. Evidently, she believed that the health of the white race was important; she wanted to ensure that “fit”, white women were not being used or harmed in the process.

Instead of ‘our’ women having more babies, Murphy argued that we should send doctors and nurses trained in eugenics, as well as teachers to train Chinese doctors and nurses in eugenics, in order to reduce reproduction in China and other countries where there is need. She claimed that this was the moral high-route to take in solving the problem of over-population. She did believe there was a threat of race-suicide, claiming that “In all ages it has happened that ultimately large, rich and new lands have been over-run and owned by the hungry hordes of vastly populated countries, thus producing a mongrel or lesser breed”(COE Archives, Emily Murphy Collection, “Over-Population and Birth Control” Part II, Janey Canuck, Oct 8, 1932, *Vancouver Sunday Sun*, MS2 Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 67). She feared such a situation would occur again, that Canada would be over-taken by the mongrel, over-producing breeds unless we changed our ways. She emphasized the importance of this task, to be taken up by women, and likened it to a religious crusade. She proclaimed that, “[w]e women have treasures to open

and to give our alien sisters, even as did the wise men of old when they followed a certain star in the East” (COE Archives, Emily Murphy Collection, Janey Canuck, “Over-Population and Birth Control” Part II, Janey Canuck, Oct. 8, 1932, *Vancouver Sunday Sun*, MS2 Scrapbook 3 (copy)). She felt that distributing birth control was as important to the human race as disarmament, perhaps more so. Indeed, she argued that the two concerns were intimately connected, that the arms race could only be halted if the human ‘race’ was halted. Murphy, evidently, saw eugenics and birth control not only in terms of racial hygiene within Canada, but in the even larger framework of saving the whole of humanity from impending destruction. In this campaign, she envisioned women taking a primary role.

It is interesting to note that the various sources of the influences and opinions circulating regarding sexual sterilization legislation are congruent with what we know about moral regulation – that the actors pushing for the reform are individuals from a range of social sectors and they are not necessarily those with a great deal of power. Doctors, welfare workers, and female activists, as well as others, provided a wide social base of influence.

Sterilization was an economic concern, as we can see from the *Vancouver* newspapers at the time. For instance, on December 2, 1925, the *Vancouver Evening Sun* (“Sterilization Is Advocated: Mrs. Smith Asks Care In Handling Deficients”) reported that Mrs. M. E. Smith, Liberal MP for Vancouver “came out flat-footedly for sterilization of mental defectives so that they could not reproduce

their kind”. This comment had been made during the course of the provincial budgetary debate in Victoria the previous day.

The Vancouver Board of Trade was actively involved in the debate surrounding sterilization. The *Vancouver Sun* reported on a meeting of the health bureau of the Board of Trade on March 7, 1929 that urged “Sterilization of Defects Urged by Government: Health Bureau Hears Experts on Need for Prompt and Drastic Reforms”. A resolution was passed at the meeting calling for the provincial government to enact the recommendations laid out by the BC Royal Commission on Mental Hygiene. A member at the meeting called for a training school for defective children, as well as “facilities for diagnosis and treatment of mentally abnormal children generally”. The article cites Dr. W.B. Burnett, Brig. General V.W. Odum (a member of the Commission) as well as Dr. Fred Bell, superintendent of Vancouver General Hospital, all as being in favour of sterilization being used as a preventative measure.

In addition to activism by the business sector, the women’s movement also provided a strong leg of support for sexual sterilization legislation. The maternal feminists of the time were primarily concerned with making society safe for the children that they viewed as being the rightful future citizens of Canada. Doctors were especially active in promoting the legislation. Indeed, of all of the newspaper coverage reviewed, the opinions of the medical establishment were the most prominent and popular pieces printed.

The medical community campaigned for the passage of the law, assisted in the formulation of sterilization programs, and implemented the programs once they were in place. For example, Dr. McKay emerged over and over in the Vancouver newspapers as an expert proponent of sterilization legislation. On December 31, 1928, under the heading “The Mentally Deficient” (*Vancouver Sun*), a case was made that legislation was an urgent need in British Columbia. The case of California was used as an example of how crippling the burden of the “mentally deficient” was to society. In California, where there were sterilization laws in place, the state had spent over \$3½ million on insane asylums and that much again on the upkeep of prisons and reform schools. The article appealed to the reader to imagine what a sorry state BC must be in without these laws in place. It was stated that the situation would only get worse since “marriage licenses are granted with a certain degree of promiscuity, and the mental deficient breeds faster than his fellow who is able to care for himself and others”(“The Mentally Deficient”, *Vancouver Sun*, December 31, 1928). The article praised the schools for employing I.Q. testing, but stressed the need for more stringent laws for governing “mental defectives” on the grounds that “until it does, the taxpayers of the province will be faced with a constantly increasing bill for their welfare, and citizens will always be faced with sufferers of the most terrible kind of sickness known”(“The Mentally Deficient”, December 31, 1928, *Vancouver Sun*). By far, the most influential voices in the sterilization debate were those of medical doctors.

On Nov 24, 1926 the *Vancouver Sun* reported that “[t]he mentally and physically unfit should be denied children as the only means of preventing the degeneration of mankind, Dr. Adolf Lorenz, noted Vienna surgeon, said yesterday”. This expert was reported to have asserted that our own humanity is turning into our downfall. That is, we are allowing those of “poorer human stock”, by saving them from life’s hardships and by prolonging their lives, to survive and reproduce. He believed this to be a grave mistake and opined that humanity was a long way from improving this situation. Evidently, it was believed that the immigrant population posed the greatest threat to the health of the nation. Thus, the issue of control over the “unfit” was also an issue of race. Dr. Lorenz, and others in the medical field, pleaded that sterilization legislation was needed for the sake of the health of society at large.

Another Doctor, Dr. Ernest A. Hall, penned a letter to the editor of the *Vancouver Sun* on April 8, 1927 which was entitled “Dr. Hall Agrees With Editorial Urging Sterilization for Mentally Deficient”. Dr. Hall stated that

The increase of insanity is so alarming, the burden upon the public so heavy, and this partial “cure” so simple and safe by means of the x-rays that some definite method of publicity should be inaugurated, for governments cannot act in any radical matter without the public being sufficiently educated and awake to demand the change.

In another article on the subject, “Sterilization Act Favoured: Expert Discusses Problem of Feeble-minded”(December 14, 1928, *Vancouver Evening Sun*), more

medical advice was offered. The expert, Dr. J.G. McKay, spoke to the Vancouver Lions Club of the necessity of sterilization. “Like begets like”, he is quoted as saying “in advocating sterilization of known deficient as one measure towards reducing the number of the feeble-minded, which he pointed out, is constantly growing”(“Sterilization Act Favoured: Expert discusses Problem of feeble-minded”, December 14, 1928, *Vancouver Evening Sun*). Dr. McKay, according to the article, was advocating for a separate institution to be opened specifically to deal with this problem.

Dr. McKay had done his homework in researching mental institutions that practiced sterilization. In his capacity under the Royal Commission, he visited the Psychopathic Hospital in Winnipeg on May 26th, 1926. A report of the inquiry into the operations and organization of the hospital outlined the conversations held between Dr. E.J. Rothwell, Chairman, and a second Winnipeg doctor by the name of Dr. Mathers, with Dr. McKay attending (PBC Archives, Record Group GR 865, Royal Commission on Mental Hygiene, 1925, Box 1, File 9).

Dr. Mathers listed the institutional sources of the intakes at their institution, including The Children’s Aid Society, the Salvation Army, the Catholic Children’s agencies, the schools, the General Hospital, Juvenile court, the employment service and some from the City of Winnipeg. Dr. McKay asked specifically what was done to “prevent propagation” of the “feeble-minded”. Dr. Mathers response got right to the heart of the matter,

That brings in the great big question of transmission on mental deficiency and it is impossible to apply it. Anyone, of course, knows definitely about heredity is the big factor, just how serious a factor it is, there seems to be a lot of confusion. I know they are varied, you can get them without any trouble at all. Some will tell you that 90% of people are cases of heredity. I think that is wrong . . . Sterilization of these people [from “normal” families] is not necessary. If you do you are stopping something that does not need to be stopped. But the inheritable child who comes from a family where there are other cases of mental deficiency where you can get a definite history, there is no doubt in my mind that the child should be sterilized. I would say that probably 50% easily are inherited. You are not going to start out and sterilize everybody. Only the ones you know about. (PBC Archives, Record Group GR 865, Royal Commission on Mental Hygiene, 1925, Box 1, File 9).

The three doctors then went on to discuss specific cases in which they believed sterilization was appropriate. Dr. McKay used the example of the current unlawful sterilization of two unwed mothers in his care:

I am sometimes called to see unmarried mothers when they have children up for adoption in the hospital and when I see a case markedly deficient and as an example I saw one last summer three times in the hospital, unmarried, this was her third time, I immediately got in touch with the attending physician through the social service there and I suggested that this woman be sterilized. She was then about 24 years of age. Well, she was sterilized, and was called in the other day to see one and I put this proposition up to her and I think she will be sterilized. Now I was speaking to Mr. Manson about it the other day and I told him what I had done in this case. I see of course I am breaking the law as there is no law in favor of it and as far as I know there is no law against it. Well, he says, I don't know whether you are breaking it or not. There is probably not one judge in the country who would censure me one bit (PBC Archives, Record Group GR 865, Royal Commission on Mental Hygiene, 1925, Box 1, File 9).

It was not just single pregnancy which concerned the doctors, however. Dr. Rothman reports on a married woman who suffered from depression both during

and following her pregnancies, a condition that he refers to as Dementia Praecox. In that case, after much prodding and subsequent pregnancies, the doctor was able to convince the husband to “have her sterilized”.

Yet another case discussed in the report was of a young single woman of age 17 whose mother brought her into Dr. McKay’s clinic in Vancouver. The mother told him that

she knew this girl was not normal and was getting beyond her and [she couldn’t] handle her . . . The girl was getting dictatorial and fellows were trying to go with her and one of them especially she knew just had that idea in view. She says what in the world is going to be done; I says there is only one thing to do and that is sterilize her . . . (PBC Archives, Record Group GR 865, Royal Commission on Mental Hygiene, 1925, Box 1, File 9).

In this report, the doctors came to a mutual agreement that laws needed to be passed and programs set up. Dr. Rothman suggested that institutions be set up and Dr. McKay suggested setting up a Board constituted of an equal number of women and men, to review cases and order sterilizations “as they saw fit”. He emphasized the great need for these programs, saying that

You would be surprised the number of cases that would be referred to you from the Vancouver General alone. I would venture to say that in the first year alone from that clinic that I have I would send you fifty cases (PBC Archives, Record Group GR 865, Royal Commission on Mental Hygiene, 1925, Box 1, File 9).

The debates among the medical community were supplemented by the positions taken by other “experts”.

There was one Vancouver couple – The Muirs – who were vocal opponents of sexual sterilization and who aired their views in the Vancouver Sun.

Unfortunately, they had a reputation for peddling quack medical treatments and for being radically anti-medical establishment (McLaren, 1986). Nevertheless, as this excerpt from an opinion piece written by Alan Muir for the June 1, 1927 edition of the *Vancouver Evening Sun* demonstrates, there was some well-articulated opposition to the proposed laws:

Society can protect itself by isolating the unfit and vicious. Nothing more is necessary. Government has no moral, constitutional nor Christian right to appoint a professional mutilator to invade the prison cells of unfortunates with the express intention of doing them an irreparable injury (“What Is Your Opinion?: Challenges Right of Any Government to Sterilize Anyone No Matter How ‘Unfit’” June 1, 1927, *Vancouver Evening Sun*).

Soon thereafter, Muir’s article degenerated into a frenzied rant about the medical establishment and the eugenics conspiracy. He claimed, for instance, that “there are thousands of corrupt surgeons, ravenous for human victims” (“What Is Your Opinion?: Challenges Right of Any government to Sterilize Anyone No Matter How ‘Unfit’” June 1, 1927, *Vancouver Evening Sun*).

Once the bill was passed, in April of 1933, the Catholic community came out against it. On April 10, 1933, it was reported in the *Vancouver Sun* (“Sterilization Protested”) that the Archbishop W. M. Duke stated that it was passed despite the

protest of himself, 90,000 Catholics in British Columbia, and the Catholic Societies in Vancouver and Victoria.

No protest was to be successful in reversing the decision of the courts to allow sterilization. By the fall of 1933, the *Vancouver Sun* was reporting that “Sterilization Board Named” (November 1, 1933, *Vancouver Evening Sun*). The naming of the board, which included two well-known experts, Dr. McKay and social worker Laura Holland, brought the new statute into active operation.

The new bill was deemed to be a success. As early as July 12, 1933, the *Vancouver Sun* had declared that “Sterilization Proven O.K”. Based on reports out of the Alberta health department that stated in the 5 years since the law in Alberta had been passed, it had been a success. The Alberta law had, reportedly, got off to a rocky start, with many protests, but it was reported that since the early days, no complaints or criticisms from any organization or individual had been received. This article seemed to provide some reassurance to the public of British Columbia that the similar sterilization law that had just been passed in BC would stand the same test of time.

Eugenics and Cultural Discourse

As we have seen, the eugenics movement was supported by various social institutions. First and foremost, it was based on scientific theory and research and

then applied to the social arena. Social Darwinian theory provided an intellectual base and justification to breed out the “unfit”. Placing so-called undesirables within an evolutionary framework provided an impetus to action that made sense. As Havelock Ellis’ argument shows, those who were viewed as being “unfit” were the same people who were viewed as being immoral, namely prostitutes, drunks, criminals and single mothers. Those who were labeled deviant were linked together under the overarching umbrella term “the unfit” which was understood, along evolutionary lines, to be a biological condition. From this angle, it was only a matter of logical progression to conclude that the health of the entire society depended upon ensuring these “unfit” people did not reproduce.

The eugenics movement was also supported by the medical community. Included in this group were individual physicians and mental specialists, but also organizations such as the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene and institutions such as the Ponoka Mental Hospital. Other groups of helping professionals, such as social workers, also stood behind the eugenics legislation. The legal establishment was also a stronghold of support. For example, Judge Emily Murphy, who was not formally trained or accredited as a lawyer, was a strong supporter of eugenics and was active in promoting these laws. The Royal Commission on Sexual Sterilization, comprising people of various professions, was also a legal aspect of the growing discourse on eugenics.

A host of other organizations also lent their support to the establishment of eugenic sterilization laws. These included women's groups such as the Alberta Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Vancouver based Women's Canadian Club, as well as other women's organizations. The United Farmers of Alberta actively lent their support to the movement and business people and organizations like the Vancouver Board of Trade argued that it was financially necessary to implement sexual sterilization legislation for the unfit. Clergy were also supporters. One preacher from Edmonton (February 18, 1928) bragged that he often preached in favour of eugenics from his pulpit (PAB Archives, 70.414, item/file 920, Box 25).

While eugenic sterilization was not aimed exclusively at the single mother or the unwed pregnant girl, she was certainly an important embodiment of "unfitness" and target for eugenic sterilization. Her status was viewed as being proof that she was "feeble-minded" and her maternity was a particular horror, for those who advocated for eugenics legislation, because it was literally the active reproduction of this unfitness. This was compounded if the woman was also disadvantaged or ill or in otherwise poor circumstances. It was seen as appropriate that she be institutionalized in a place like the Ponoka hospital or brought before a court of law as a means of correcting this social problem. It was through these social actions and moral discourses that the "single mother", as a distinct problematic identity type was formed in part.

The Eugenics Movement as a whole was a program aimed at the improvement of society through the rational control of the population. Of particular significance was the typification of what was viewed as being “good” versus “bad” mothers, which then led to the justification of inhumane treatment of “bad” mothers. During a time when “proper” motherhood was deemed to be heroic and patriotic, “unfit” motherhood or reproduction was viewed not just as a lack of this virtue, but as socially destructive and dangerous. Defining unwed mothers as feeble-minded effectively grafted negative mental health labels onto the single mother, contributing to an overall negative image of the single mother.

Eugenics cannot be viewed alone as being a social action against single mothers. Sociologically speaking, various social characteristics and types of people were targeted. Poor people and individuals from certain immigrant groups were among those deemed the most reproductively unfit – as we have seen, up to 70% of the individuals in the B.C. and Alberta hospitals were immigrants. This was not, however, a haphazard heaping together of purportedly noxious, undesirable individuals. The social characteristics of the individuals targeted comprised various intersections of transgression against the emerging norms of the nation. Those in the line of fire were the embodiment of dissension from the nationalistic vision.

Sexuality and reproduction were, evidently, a fundamental concern for those allies of the eugenicist program. Nevertheless, sexual deviance and potential

reproductive abnormalities were only part of the picture. The eugenicists linked sexuality and reproduction to the health of society as a whole. As Angus McLaren (1986) pointed out, the debate over eugenic sterilization was an ideological one. There were people at the time who argued that targeted individuals were the victims rather than the cause of social problems and poor social conditions. Clearly, the idea that eugenic sterilization was needed to save society from the “unfit” and their (equally unfit) progeny was not a fact, rather it was a widely spread, accepted and applied philosophical viewpoint. At heart the nationalistic vision included a vision of the proper heterosexual family as the building block to a strong society – those individuals and types that were targets of the eugenics movement fell short of this vision. Here we see an intersection of class, race and lifestyle (or family style) coming together to represent a significant threat to the survival of the society.

The Eugenics Movement, as a social activist movement, is interesting from a Queer perspective. A fundamental aspect of the Movement’s approach was to sexualize and solidify identity positions for positive social change. Included foremost within the target groups were single mothers, poor people, and immigrants who were identified and classified as mental, sexual, reproductive and social defectives: in short, there was a trend toward targeting marginalized groups (Grekul, 2008: 249). Considering the public nature of the debates, the widespread dissemination of supportive ideology, as well as the wide expanse of popular support for the sterilization legislation, ideas about the “types” of people

possessing this ugly mental taint leaked generously into the culture at large. In this way, the eugenics movement helped to publicly entrench ideas about valuable Canadian citizenship; it helped to organize private lives by making it clear who had the social rights to engage in sexual and reproductive activities and in which contexts and it encouraged individuals to think about how following or breaking these rules could either strengthen or weaken Canadian society.

The Eugenics movement operated on a gendered basis. Women in Alberta were disproportionately sterilized (58 percent) even in lieu of being diagnosed as “mentally defective”(Grekul, 2008). These findings suggest, says sociologist Jana Grekul, that women “were perhaps not ‘abnormal’ in a psychiatric sense, but rather in a social sense: they violated the norms of proper feminine behavior and therefore would not be suitable mothers”(Grekul, 2008: 255).

The eugenics movement placed sexual behavior in a central position on the public radar. It put individual sexual conduct in the spotlight and politically encouraged individual citizens to have an opinion on the sex lives of other people. By framing undesirable reproduction as a drain on the public – the education system, law enforcement, social welfare agencies, the medical apparatus, the business sector and economy -- sexuality moved from the private, individual realm and became a political precept and thereby became a matter that was everyone else’s business. This made digression from the white, middle-class, heterosexual, marital norm in the form of out of wedlock pregnancy more than a personal problem in

need of management; it made it a disgrace of patriotic proportions. Eugenic sterilization bills made it legal to forcibly and permanently take reproductive control out of the hands of erring young women, and to do so in the name of social progressivism.

The Eugenics Movement is also a fine example of how power operates from a wide societal basis and with notions of morality, rather than sheer force, as a central operating tool. As we have seen, support for the movement came from many angles and from various individuals within society. The targeted individuals of the movement, it must be acknowledged, came from those sectors of society with very little traditional social power and were thus in a weakened position from the outset. However, the “power” being used came in the form of ideas and definitions about what was right, what was good, what was proper – in short, ideas and definitions about proper sexual morality. The force behind the movement was ideological in nature, and the central idea being that only those deemed “fit” should be allowed to reproduce, thus contributing to the good of society as a whole. The battle, then, was over what people believed to be right and proper, and winning that battle constituted social power in this instance.

It could well be argued that the Eugenics movement was a failure. Not just in the sense that the supportive legislation was eventually overturned but also, with an eye to the aims of accomplishing a hegemonic hold on reproductive behavior, the movement veered more toward the coercive aspects of social control and less

towards the consensual. As an aspect of the moral regulation of single motherhood, as a part of the “umbrella” being formed over the subject, the Eugenics movement, set as it was in the extreme, even gruesome, end of the spectrum of reproductive control, encountered a great deal of social criticism, not to mention a lack of willingness in its own clients. Nevertheless, it sent powerful messages into the culture about sexual morality, proper familial forms, and “good” versus “bad” mothering. In this way, it contributed to popular notions of sexual shame, notions of proper reproductive behavior, and conformity to notions of hegemonic heterosexuality. In this negative sense, then, the Eugenics Movement was a successful means of engendering society-wide “governance of the self” toward behavior supportive of hegemonic heterosexuality.

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The sterilization bills did not come under sustained attack until the 1960s. Eventually, the laws legalizing eugenic sterilization in Alberta and BC were overturned. Sexual mores were obviously changing at this time. Also, the attitude towards people with mental disabilities seemed to have changed by the 1960s. The *Vancouver Sun* reported on December 10, 1963 (“Organizer to Work With Handicapped: More Community Programs Planned by Park Board”) that more community programs were being planned for the handicapped and argued that public facilities such as camps and parks should be taken advantage of for the benefit of the handicapped. Similarly, the same newspaper, on the same day (The *Vancouver Sun*, December 10, 1963, p. 36) sported a large picture of smiling

ladies preparing Christmas packages reportedly intended for patients at the BC Mental hospitals. Furthermore, the very same newspaper, on the very same day, reported emerging activism against and public outcry over the sterilization practices in Alberta (The Vancouver Sun, December 10, 1963, “2,103 Sterilized Under Alberta Law”).

Public opinion seems to have changed from one of fear and punishment to one of compassion and caring for the handicapped in society. During this decade, the focus of the sterilization debate had shifted to a focus on birth control, and particularly over discussion of sterilization being used on a voluntary basis to curb the birth rate of the poor (*Vancouver Sun*, January 28, 1965, “Free Birth Curbs Urged for Poor”) and as a means to reduce maternal mortality resulting from illegal abortions (*Vancouver Sun*, May 16, 1968, “Doctors’ Committee Suggests: Easier Sterilization Law Could Cut Abortion Deaths”). The sterilization issue did not disappear – although terminology no longer focused on the much feared “mentally deficient” – rather, it expanded into wider reproductive debates, and toward those with blatant social disadvantages such as poor, young women likely to become pregnant out of wedlock. In the next chapter, the case study of the Edmonton Beulah Home will illustrate historical changes in social attitudes towards mental health and unwed pregnancies.

Chapter 5. The Edmonton Beulah Home for Unwed Mothers, 1909 - 1964

BEULAH (BEW-lah) English, Hebrew: “a married woman”
(Samuelson, 1994:30).

She’s more to be pitied than censored,
She’s more to be helped than despised;
She’s only a lassie who ventured,
On life’s stormy sea ill-advised,
Don’t scorn her with words fierce and bitter,
Don’t laugh at her shame and downfall;
For a moment just stop and consider,
That sin was the cause of it all.

(P. 22 from “Sad Stories From Beulah Home” by Olivia Eidsath in
Twenty Five Years of Rescue Work: Beulah Home, 1909-1934,
1934, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Acc. # 71. 47/2).

Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more (Jesus Christ, John
8:11, King James Version).

The Beulah Home for unwed mothers in Edmonton was run by Superintendent Mary A. Findlay (one of three founders of the home) for 42 years between the time of its opening in 1909, until it changed over to government hands in 1964. Also known as the “Beulah Rescue Home”, it was a deeply religious organization, as is evidenced by the opening remarks by Mary Findlay in the history of the Beulah Home written in 1934: “[We] are praying that this little volume will not only acquaint you more closely with the work of the Home, but will inspire greater faith and confidence in God who directed the opening of the work and has so graciously sustained it across these years”(PAB Archives, “Preface” by Mary A. Findlay in *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, Acc.# 71.47/2). Over and over again, we see the words of Jesus from John 8:11 – originally spoken in reference to an adulterous woman facing a murderous crowd – quoted by the Beulah Home staff, to point to the role of the Christian to love and to forgive, rather than to condemn, those who have sinned. According to this passage, everyone is a sinner. To those wishing to punish the adulterous woman, Jesus said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”(John 8:7, King James Version). This was the attitude endorsed by Mrs. Findlay and her staff.

It is clear from the historical record that the Beulah Home was run in the spirit not only of Christ, but also of charity and rescue work. As Christ opened his arms to the needy, so too did the superintendent of the Beulah Home feel her organization should offer a helping hand to the unfortunate. She stated,

How sad, that so many every year are in need of Beulah Home.
“Sick” in mind, sick at heart, and sick sometimes in body – “Sick”
and a “Stranger” so we must keep an open door, a kindly, “Come
in,” to all who need us (PAB Archives, “Preface” by Mary A.
Findlay in *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, Acc.#
71.47/2).

The girls and women who came to stay at the Home were considered to be lost and broken. The workers at Beulah were cast as rescuers and the young women who came to their door were portrayed as pathetic and needy. As Mrs. J. Price explained in her essay, “Early Struggles At Beulah Home”, published in the Beulah Home’s (1934:15) history, “It was the need which awakened the desire to help: and the desire called forth sacrificial effort”. The Home was referred to by the organizers as the “Beulah Mission”, making them, in turn, missionaries.

Working for the organization was a special calling. Indeed, “A successful worker in Beulah Home must be commissioned by God”(PAB Archives, “Early Struggles At Beulah Home” by Mrs. J. Price, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 15, Acc. # 71.47/2). A poem, also published in the Home’s 1934 history, nicely illustrates the philosophy behind the Home’s mission. In part, “Did You?” reads

Did you give her a lift? She’s your sister you know,
Her burden is heavy as she struggles on so.
Did you give her a smile? She was downcast and blue,
And the smile would have helped her to battle it through...

Did you ask what it was – why the quivering lip?
Why the heart-breaking sobs, and the bitter tears drip?
Were you sister of hers when the time came of need?
Did you share of your plenty or didn’t you heed?
(PAB Archives, “Did You”, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*,
1934, p. 18, Acc. # 71.47/2).

When it first opened, the Beulah Home catered to all sorts of young women: delinquent, homeless, drunk and drugged out, plain destitute and pregnant girls and women. However, due to the practical consideration of the great effort, staffing and funding involved, and after much prayer, the organization settled its concentration solely on “the unfortunate girls” – a term employed by the Beulah Home staff as a euphemism for an unmarried pregnant girl or woman (PAB Archives, “Early Struggles At Beulah Home by Mrs. J. Price, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 15, Acc. # 71.47/2).

These “unfortunate girls” were, purportedly, sufficiently ashamed of themselves.

Mrs. Price describes the state of the Home’s intakes:

[O]ne cannot forget some of the scenes of black despair and hopelessness of some of the girls who came for aid to Beulah Home. Some were so conscious of their sin and defilement that as I put my arms around one of them and kissed her, she said “O, how can you? I hate myself so I cannot bear to look in the mirror”. Others were so young they didn’t seem to realize or comprehend either their sin or great need; others had so little conception of right or wrong, only Divine love and wisdom could effectively minister to such (PAB Archives, “Early Struggles At Beulah Home” by Mrs. J. Price, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 15, Acc. # 71.47/2).

The Beulah Home staff members were intermediaries of Christ, their mission was to take in the “fallen girls”, who had no place else to go, and lead them to the healing powers of their own Lord and Savior. Viewing their work as a duty performed under the guidance of Christ allowed these missionaries, ministering to the “girl mothers”, to have a great deal of compassion for their sinful charges.

Mrs. Price described a handful of choice stories of young women in mournful agony at having to give up their babies and said of them that they were “more sinned against than sinning” (PAB Archives, “Early Struggles At Beulah Home” by Mrs. J. Price, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 16, Acc. #71.47/2). Mrs. Price reminded the reader that Christ had admonished his followers to treat the unfortunate with loving kindness, for in dealing with the most destitute of humankind, Christians were likewise dealing with Him, who had come to live incarnate on earth and bear the burden of our sins as if they were His.

The Beulah Home workers, while feeling compassion for the unwed mothers they helped, also clearly viewed them as being full of sin. The knowledge of a young woman’s sin, however, was always somewhat suppressed by the workers, largely because a girl or woman under such circumstances was viewed as being a victim, but also because of the eternal promise of redemption. The mix of emotions toward these young women was described by Mrs. Findlay in the Home’s 1934 history, as she clarified what these young, delinquent/ unfortunate ones were all about. In her essay “Lifting The Fallen” she described the unwed mother as such,

It is true she has been robbed of the priceless treasure of a woman’s virtue, like the man of old, she has fallen among thieves, who have robbed her, wounded her and left her half dead, for her virtue is gone, her heart is crushed and her spirit broken. She has been forsaken by friends, cast out by society and abandoned to her fate by all. In addition to this, she is an expectant mother and must face the unspeakable sorrow of bringing into the world a nameless babe. “Her light has indeed become darkness and how great is that darkness” (PAB Archives, “Lifting the Fallen” by Mary A. Findlay, 1914, reprinted in *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 17, Acc. # 71.47/2).

According to such a representation, the unmarried, pregnant girl or woman – the “girl mother” – is a weak figure to be pitied. She is a figure devoid of any type of agency, a pure victim, a “lost sheep”. Because of her gender, she is deemed to be free of sexual agency and the loss of her virtue and her subsequent pregnancy is the result of a “robbery”. Nor does she have the individual or social resources to uphold her dignity. Friends, family and society at large reject her, despite (in many cases) the perceived victimized role of the woman. Her predicament was perceived as being too despicable for any type of redemption, save for the grace of God: “No one can portray the pathos of soiled and degraded womanhood, it is sadder than death, sadder than poverty, yea, the saddest sight in the world”(PAB Archives, “Lifting The Fallen” by Mary A. Findlay, 1914, reprinted in *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 17, Acc. # 71.47/2).

The Beulah Home’s “rescue mission” was not based on any type of faith in the “fallen girl” but wholly on the redemptive powers of the omnipotent God and His “power to transform and completely restore”(PAB Archives, “Lifting The Fallen” by Mary A. Findlay, 1914, reprinted in *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 17, Acc. #71.47/2). Over and over again in the Beulah annual reports, the “broken girlhood” of the clients was likened to a broken pottery vessel, with Christ being like a potter who “can take the vessel that was marred... and make it another vessel” (PAB Archives, Beulah Mission Anniversary Report, 1928, Acc. # 71.47/2). Christ, the “Great Potter” has a personal interest in each and every

vessel broken by “The glare of sins pleasures... The lure of wrong associations...The charm of well sounding promises” and fixes the vessels as He sees fit (PAB Archives, Beulah Mission Anniversary Report, 1930, Acc.# 71.47/2). Beulah Home regarded itself as one of the “Potter’s” instruments. Although these young women were not considered to be “bad”, taking a Christ-like approach to any human being means that the individual has the potential to become “saved” and reborn in Christ’s immaculate image. As another Beulah missionary, Olivia Eidsath, summed up her mission, the task was to “Weep o’er the erring one, Lift up the fallen, Tell them of Jesus the Mighty to save”(PAB Archives, “Some Sad Stories From Beulah Home” by Olivia Eidsath, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 21, Acc. # 71.47/2).

The Beulah Home was criticized by many for being too kind to the unwed mothers. In response, society at large was portrayed by the missionaries as focusing too greatly on the deviance of the “girl-mother”. As a 1935 report states,

We have frequently heard that we are too kind to our patients, and have everything too comfortable, that these young women do not realize their position, ah, if we could only tell these friends of the bitterest struggles these young women encounter because of this dark chapter in their past (PAB Archives, Beulah Mission Anniversary Report, 1935, Acc. # 71.47/2).

The Beulah missionaries, in conscious Christ-like fashion, chose compassion rather than condemnation as a strategy to reform the girls and women and “help them regain their place in society as trusted citizens”(PAB Archives, Beulah Mission Anniversary Report, 1935, Acc. # 71.47/2).

The records of the Beulah Home provide other illustrations of how society condemns the unwed mother. One letter, sent to a client from her ailing father, reveals the scathing treatment some women received from their families,

Poor Ruth you ought to be ashamed to write to me any more you were worse than your mother she married and settled down you say you have got religion and think you can pass as a married woman...you surely will have a name for yourself in the hat...I have worried and spendt love and money on a worthless thing like you don't write to me again as you have killed the last of my love for you I want to forgit you, Your Old Pappa [sic](PAB Archives, handwritten letter, from Medicine Hat Alberta, May 31, 1931, Acc.# 71.47/2).

Clearly, this father equated a woman's marital status with her worth: her mother was worth something, having gotten married but, in his view, the daughter was only pretending to be a married (i.e., virtuous) woman by becoming a Christian, and was therefore worthless. Where society was, purportedly, ready to castigate the unwed mother, Beulah fashioned itself a refuge from such intolerance.

At least one missionary at the Beulah Home attributed the unwed pregnant woman's downfall to lack of female supervision at home. Olivia Eidsath (1934) spoke of how the lives of most of the intakes would have been different, if only they had been under the proper care of a mother at home:

Some at the age of twelve and thirteen years became mothers when they themselves needed a mother's care and protection. Some of the girls were motherless, others came from broken homes. In most

cases could the cause of their misfortune be traced to neglect or failure in the home life. How different their lives might have been had they had a mother's love and careful supervision when they needed it most! (PAB Archives, "Some Sad Stories From Beulah Home" by Olivia Eidsath, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 21, Acc. # 71.47/2).

Olivia Eidsath's selected stories in her essay "Some Sad Stories From Beulah Home" (1934) tell of 3 young women, all without the proper care of a mother (one whose parents had been divorced, one "motherless", and one having left her mother in Europe when she emigrated). All three mothers lost their babies during their stay at Beulah (2 adoptions, 1 stillbirth) and all three stories were told as being success stories. The first young woman, wild and ornery at the outset, eventually allowed the spirit of Christ to work through her, and ended up in "good service" to others. Later, she worked tirelessly nursing the sick during the flu epidemic of 1918-19. The second client, a thirteen year old who had made her living doing service work at a farm, gave her baby up for adoption and "[s]ome time after leaving the Home B was married to a young man who had loved her before her misfortune and was willing to forgive and forget the past"(PAB Archives, "Some Sad Stories From Beulah Home" by Olivia Eidsath, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 22, Acc. # 71.47/2). The third expectant mother, an immigrant who had come to Canada seeking adventure, lost her baby to stillbirth, was overcome by homesickness for her mother and her homeland. She returned to Europe and later was "happily married". Eidsath cites these stories to underline the importance and the merit of the work done at Beulah Home.

A 'proper' home life was emphasized again and again by those affiliated with Beulah Home. The Editor of a local Edmonton newspaper, E.E. Roper, re-elected Chairman of the Board of Beulah Home in 1928, wrote the following "true" story to his readers in his letter "By The Editor". The dramatization read, in part, as such

It is evening. A fire glows on the hearth and the shadows dance on the walls of the cozy room... there is warmth and happiness within. A flaxen-haired girl plays with her doll things on the carpet, the mother instinct showing forth though only three summers she yet has known. The boy, a little older, is busy also with some mechanical contrivance. The young mother is bending over her mending and humming softly as she works. The husband, glancing at the evening paper looks up now and then at the group within the room, and the happiness of fond possession shines from his eyes. But tragedy is stalking near the room!

The tragedy stalking nearby was none other than the impending death of the dear mother, an event which left the family sadly incomplete. Roper continued,

The years go by and the father does his best to keep the little family together, but the grim reaper again reaches into the home and this time the boy and girl are left alone. The girl is fourteen when tragedy breaks into her life this time...she's left alone to buck life's relentless stream. The current proves too strong and one day she stumbles into Beulah Home with her eyes blinded by tears and her heart sick with fear. (PAB Archives, "By the Editor", E.E. Roper, 1928, Acc. # 71.47/2).

This passage – a plea by the Home's Chairman to impress upon the public the merit of the Home's work, and the virtue in lending a hand or a donation to the cause – clearly illustrates the belief in the superiority of the traditional family and its heterosexual gender divisions. In short, girls are born mothers who play with

dollies, boys are mechanical or otherwise blessed with skills that will serve them well in the public work-world, women joyfully take care of their family's basic needs, fathers are wise to the world and the head or the possessor of the family. Any disruption to this order leads to great despair and misfortune. In this case, the young woman's fall from virtue, unwed pregnancy, and need for Beulah Rescue Home. There is no question from this viewpoint that the cycle of improper family life can be terminated at this junction with the young woman in this story counseled to give her baby up for adoption so that she can become a good citizen and eventually marry and set up a "proper" family.

In Eidsath's report, as well as in the reports of the other staff members, an unwed pregnancy was described as a great misfortune, the loss of the child a heartbreak that a so-called broken and fallen young woman must endure, and the rehabilitation leading to service to others and/or a marriage a great success. Mrs. Buck, from Beulah Home told the story of a young woman at the home who waited night after night for the father of her baby to come to the home for her and the infant. While it was assumed that he would not show up, he one day, finally, did:

Then one day "he" came – such a fine looking lad. He came again and again. The little baby came too. The second time after he saw the wee boy, our tactful, wise, motherly superintendent suggested and urged with him an immediate marriage to which the lad's own heart must have said "Amen", because only three days later he phoned up. "If you will bring L....in we will get married"...The car comes and Lwent to a name and happiness (PAB Archives, "Wedding Bells" by Mrs. Buck, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 56, Acc. # 71.47/2).

As in other accounts, the end result of an unmarried woman's pregnancy leading to marriage (with or without her child) was the ultimate success story. As Mrs. Buck pointed out, there is nothing unusual about a wedding, it is life as usual. What is remarkable is that the missionaries at Beulah Home were there "bearing the burden of those who have slipped on [life's] pathway, and helping them to be men and women" (PAB Archives, "Wedding Bells" by Mrs. Buck, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 56, Acc. # 71.47/2).

"Finding Christ" was also a measure of success at the home. As Myrtle Bailey, former Matron of Beulah Home said of one young woman she recalled, "She came to us and what a joy she was, as she soon found Christ"(PAB Archives, "A Former Matron's Report" by Myrtle Bailey, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 23, Acc. # 71.47/2). All three women that Bailey singled out as successfully rehabilitated clients, became strong Christian women, later continuing to follow the Lord, one even "started a small Sunday School, kept it up for a long time, and finally married a Christian man"(PAB Archives, "A Former Matron's Report" by Myrtle Bailey, *Twenty-Five Years of Rescue Work*, p.23, Acc. # 71.47/2). Single pregnancy was viewed as an almost unspeakable tragedy. The role of the Beulah Home was to re-socialize these unfortunate, deviant young women into socially acceptable female behaviors and roles.

Giving babies born to unmarried women up for adoption appears to have been the preferred policy for women giving birth at Beulah Home. One account tells of the

sorrow involved for the “girl-mother” when she gave her baby away for adoption. The reason given, however, for cooperation on the part of the mother is that she knew it was for the baby’s own good. The great heartache was endured because the mother was convinced that she was incapable of fulfilling the baby’s needs:

The fact that many of these girl-mothers cannot hope to be able to provide for their baby, does not say they haven’t mother love. They have. They would do anything they could to keep it, but because they love their baby and do not want it to be deprived of a reasonable chance to be educated and trained for usefulness, they sign their consent for its adoption
(PAB Archives, *Twenty-Five Years of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 37, Acc. # 71.47/2).

Not all of the babies were adopted out: figures rose to just over 50% of all babies born at Beulah in 1934 being signed over for adoption. Reportedly, finding adopting families for the babies was an easy task, many letters of application for adoptions were received by the Beulah Home, and the department of child welfare was, purportedly, very helpful and cooperative in placing babies with adoptive parents. Advertisements were taken out in the local newspapers with pictures of the babies who were available for adoption, little descriptions of the appearance and personality of each, and accompanied by headings and write-ups such as this:

Orphans! We Want A Home...

Merry Christmas, folks! We know it’s a little early, but how’s chances to spend Christmas with you? We’d like to hang our little pink and blue sox on somebody’s mantle-piece and to have a real Christmas in a real home of our own with a real Daddy and Mummy to see that we didn’t over-eat or anything like that but that we had a real Christmas...it’s going to be kind of hard having a real Christmas unless we have Daddies and Mummies. That’s what

we heard in the place where the babies come from... But unless some Mummy and Daddy come along soon it looks as if we'll be out of luck (PAB Archives, "Orphans! We Want A Home...", Acc. # 71.47/2).

By 1936, there were references being made in the Beulah reports to the "marvelous provision of foster homes"(Beulah Mission Annual Report, 1936, Provincial Archives of Alberta). The foster home system had reportedly led to the facilitation of younger adoptions, as well as to less crowded nursery conditions at the Beulah Home at the same time that more young women were coming through the Home.

Beulah also boarded babies for months at a time to allow the young mothers to get a head-start at working and making money so that they could provide for their babies (PAB Archives, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 38, Acc. # 71.47/2). A young woman, mentioned in the 1934 history, who chose this option was apparently not discouraged. Indeed, as one staff member put it, "There are a number who can take their baby home with them, which is one of the very best ways to meet this great problem"(PAB Archives, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 38, Acc. # 71.47/2). The specifics of such an option were not elaborated upon.

Evidently, many "cured" young women internalized the vision of themselves as "fallen girls". One such "Rescued Girl" wrote about her self in such terms in a poem entitled "The Bird With The Broken Wing", published in the Beulah

Home's 1934 history. The poem described the young woman's transformation, as evidenced in this verse:

My heart took up melodiously the song the bird was singing,
And through my life with all its strife the matchless strains went
ringing,
From sin, and shame, and sorrow, He raised my sin-sick soul
His healing touch on a broken life restored and made me whole.
(PAB Archives, "The Bird With The Broken Wing" by A Rescued
Girl, *Twenty-Five Years*, 1934, Acc. # 71.47/2)

The kindness given by the women working at the maternity home was evidently appreciated by some clients. A letter written by one of the unwed mothers to a staff member, years after she had lived at the home and having subsequently gained comfort and happiness in her life, recalled the following moment from her stay at Beulah Home:

Do you remember one day I met you in the nursery, you did not say a word but just put your arms around me and kissed me? That was the turning point in my life. I felt that if someone like you could love me, there might still be something to live for. Since that day you have been as a guiding star in my life (PAB Archives, "Some Sad Stories From Beulah Home" by Olivia Eidsath, client's letter recalled by the missionary, *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 22, Acc. # 71.47/2).

It is important to realize that the stories retold by the Beulah Home staff were selective and biased by virtue of those doing the telling. Nevertheless, staff accounts at least, are consistent in their unwavering conviction that they were "saving" these young women's lives.

Personal testimonies of former clients, published in *Twenty-Five Years of Rescue Work* (1934), attest to the role that Beulah Home had played in their lives. Over and over, the young women cited their religious revival as the fundamental benefit they had derived from their stay at the home, as is evidenced in the following lines, written by 5 former clients:

When I think of our Saviour's promise, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest," I feel surely that Beulah Home is an answer to that promise (PAB Archives, "What Beulah Home Has meant To Me" by "T", in *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 41, Acc. # 71.47/2).

Last but not least, is the spiritual education received here. Belief in the Bible and Salvation has been restored unto me and I have been given eyes to see that evolution is only built upon theories and not facts as the Bible. As I return into the world from this, my second home, unto those I once called friends, I shall carry in my heart and on my lips the story of Jesus and the little songs from the Sunday evening sing-songs...(PAB Archives, "My New Home" by "M", in *Twenty-Five Years Of Rescue Work*, 1934, p. 41, Acc. # 71.47/2).

I am still as close to my Lord as when I was with you. It takes such a load off my heart to talk to Him. I cannot praise you and the staff highly enough, for treating me and my baby so wonderful, and bringing me back to my Saviour and the straight and narrow path. I hope you will always pray for me, and keep a little place in your heart for me (PAB Archives, "An Appreciation" by "E" in *Twenty-Five Years*, 1934, p. 42, Acc. # 71.47/2).

As I journey along the pathway of life, I shall always remember my stopping point at Beulah Home. It was there, I learned the way of salvation, and so will continue the rest of the journey on the straight and narrow way (P. 42, "What I think of Beulah Home" by "B" in *Twenty-Five Years*, 1934, p. 42, Acc. # 71.47/2).

...I took the cold attitude toward the Home at first. I thought there was nobody in the wide world who cared for, or had any use for those who fell, but to my surprise, after entering Beulah Home, I found love and help that I needed, but above all I found my way to the foot of the cross where I met the Lord Jesus who so tenderly lifted me from the island of sin (PAB Archives, "A Testimony" by "B" in *Twenty-Five Years*, 1934, p. 57, Acc. # 71.46/2).

Again, it is important to note that these personal testimonies were selected by staff members out of thousands of women's stories that could have been chosen over the years. These stories are not necessarily representative of the views of all the clients who stayed at Beulah Home. Nevertheless, they point clearly to the philosophical viewpoint advocated at the home. The Beulah Home missionaries were proud and forthcoming about their belief system and the religious nature of their "rescue" work. These testimonies represent the highest standards and the most ideal results for which the Beulah Home staff aimed in their rehabilitation of unwed mothers.

The Beulah Home was not, by any means, an obscure religious institution which catered to a special subsection of single pregnant women affiliated with a certain church or group of churches. Beulah Home housed hundreds of Edmonton area, and province wide, "girl-mothers" over the years, taking out frequent advertisements and fund-raising pleas in the local newspapers. One advertisement placed in an Edmonton area newspaper read as such:

A Baby's Cry

A Baby's cry touches almost any heart. But when the wee one is nameless and homeless and with a stain on its innocent little life, its plea should strike deeper than ever. Forty-nine babies were born at Beulah Home this year. They are reaching out little hands to **YOU** now. Have you sent your dollar?

Mail it NOW please!

Beulah Home

Edmonton

(PAB Archives, Acc. # 71.47/2)

The Beulah Home was a smashing success, and was publicly praised in the local newspapers. It was proclaimed that “Wayward Girls Are Sent on Right Track by Local Institution” and that a desperate need was being fulfilled in supporting the “little nameless babies” (PAB Archives, Acc. # 71.47/2). The *Edmonton Bulletin* announced on January 7, 1918 that “over Thousand Attend Tenth Anniversary of Founding of the Beulah Mission Here”, a celebration held at the First Baptist Church on 102cd Street. Several guests attended what would become the annual addresses by Superintendent Mary A. Findlay, who reported on the goings-on and successes of the home. In 1928, an Edmonton area newspaper reported that “Hundreds Attend[ed] Outdoor Services at Beulah Home” (PAB Archives, Acc. #71.47/2) for that year’s annual service in September. The historical records show photographs of large numbers of people gathered on the lawn of the Beulah Home, with chairs set up especially for the comfort of those attending the yearly event.

Beulah Home did not consider itself a “charity” but a “chance for every girl in need” (PAB Archives, *Beulah Home Informer*, n.d., Acc. # 71.47/2). The Home was run financially through collections from “the man responsible”, grants from the City of Edmonton, the Provincial Government, other municipalities, as well as the Home’s fundraising activities. By the end of the year 1959, close to 5,000 unwed mothers had received services from the Home and over 4000 babies had been brought into the world inside its doors (*Edmonton Journal*, “Kind Door

Open For Half Century”, Sept 10, 1959). Beulah Mission was a thriving, public institution.

The numbers using the facility increased as the years went by, expansions to the building were made, and the running of the Home, necessarily, became more regulated. There was a perception that unwed pregnancy was becoming a larger social phenomenon:

Conditions have changed in our country and the moral standard is slowly but surely breaking down, this with a growing population, has brought to our doors an increasing toll of broken girlhood which is sad, indeed (PAB Archives, Untitled Report, 1932, p. 1, Acc. #71.47/2).

The growing tolerance for the single mother filtered through to the home itself by the 1960s. As *Edmonton Journal* staff writer Pat Taylor pointed out, “At the time of the opening of the home, girls went there to hide from the censure of society. During the years however, the institution has proven to be a ‘home’, in the true sense of the word” (*Edmonton Journal* , “Kind Door Open For Half Century”, Sept 10, 1959).

In 1962, Mrs. Findlay was officially named Edmonton’s #1 Citizen. The Home was nearly closed that year due to “radical changes in the city welfare department’s policies and the attitude of the public toward unmarried mothers and babies” as well as the fact that the building was not approved under the city’s building codes at that time (*Edmonton Journal*, “Beulah Home Plans To Close

Operation”, January 30, 1962). Negotiations between the Home and the provincial welfare department, however, proved fruitful, with operations remaining open and a new building plan drawn up (*Edmonton Journal*, “Plan to Retain Beulah Home”, Oct 24, 1962). Two years later, in 1964, the newly named Woodside Homes with its cottage style housing was taken over by the Province of Alberta and touted as the only maternity home in Canada to be completely government run (*South Edmonton Sun*, “Beulah Home Has New Look”, Sept 12, 1964).

The religiously inspired charity of the Beulah home was a contrast to the scientifically based initiatives of the eugenicists and other social Darwinians concerned with “race degeneracy”. The Home’s charitable stance was the exact position being criticized by the eugenicists for being a part of the problem of propagating unfitnes. Beulah also provides a stark contrast to the more punitive, criminological attitudes of other agencies such as Children’s Aid Societies, and the state run welfare organizations that were to emerge as the century moved along.

Summary

Important elements of sexuality and reproduction are biological realities. As lived experience, sex, pregnancy, childbirth and post-partem breastfeeding and care of a child all require, to varying degrees, the use of the body. All of these aspects of

sexuality and reproduction are also subject to social manipulation²⁴. Single motherhood is subject to societal controls and variable views in regard to sexuality and reproduction. As Foucault (1975) pointed out, the military aspect of contemporary western society, pre-conditions members of our society to a large degree of biological docility.

We can apply Foucault's notion of "docile bodies" in the case of The Beulah Home for Unwed mothers. For instance, the missionaries redefined the bodies and status of the pregnant women as "girl-mothers", a term which represented the infantilization of these women. It rendered them "girls", not "women" and it undermined their capabilities as responsible mothers. Hundreds of women, in the face of substantial suffering, gave their babies up for adoption. Positioning these women as "girl-mothers", and all that was involved in accomplishing the title, and the moralization of their situations, made these women and their bodies "docile". It created a situation in which they obediently followed the rules. It is no mean feat to take a newborn infant away from a new mother. These women were encouraged to believe that they had been victimized and were, therefore, victims; that having a child out of wedlock was a sin and against the will of an all-loving Saviour; that society, including family and friends, would not accept them or their child as a single mother family; and that they were shirking their gendered citizenship responsibilities in keeping a child born out of wedlock. It seems

²⁴ As an older woman, and family friend, explained to me, when she had young children in the late 1960s, early 1970s, breastfeeding was considered to be only for the lowliest of "peasants". When she had another child in the early 1980s, however, breastfeeding was back in the favour of the health care profession. She and her youngest child then enjoyed the benefits of breastfeeding.

evident that the Beulah Home caught a lot of its flies with honey, so to speak. The testimonies of some of these women showed that they were not only docile, but abundantly thankful for the path that Beulah helped them to take. Regardless of how the unwed mothers felt about their treatment or the outcome of their stay at Beulah, the evidence that survives indicates that they were expected to behave in a compliant, obedient manner.

The unwed mothers who came to Beulah, arrived conditioned to confess the details of their circumstances. They only came to Beulah because they needed help to begin with. But they also were living in a society in which as Foucault put it, sex was a “police matter”(1978: 24). These women had transgressed social norms. Their bodies and their sexuality did not belong to them alone. Their biology was subject to social control and women were accustomed to being told how to, ideally, control their sexual behaviour.

Unwed pregnancy created a vast industry in which the policing of sexuality played out its “perpetual spirals of power and pleasure”. The evasion of authority required for pre-marital sex, the fact of being “caught” by becoming pregnant, the terror of needing to seek help, being subject to the punishing gaze of the authority, the purging, the long-last truth telling, the thrill of being the saviours (charity or social workers, adoptive parents), the cleansing rebirth of being the saved, the social support given to reformulate and follow social norms of proper womanhood

– this grouping of behaviours is a socially constructed play of power and pleasure, each depending upon the other to make it a reality.

The Beulah Home, along with the religious and charity-minded principles and philosophies that they followed, provide evidence of another cluster of social discourse built up around the single mother. Unwed pregnant women were positioned as a growing social group of immature and victimized females who, despite the biological realities of reproduction, were viewed and treated socially as non-mothers. As such, organizations such as the Beulah Home in Edmonton, helped to create a cultural conflation of youthful (child, teen) mothers with single mothers. If being a full grown, mature woman is only accomplished through marriage, then unmarried women are still children and, further, a child, by definition, cannot be a mother. This infantilization of the unwed mother is one way in which the single mother family, with the single mother positioned as viable head of household, has often been rejected as a reputable alternative family form²⁵.

While the Beulah missionaries did not treat these women as perpetrators of their own downtrodden circumstances, even as the victims of other social actors (their own mothers, uncontrollable male sexuality, profanity within modern society), social control over the meaning of unwed pregnancy was enacted in the Beulah

²⁵ This is not to say that the single mother family is universally degraded by all societal members or by all societal groups. It has never, however, enjoyed the status or hegemony of the nuclear family unit within Canadian society.

Home. Rules of conduct and procedures that needed to be followed by each woman were structured into the organization's policies.

The case of the Beulah Home provides a clear example of several of the social processes being explored by this thesis. It shows how single motherhood has been created as a deviant category in opposition to the norms of hegemonic heterosexuality. Even in name, the Home was set up as a place where "married women" were available to assist and reform unwed mothers. The moral – or more specifically, the religious – component of the Home was made explicit and comprised the core of the operational philosophy. Specific cases have been highlighted to demonstrate that unwed pregnancy and motherhood were treated as unfortunate, problematic situations. These women, according to the Beulah staff, had fallen away from female virtue. A considerable knowledge base was created surrounding the causes of unwed pregnancy: be it through "poor" gender modeling at home, a lack of maternal guidance toward proper gender roles, or through falling victim to male predation. Proper gender and mothering roles were clearly held up as the ideal to work towards for these young women.

A clear delineation of power was structured around these moralized identity categories: mature married women (or virginal women on that same track) were viewed as upright, qualified helpers, whereas unmarried "girl-mothers" were those in need of being helped. Those in the morally correct category were not necessarily individuals with a great deal of social power, but they exercised power

through their position within the Home's moral hierarchy – that is, through the organization of their institution into identity categories.

One of the main tenets being examined in this study is the process of hegemony in reference to identities and subjectivities. The example of the Beulah Home demonstrates how the heterosexual ideal is accepted by both the dominant and the deviant group. The unwed mothers who came to Beulah were evidently in need of assistance. They easily comprised a group of individuals open to negative self evaluation. By approaching these women with an air of forgiveness and a promise of hope and renewal for the future, it is easy to see how these women would embrace and work toward proper gender roles and behaviors. By accepting the label of sinner or deviant, these women accepted a negative definition of the single mother but could envision themselves as capable of becoming something “better”.

As we have seen, many of the young pregnant women who came to Beulah actively worked toward becoming morally upright, as that was defined, and viewed their transformation as being the best thing that ever happened to them. Such a process is an exercise in social conformity. Along with the presence of coercion (the initial labeling of the girls and their circumstances as being sinful and wrong and in need of being fixed), and the presence of consent (the adoption and embrace of the dominant morality), there is also a stabilizing of the negative identity category of the single mother. Individuals moved in and out (however

uneasily) of single motherhood, but single motherhood itself remained a negative identity category. While some women kept their babies, technically remaining single mothers, they could still be viewed as successes in the eyes of the Beulah Home, because they were striving to attain a heterosexual ideal. Their deviant sexual behavior had changed with their newfound outlook. This may have worked well, and indeed made sense, for those involved but for those on the outside, it was a harder sell to make: as one father of an unwed pregnant woman jeered (quoted above), “you ...think you can pass as a married woman[!]”

The Beulah Home, and other charitable and religious organizations like the Home were not the only institutions that structured the discourse around single mothers. Out of all of society’s institutions and organizations that had practical dealings with single mothers and that produced discourses surrounding single motherhood, none was more involved in these activities than the Children’s Aid Society. The reports of the Children’s Aid Society of Vancouver and additional informational media, most notably the local newspapers, provide a comprehensive record of society’s views of the single mother beginning at the turn of the century, which we will examine in the next chapter. As we will see, the Children’s Aid Society had a view of single motherhood which contrasted significantly with the biological determinism of the eugenics movement. Generally speaking, the Children’s Aid Society looked upon the children under its care with a more sociological stance and sensitivity toward environmental factors that produce

deviant behavior in contrast to the ideology of naturally reproducing, inheritable criminality.

Chapter 6. The Children's Aid Society of Vancouver:

“We Protect the Little Ones”

At the turn of the 20th century there was a distinctly putative, moral tone concerning “deviant” women. The newly formed Children’s Aid Society of Vancouver (CASV), incorporated under the Children’s Protection Act of British Columbia in 1901, was part of this social movement to put a stop to the erring ways of wayward women, and to help those innocents harmed by their behaviour. According to the First Annual Report of the CASV, the Children’s Protection Act was passed as a result of

public agitation asking for some protection for young children against influences by which many were surrounded, which could only end within growing up either paupers or criminals (COV Archives, CASV, 1st Annual Report, 1902, p.7, Ann Angus Fonds, Add. MSS No. 351, file 2).

In the CASV Reports and in the literature produced by affiliated organizations, there was a preponderance of criminological jargon in reference to the personal environments from which the Society’s target group was emerging.

Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, the CASV President in 1905, spoke of saving “waifs and strays” from “an evil and criminal future” due to the “vicious and demoralized settings” they were living in. Tupper argued that it was the obligation of the state, in its role as ‘Parens Patriae’, to intervene, remove, and become the guardians of children suffering from “the haunts of vice”(BCMCF, CASV 4th Annual Report, 1905, p. 5, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046). The (1901) Children’s Protection Act gave Children’s Aid Societies the right to remove children from their home environments and to become their rightful guardians. This law

followed English common law where “there is and always has been authority in [the] Courts to interfere in these cases”(BCMCF, CASV 4th Annual Report, 1905, p. 5, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Tupper argued that non-intervention in the case of mistreated or neglected children was detrimental for society. He claimed that these children needed to be saved lest they “become criminals and society will suffer and thousands of souls will be ruined”(BCMCF, CASV 4th Annual Report, 1905, p. 7, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046). The Reverend C. C. Owen agreed, stating that

I feel that the principle of prevention is one we cannot emphasize too greatly and when we know that so many of these children come from environments which are the worst possible – and we are being educated to understand that environment has as much to do with criminality as heredity, we want to use every effort to remove those children from such environments (BCMCF, CASV 4th Annual Report, 1905, p. 24-25, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Tupper claimed that no other youth oriented agencies, such as churches, gymnasiums and orphanages dealt “so directly with the criminal classes” as did the CAS (BCMCF, CASV 4th Annual Report, 1905, p. 7, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046). Mr. F.C Wade, an invited speaker to the Annual meeting, likened the children’s impending criminality to a fire, stating that to put out a fire, you must start at the source rather than at the top of the flame. Mr. Wade opined that all the jails and penitentiaries in the Dominion of Canada could not equal the effectiveness of the work that the CASV was doing (BCMCF, CASV 4th Annual

Report, 1905, p. 5, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046). The reason he believed so strongly in the work of social intervention was because he believed that

the child was not bad by character and disposition; it is in many cases absurd to suppose that he did wrong with criminal intent. It is more a matter of environment. That is the modern point of view...(BCMCF, CASV 4th Annual Report, 1905, p. 32, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Clearly, the original CASV members and supporters believed that, in reforming their young charges, they were intercepting and neutralizing the criminals of the future.

The reform work of the CASV involved invoking the related values of Godliness and cleanliness in the place of vice. The Society sought to “scour” the province for needy children who were to be given over to “the advantages of clean and Godly homes”, where they would receive “care and salvation”(BCMCF, CASV 4th Annual Report, 1905, p. 5, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

The strong religious and moral thread running through the early years of the CASV (particularly pre-WWII) is not surprising considering the Children’s Aid Society’s close ties to the Protestant religious community. The first president of the CASV was a man of the cloth – the Reverend G.W. McBeth of the First Baptist Church of Vancouver, and the meetings were originally held at the First Baptist Church of Vancouver (BCMCF, CASV 34th Annual Meeting, 1935, p.1, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

The CASV felt it was their duty to install some semblance, as best as they could, of a Christian upbringing for these children. The Rev. A. Macaulay, who visited the CASV often, heard prayers at dinner and received the children at his church on Sundays. He described his role in relation to the Society as such:

This is no easy task when we know the kinds of homes from whence [the children] come. There are hundreds of fathers and mothers in this city that are simply no good . . . As far as I am concerned, my great purpose was to help them along spiritual lines (BCMCF, CASV 17th Annual Report, 1918, p. 17-18, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Another organization that was affiliated with the CASV (referred to in the 1905 Report) was the Moral and Social Reform Council of British Columbia. In their 1912 pamphlet “Social Vice in Vancouver” (COV Archives, Pamphlets Collection, Pam 1912-43, Social Vice in Vancouver/ report issued by the Moral and Social Reform Council of British Columbia, 1912, p. 6-7), they discussed the “vice” that their organization deemed the most significant threat to civilized society – prostitution. So evil did they consider prostitution that its name, to them, became synonymous with the word “vice”. This organization was in a state of alarm over prostitution in Vancouver. To them, the most significant cause of prostitution was the lack of money and poor housing choices available for young women. While this could be read as an argument in favour of female equality and financial empowerment, the authors also blamed and bemoaned the fact that the poor financial situation for young people prevented early marriage, making it

clear that they did not foresee female independence as being a solution to the problem, but female dependence upon breadwinning males.

In regard to the poor financial situation of young women, the Moral and Social Reform Council of British Columbia linked the problem of prostitution to unwed motherhood. They stated that one area of concern to them was the number of domestic workers that fell into prostitution. They claimed that this “class” of women was almost single-handedly responsible for the problem of unwed motherhood in the city, and internationally:

Two of the Rescue Homes here gave the information that most of the unmarried mothers whom they receive were of this class. Statistics from Germany and other countries point out the same thing (COV Archives, Pamphlets Collection, Pam 1912-43, Social Vice in Vancouver/ report issued by the Moral and Social Reform Council of British Columbia, 1912, p. 6-7).

The WCTU as a whole was enraged by the evil of alcohol and how it made men misbehave and mistreat wives and children and a degree of pity was extended to some single mothers. The Moral and Social Reform Council discourse demonstrated some degree of empathy for what they viewed as innocent young girls being corrupted by poverty and by living in (or even walking by) the wrong district of the city. A woman rescued from such a situation, was different from a woman who got herself “in trouble” through unmarried sexual deviance. Nevertheless, unmarried mothers were labeled criminals for becoming pregnant out of wedlock, as in this passage from 1935 in which the author quotes from a 1912 CASV Report:

Applications are now being made to take children over to the Society and too often the request is made to cover up the crime of bringing a child into the world without a name and permit the mother and alleged father to pass through the world as being without a stain on their character (BCMCF, CASV 34th Annual Report, 1935, p. 6, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

It was the connection to the criminal class that caused the Alexandria Orphanage to reject too close an affiliation with the CASV in 1904. The CASV opened its own receiving home for children in 1903, after using the Alexandria home for two years. The issue of amalgamation was brought up on occasion, but was definitively dropped in 1904 (the year from which this 1935 Report is quoting in the following passage) because of the

“very wide gulf” between the work of the two, the work of the Orphanage being designated as “charity” covering the care of children of respectable parents who for one reason or another could not care for them, and that of the Society as “administration of justice” since every child in the care of the Society was the child of a criminal – “Our children are the children of criminals”, the report ends, “Amalgamation with the Alexandria Orphanage is impossible as the children there should not and could not be mixed with the children of criminals”(BCMCF, CASV 34th Annual Report, 1935, p. 13, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Unmarried motherhood was brought up over and over in the CASV reports. Generally, the tone was one of pity, with the mother being cast as a pathetic woman, unable to cope on her own, and left out of society. Occasionally, the marriage of one such young woman was announced. This was an occasion of overwhelming joy, with the idea being promoted that the marriage, particularly if it was to the child’s biological father, would make life possible for the woman and

child(ren). There was an expressed feeling that the woman was saved by the marriage, given another chance.

Eventually, the CASV came to see their organization as playing a paternal or parental role with the children. By 1918 – following the great war as well as a great influenza epidemic – the discourse had taken a more positive turn, and was less putative, emphasizing the idea of children as great national investments. The President of the CASV at that time argued that the unfortunate children be cared for on this basis:

If the boys and girls are the greatest asset for a young country like Canada to have, we have to ask ourselves what our attitude towards them should be, more particularly the less fortunate ones. Is it too much to ask the government to give a little paternal care to the unfortunate child? (BCMCF, CASV 17th Annual Report, 1918, p. 16, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

The CASV and its affiliates claimed to have the highest regard for children's well-being and the well-being of their communities, their country, and humanity as a whole. These activists included the professional elite of their community, representing clergy, university professors and doctors. And yet, the preponderance of discourse surrounding nationality, survival of the fittest, eugenics, patriarchy, and a strict sense of Christian morality led to a situation in which the children and the mothers that they were purportedly there to help were depicted as, in one way or another, having something drastically wrong with them.

In 1918, an academic by the name of Professor Hetherington addressed the Children's Aid Society in reply to their request that he speak on "The Value of the Child". Hetherington addressed the topic in terms of Children's Rights. He regarded the foremost of children's rights to be the right to be "well-born". He praised the Eugenics movement, advocated a ban on the marrying of the "feeble-minded", and for the social policing of venereal disease. He pointed out that the child was the product of "the past history of the race", proclaiming that the "feeble-minded and tainted boys and girls cry out against the community for robbing them of their birthright"(BCMCF, CASV 17th Annual Report, 1918, p. 24, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Another right of the child, according to Hetherington, was the right to have a father and a mother. In this respect, he decried the post-war increase in the divorce rate:

An aftermath of the great world struggle is the astonishingly large number of applications for separation in our divorce courts. In these suits there should be an advocate to defend the rights of the child. Every influence and pressure should be brought by the community upon the parents in the interests of the child. The appeal of the helpless and unoffending child should lead the parents in the interests of the child. The appeal of the helpless and unoffending child should lead the parents to sober thought, sound judgment, and the sacrifice of wounded feeling (BCMCF, CASV 17th Annual Report, 1918, p. 25, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

This sentiment, of course, is central to a discussion of the single mother. Many mothers become single upon separation and/or divorce – a trend that increased in the second half of the 20th century. In arguing that divorce is so very harmful to a

child that men and women should avoid it at great cost – indeed, possibly even enduring abuse, although this matter is not explicitly discussed in this instance – illustrates the great bias against single parent families. It is true that great hardship may result from divorce and the re-figuration of the family unit as a single mother home, particularly in terms of the poverty such a move would likely engender. Nevertheless, these difficulties existed precisely because there was a lack of societal support for the single mother family and/or opportunities for female self-sufficiency. Instead, there was widespread condemnation for these families, as the record of Hetherington's address attests.

Another right of the child discussed by Hetherington, was the right to nourishment and community support in ensuring that nourishment. In this regard, he warned against pregnant women working for pay, as he claimed it was hazardous to the unborn child:

...[C]hildren [are] born with low vitality owing to their mothers being forced to work to the point of fatigue. The nourishment which should go to the unborn infant is used up to sustain the mother's muscular action, and thus the child is robbed of its right to its full share of vitality. This fatigue on the part of its mother may raise the earnings of some commercial enterprise, but it also leaves in the physical system of the unborn child the poison of fatigue, which filches the right of the child to its full and fair growth (BCMCF, CASV 17th Annual Report, 1918, p. 25-26, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

A guideline blocking women from paid employment during pregnancy seriously undermines the ability of a mother to be self-sufficient. If the only way to be a good mother during pregnancy is to not work for pay, then a good mother, in

effect, equals a dependent woman. This point is reminiscent of recent debates over the rights of the unborn child verses the rights of a pregnant woman. This debate, in its current form, has raised concern among some feminist groups and individuals because elevating fetal rights above the rights of women may well lead to an erosion of the rights of women.

According to Hetherington, the child should be valued above all else in society because a strong, healthy population ensures the survival of the nation. In closing his address, he made the Social Darwinian point that

the great law of the survival of the fittest applies equally to the nation as to the individual. The nation which has the largest number of physically sound, intellectually developed and morally controlled individuals is the nation that is going to survive (BCMCF, CASV 17th Annual Report, 1918, p. 26, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

This 1918 address to the Children's Aid Society by Professor Hetherington ties together several strands of concern in this study. His address encompassed Christian, conservative sexual morality; eugenics; and the fear of female independence which is tied to fear of an uncontrollable female sexuality.

Beginning in the 1920s, there appeared to be a more professional, "social work" approach to the running of the Children's Aid Society. There was a less explicitly moral tone to the CASV philosophy and more of a push for people to "help themselves". This approach increased throughout the century, but had initially become evident during the inter-war period. That is not to say that the references

to morality and to the needs of the nation were non-existent at this time. For instance, in the 1922 Annual Report, one CASV member stated that

The child of today is the citizen of tomorrow . . . how much is embodied in these nine words. The child – the citizen – the nation. Hence, it is plainly the duty of every right-thinking and loyal citizen to do his or her part to bequeath to the Empire a generation of God-fearing, righteous young men and women; sound in body and mind (BCMCF, CASV 21st Annual Report, 1922, p. 2, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Nevertheless, these foci were becoming tempered by a more liberal, professional stance. At this time, the CASV's declared mission was to help out in those few cases where the parents "probably through no fault of their own" could not raise or care for a child due to sickness or adversity (BCMCF, CASV 21st Annual Report, 1922, p. 2, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Many changes came about in the late 1920s, as the Society followed the recommendations of the British Columbia Child Welfare Survey of 1927, a study instigated by the Children's Aid Society and carried out by the Canadian Welfare Council. Among the recommendations made by the Child Welfare Survey was the recommendation for each CASV office to hire one or more experienced social worker to overlook the welfare and protection of children in their own homes as well as in adoptive homes through a special "Family Work Department". In reference to unmarried mothers and adoptions, recommendations were made to develop facilities specifically to deal with the "grave social problems associated with such babies", preferably through the CASV and implemented by the Family

Work Department. Also recommended was a non-denominational family case working agency to be set up in Vancouver that would stress social adjustment and family rehabilitation over and above financial aid (BCMCF, CASV 35th Annual Meeting, February 22nd, 1937, Manager's Report for the year 1936, p. 9, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0040).

The 1936 Annual Report provides a neat summation of the changes that had occurred between the early and the more recent years of the Society:

Perhaps the most marked change centred about its preventive policy, which meant, according to an early report, 'removing a child from an unsuitable home environment in order to prevent it becoming a criminal', but which today means something saner and more constructive, namely concentrated effort in the matter of removing the causative factors in the unsuitable home environment and so, if possible, overcoming the necessity for removing the child and at the same time lessening the likelihood of it becoming a criminal, or a 'delinquent' as we now say (BCMCF, CASV 35th Annual Meeting, February 22nd, 1937, Manager's Report for the year 1936, p. 1, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0040).

In short, the focus of the CASV in the inter-war period shifted away from removing the child from its family environment and toward changing the family environment itself.

In 1927, the CASV implemented the recommended Family Work Department.

The aim, articulated in the 1928 Annual Report was "[t]o place a child satisfactorily with its parents or relatives rather than to make it a ward of the state..."(BCMCF, CASV 27th Annual Report, 1928, p. 5, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

The logic behind this shift, explained by the head of the social work department, Miss Collins, in a 1936 Manager's Report, was that a child must learn to live in the real world, not an institution. To this end, the fundamental work of the department was to alter the environment to such a degree that it would be a reasonably safe environment for a child. Further, she explained that "[a] child's own family has long been recognized as the place for his nurture and upbringing, but the tremendous value and importance of family ties and the ruinous results of their severance are being more fully understood as sociology and psychology develop"(BCMCF, CASV 35th Annual Meeting, February 22nd, 1937, Manager's Report for the year 1936, p. 2, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0040).

In 1929, Miss Collins had described a more intensely involved process of working with clients and their families than was evidenced in the past. She likened the process of social work to the work of a medical doctor:

Social investigation is the keynote of the work of this department and is on a par with preliminary work done in other fields. For instance, when a patient goes to a doctor complaining of a pain in a swollen finger the doctor does not merely look at it wisely and say, 'Very well, we'll remove the finger', but rather by linking together the information obtained from the patient and experience gained in the field of medicine he assures himself of the cause, prescribes treatment, and may or may not remove the finger. And so a complaint received regarding the ill treatment of a child does not necessarily mean the removing of the child from the environment but it does mean, whenever possible, treatment and care, based on a thorough investigation of the social sanctions surrounding the child and the family history back of it (BCMCF, CASV 28th Annual Report, 1929, p.5, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

This passage, and others like it, denote a growing confidence on the part of the CASV workers as professionals, as well as a growing respect for other professionals. From the above analogy, it is clear that the workers viewed themselves as social doctors. As Miss Collins phrased it, “The community is well supplied with certain drugs, but painfully lacking in social physicians to diagnose needs and carry out treatments”(BCMCF, CASV 35th Annual Meeting, February 22nd, 1937, Manager’s Report for the year 1936, p. 3, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0040).

This “medical model” of social work and the aim of keeping families together instead of removing children from their family’s care, mark a move to a *more intrusive* method of dealing with the children, the families and the mothers under their scrutiny. The Society evidently began to think of the nuclear family unit as a unified whole, with individual members as biological extremities of the body proper. The Society, at this time, clearly wanted to *cure* these families. Furthermore, stories about the trials and hardships of intervention at all hours, and the tales of the heartbreaking situations that needed to be attended to were accompanied by a tangible sense of self-importance. It is clear that the CASV workers, at this time, were taking their work very seriously and considered it to be something of a calling.

The professionalization of the work of the Society is illustrated by the painstaking record keeping and point by point regulations in all dealings, from admissions, to

the selection of foster homes, and discharges, comprising a routine “involving numerous visits, letters and telephone calls, taking of child to clinics” etc. (BCMCF, CASV 27th Annual Report, 1928, p. 7, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046). In 1929, a non-denominational Council of Social Agencies was organized in the City of Vancouver in order to coordinate all the various agencies, raise the standard of care and avoid overlap of services. The Children’s Aid Society joined as a charter member of this organization.

While the 1927 Survey by the Canadian Council of Child Welfare recommended a move away from institutional care and toward foster homes and boarding homes for young people who needed extra-familial care, a number of clients were still taken in by the Society. At the time, the Society had two buildings available with room for 10 admissions, and 30 longer term beds. Nevertheless, the CASV depended on foster care in many cases. Potential foster homes were carefully selected, with the Society looking at various factors including home conditions, approximate income, recreational interests and church affiliation. The CASV did not rely entirely upon their own professional opinion, the input of the family doctor and church minister of the foster family under consideration was taken into account. Extensive examination and great thought were put into the choosing of a foster home to ensure that the children received the proper training in the home.

In the reports beginning in 1928, the records kept of the family circumstances of CASV clients reveals that the vast majority came from single parent homes due to

unwed motherhood, parental desertion, death of a parent, separation, or the jailing of a parent. Other remaining circumstances may also have included single parent situations such as an insane or feeble-minded parent, or an intemperate (read violent) parent.

As noted, the Child Welfare Survey had recommended the development of facilities to deal with the “grave social problems” associated with unwed motherhood and the resultant babies, preferably to be dealt with by the Children’s Aid Society. It is evident, in examining the 1920’s reports, that single mothers and their children (not all of whom were “illegitimate”) were the principal clients of the CASV. However, there seemed to be less demonization of the mothers, fewer charges of criminality and the like. There was also a more self-conscious professionalism and concomitant detachment and distancing by the workers who sought rational means to assist mothers:

Statistics can only indicate the volume of work involved . . . [and] does not begin to picture adequately the time, patience and knowledge necessary if people in trouble are to be helped on the road to independence, self-respect, or a realization of parental responsibility. In this department lies a great opportunity to do constructive social work (BCMCF, CASV 27th Annual Report, 1928, p. 6, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Many cases involving single mothers were also referred to other agencies, most notably widows with children who were eligible for pensions were referred to the Mothers’ Pension Committee, and pregnant women who needed shelter were referred to either the Salvation Army or the United Church Home. The CAS reported that their numbers had been reduced due to the assistance of these other

agencies and that the Mothers' Pensions and Workman's Compensation in particular made it possible, in many cases, to keep children in their families' care whereas, in the past, they would likely have been removed (BCMCF, CASV 35th Annual Meeting, February 22nd, 1937, Manager's Report for the year 1936, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0040). This marks a conscious move toward greater cooperation with other social agencies, professionals and schools. However, it also points toward a justification for a higher degree of surveillance within private homes.

In the Reports, unwed motherhood is a special area of concern. In the 1929 report, family case worker Zella Collins pointed out that out of 17 children taken on as wards of the Society, 6 were children of unmarried mothers. Miss Collins went on to explain the situation of each of these six. For example,

In three instances these young girls came from out of town, one in fact from Alberta, in order to hide their condition from their family and friends. In one instance the girl placed her baby in a commercialized boarding home when she left the hospital and apparently returned to Alberta. She paid his maintenance for a time, but at the age of three he was referred to us by the Home as a deserted child...we were unable to locate the mother or relatives and so another child will probably grow up to face the fact that he has no family history...(BCMCF, CASV 28th Annual Report, 1929, p. 9, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046).

In another case, the author explained the situation of a child who they did not take on as a ward (note that avoiding removal from the home was the goal of the CASV at the time):

[One] is a case where a lawyer arranged a marriage between the father and mother after the child was born. The child was placed in a commercialized boarding home and the father went his way and the mother hers. At the age of two the baby was referred to us as deserted. We traced the mother from one domestic position to another and finally located her only to find that she was defective and had a previous illegitimate child already a ward of our Society. In spite of the fact that she tried to prevent us through telling untruths, we did eventually find not only the paternal grandmother and an aunt, but the father as well, and learned that while the father had only recently returned to Vancouver, the child need never have gone to a boarding home, as the grandmother had been ready from the beginning to care for him if asked to do so... (BCMCF, CASV 28th Annual Report, 1929, p. 10, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046).

In yet another case from that year, it was pointed out that a rescued child was then in the care of “a married sister” of the mother. In these cases, pointed out for special comment, marital status (or lack thereof) takes on a special meaning, that is, being married is closely related to parenting ability. Simply put, marriages (even if it be between two people who are virtual strangers) forged legal family ties that afforded children a socially defined legitimacy that purportedly provided wholeness.

Mothers were particularly singled out for their lack of responsibility. In the 1934 Report, Zella Collins (at this point in time, “Manager”) asked her (annual meeting) audience to consider for a moment all the care and painstaking work that had gone into the planning and raising of their own blessed children. She asked them to consider the pride passed on and the guidance given by family background and tradition to their own children. In contrast she described the situation of the children coming to the CAS for aid who,

must forget family background and tradition, for grandfather Smith was an inmate of a prison, uncle Tom is a “drifter” and aunt Mary has deserted her family of small children. No thought here as to shoes, eyes and teeth, no balanced meals nor carefully planned exercise and recreation, but rather a matter of children shifting for themselves, of running the streets and begging for nickels, or “asking mans for cents” as one young lad of five put it when asked what he was doing alone on a street corner at 10pm. Motherhood, and the long service it renders the country, has been eulogized in poetry and in song, but think of some of these mothers who should not be mothers. Are we putting the emphasis in the right place? Is it motherhood, or is it the preparation for motherhood and the training and care given the children once motherhood has been achieved that should be lauded in song and story? (BCMCF, CASV Report of the Manager, Presented at the 33rd Annual Meeting, February 26, 1935, for the year 1934, p. 1, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046).

In short, there are “good” mothers and “bad” mothers, good mothers being those who follow patriarchal family tradition and are trained to fulfill proper motherhood roles. In this respect, Miss Collins pointed to both the environmental and the innate roots of their clients’ circumstances and the nation’s “future citizens”: jailed parents, physical, medical and moral neglect of children, parents living together without being married, parents separating and divorcing, cruel parents, delinquent parents and parents who are deemed to drink too much. In the case of natural causes of delinquency, she pointed to the many physical and mental handicaps of parents who were so-called morons, borderlines, and dull normals, including as well those suffering from deafness, crippled arms, epilepsy, and venereal diseases.

In this 1934 Report, a special section was presented on the 118 “Unmarried Mothers” the Society dealt with over the course of that year. Two of these cases were discussed in the 1934 report,

I am going to be married and take my child”, said a smart looking young mother, who four years before had placed her twenty month old baby with us. During that period she had never lost her sense of responsibility nor her love for her child. She had worked steadily and had paid a total of \$405.05 to the Society for its care.

Another mother came to us on the advice of her physician when her health would not permit her to work for her baby, Nora, aged two, whom she had supported since birth. She was engaged to be married and later married, expecting to take Nora from our care to her home. A year went by and the baby of her marriage came, and then it was she realized that her husband, devoted though he was to her and to his home, would never accept Nora...Nora was placed for adoption and later adopted...((BCMCF, CASV Report of the Manager, Presented at the 33rd Annual Meeting, February 26, 1935, for the year 1934, p. 3, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046).

The CAS equated a responsible young mother with a married mother and advocated the union of a child’s biological parents as the best, natural, situation for the child. It was stated in this (1934) report that the “problem of the unmarried mother and her child demands attention”, that it was a growing problem and one that was apparently there to stay. They reported that a committee had been formed by the CAS’s umbrella organization, the Council of Social Agencies to consider the problem of the Unwed Mother.

By 1936, the CAS was reporting that facilities had been put in place to cater to the needs of 100% of Vancouver’s unmarried mothers and their children, fulfilling the predictions of the 1927 report and their call for infrastructure to deal with the

growing “problem”. “Truly one could say of the Survey Staff, that they spake with the tongues of the prophets”, declared Miss Collins in the 1936 Annual Report (BCMCF, CASV 35th Annual Meeting, February 22nd, 1937, Manager’s Report for the year 1936, p.10, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0040). As a result of their hard work, the Child Welfare Branch of the Provincial Government along with the Children’s Aid Society were responsible for “the care and protection of British Columbia’s neglected children” (BCMCF, CASV 35th Annual Meeting, February 22nd, 1937, Manager’s Report for the year 1936, p.15, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0040) and regarded as the guardian angels of the child born to unwed mothers. The CASV staffers at this time were angered by the criminological slant that their predecessors had applied to these children and their mothers.

Nevertheless, the “problem” loomed large for the CASV, “Of the many problems met by the Children’s Aid Society illegitimacy bulks largest . . . We are startled by the figures on illegitimacy”(BCMCF, CASV 36th Annual Report, 1937, p. 8, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046)). Questions abounded as to the causes of unwed pregnancy – where the large numbers were coming from; why the majority of these women were in their 20s (a lesser number in their teens and over age 30); whether there was a relationship between domestic work and unwed pregnancy because a great number of the mothers were employed in this type of work. Report after report in the pre-WWII period indicated the steady demographics of the unwed mother. Most were within the age of responsible adulthood, most were legal residents of B.C., a disproportionate number worked as unskilled domestics, and most were of, or above, average intelligence.

One cannot help but note the perplexity shown over the employment status of these young women. While the Moral and Social Reform Council of British Columbia back in 1912 had pointed out that poverty and lack of employment was a key indicator of “vice” (read “prostitution”) in Vancouver, and a principal cause of unwed motherhood (COV Archives, Pamphlets Collection, Pam 1912-43, Social Vice in Vancouver/ report issued by the Moral and Social Reform Council of British Columbia, 1912), the Children’s Aid Society, in the 1930s still did not seem to grasp this crucial point. Ironically, they seemed somewhat unconcerned about the employment of girls, who they felt could always receive employment as domestics before becoming wives. As one CAS member pointed out,

Other [unwed mothers] who have no particular desire to enter a definite field [such as nursing] are learning as domestics to accept responsibility in home-making, which should prove helpful when they marry. Seven girls were married during this past year... It is the youth [i.e., the boys] who constitutes the gravest problem, because of the difficulties of finding employment... (BCMCF, CASV 37th Annual Report, 1938, p. 6, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Poverty and unemployment were, obviously, a salient point in terms of problems that the unwed mothers were facing in society in general, and specifically, in relation to their ability to raise a child. Nevertheless, at times the CASV seemed blinded to any form of critical consideration of this point at a sociological level. While the evidence of female poverty and lack of employment opportunity was staring them in the face, they continued to make comments such as the one above in which employment as a domestic was deemed a positive step for a young

woman because it would lead to a greater chance of finding a man who would marry her and take care of her financially. While the sexist bias is obvious, the trappings of class were also difficult to break. Whereas poverty brought a young woman to the Society, her post at a low-paying, subservient job was often viewed as the rightful place for someone of her status. Nor was there discussion of the perils of sexual assault at the hands of an employer (and the possibility of unwed pregnancy arising from such a situation) despite the outlining of “Seduction of a ward, servant, &c.” as an indictable offense in the Criminal Code of Canada as early as 1892 (The Criminal Code, 1892, Statutes of Canada, 1892, Chapter 29, Section 183). Furthermore, the Code’s section on criminal seduction covered employees in the workplace, as opposed to those within the home, with the result that private domestics were not given protection under this section of the law (The Criminal Code, 1892, Statutes of Canada, 1892, Chapter 29, Section 83).

While from the Society’s perspective, the dealings with unwed mothers were full of sorrow, there were also joys involved and success stories in the CAS reports:

Sally, Mayoress of the high school she attends, Jean a delegate to the Hi-Y Conference recently held in Tacoma, Peggy off to Victoria as a member of the school choir, and Betty leading her class in the Christmas exams, and then in the matter of what may be a combination of both [joy and sorrow] – only time can tell – three of our wards married and three others engaged (BCMCF, CASV 35th Annual Meeting, February 22nd, 1937, Manager’s Report for the year 1936, p.16-17, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0040).

Evidently, rehabilitation back to a “normal” girlhood was the measure for success with the unmarried mothers. The stated goal of the Society, aside from securing

adequate care for the woman's child was to "so build the mother that she may find her place in society as a useful citizen, not a liability but as an asset" (BCMCF, CASV 38th Annual Report, 1939, p. 8, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

The term "useful citizen" was a descriptor uneasily applied to unwed mothers. As one CAS member mused, a "frequently" uttered criticism of the unwed mother was that "They simply sit down and expect to have everything done for them. They accept everything as their due and do not know the meaning of gratitude" (BCMCF, CASV 37th Annual Report, 1938, p. 10, Acc.# 95-4380, Box 0046). Nevertheless, the CASV continued their attempts to "rehabilitate" young women, or at least to make assessments "as to whether the effort to 'come back' [was] worthwhile" (BCMCF, CASV 38th Annual Report, 1939, p. 8, Acc.# 95-4380, Box 0046).

Successfully getting married and fulfilling their duties with maturity was the test some of these girls still had to pass. Nevertheless, frequent success stories in the pages of the CAS Annual Reports include phrases such as,

After some months of part-time work and public assistance she married and baby has a regular family now. (BCMCF, CASV 38th Annual Report, 1939, p. 8, Acc.# 95-4380, Box 0046).

[O]ne of the nicest stories of all is in this letter from girl who married the baby's father after some months of struggle on her own... (BCMCF, CASV 38th Annual Report, 1939, p. 8, Acc.# 95-4380, Box 0046).

In short, a girl could only become a socially responsible citizen by revoking any claims to independence. Working hard at a low paying job, all the while looking forward to the future prize of finding a husband, was the redeeming grace, the step one had to take to lose the stigma of the free-loader and become a proper, responsible woman.

Of course, it was the child, not the mother, with whom the Society was most concerned. The Rights of the Child, as they saw them in 1937 were stated as,

Every child has the right to a chance to live in a normal family group; he has a right, too, to security, to sufficient food, to adequate shelter; he has a right to comfortable clothing, to means of health, educational opportunities, recreation and community life, and of maximum importance, moral and religious training. It is when too many of these rights are denied that a Children's Aid Society must come in to protect the child" (BCMCF, CASV Report of the SuperIntendent, Presented at the Annual Meeting, February 15, 1938, for the year 1937, p. 1, Acc.# 95-4380, Box #0046).

It was not only unmarried women who were viewed as being incapable of raising their children. It was also women who were left alone for extended periods without their husbands. During the war years there were reports of soldiers asking the CASV to keep an eye on their wives. There were reports of cases where husbands requested supervision of a "missus" who "likes to have her good time" instead of properly taking care of the children and there were reports of husbands not trusting their wives to manage their own Dependent's Allowances. These women were considered unable to care for children without the presence of their husbands:

A helping hand has had to be lent to these mothers who, possibly unstable to begin with, are further overwhelmed at being left with the sole responsibility of the family. Frequently they resent the worker's interest and so it is not always possible to do enough constructive work with the family to leave the children safely with the mother (BCMCF, CASV 39th Annual Report, 1940, p. 4, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046).

During WWII, according to the Society, there was a rise in unmarried motherhood (153 cases in 1940, 195 in 1941). However, the demographics reportedly remained similar. The question of what to do with these babies continued to tax the Children's Aid workers. While they could not immediately see an answer as to the best way to proceed in caring for these children – adoption, foster care, keeping the child with its mother and her family – the workers all agreed that unwed motherhood was a problem. While there was much internal disagreement on solutions, some things were unequivocally agreed upon. As Winona Armitage, at this time a “manager” in the CAS, stated,

at this point we do agree with the feeble-minded teen age unmarried mother who, after the second illegitimate baby had been taken from her through the court, said “I am tired of having babies for the Children's Aid Society to put in foster homes” (BCMCF, CASV 39th Annual Report, 1940, p. 7, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046).

In 1941, it was reported that due to more Dependents Allowances and higher rates of employment, more unmarried mothers and their families were now keeping and raising their children. Nevertheless, factors such as mothers being employed outside of the home and the increase in wages for young people, were reported in 1942 as being hazardous for children. In that year, of the 1300 families under the

supervision of the CASV, almost two thirds were cases of “broken homes”, over 500 were instances of moral or physical neglect, and a host of other common reasons for assistance – including accounts of truancy, drunkenness, illness, mentally disturbed parents, unwed motherhood and non-support – were believed to be intensified due to war conditions (BCMCF, CASV 41st Annual Report, Manger’s Report, p. 2, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046).

In 1942, the Society had 198 new cases involving unwed motherhood, bringing the total number of these clients in their care to a grand total of 374 cases in that year. In the 1942 report, Armitage reiterated the point that more women were keeping their babies, and she openly tied this trend to economic circumstances. Nevertheless, the inherent parental (dis)ability of unwed mothers was still emphasized:

Many of the 198 new unmarried mothers referred to us in 1942 were themselves from broken homes, from homes which, *because of this lack of training for the responsibilities of parenthood*, were a contributing factor to their predicament...Yet there were fewer babies available for adoption, fewer reported as neglected and fewer requests for temporary foster home placement. Increased opportunities for employment and military allowances seem to be the answer here and *we are satisfied that many of these girls who in the past gave up their babies for adoption did so for economic reasons...* the security that comes with additional finances was lacking and to give up their babies was the only solution many of them would consider. Today most of them are carrying the whole responsibility, it being their wish to do so and to be independent...(BCMCF, CASV 41st Annual Report, 1942, P. 3-4, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046, italics added).

While CASV statistics consistently showed, over the span of the entire history of the Society, that the majority of single mothers were between the ages of 20 and 30 – legal adulthood – these mothers were nevertheless termed “girls” and spoken of as if they were incapable of raising children properly.

In the post-WWII period – a time period in which the Society was becoming increasingly scientific and rigorous, with plenty of charts and graphs to communicate the nature of the work they were performing – the numbers of unwed mothers seeking CASV assistance continued to grow. This increase was likely due to a combination of factors including the growing independence of young women, the post-war baby boom, and the “marked cooperation of hospitals, doctors, maternity homes, and to [the CASV’s] improved services and increased public knowledge of [the CASV’s] work” (BCMCF, CASV 49th Annual Report, 1950, p. 7, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046). During the year 1950, the number of unmarried mothers seeking assistance for the first time from the CASV was “431... more than ever before; and in addition we were still working with 328 that had been known the previous year” (BCMCF, CASV 49th Annual Report, 1950, p. 7, Acc.# 95-4380, Box # 0046). Children born to unwed mothers comprised the majority of the CASV clientele during this period.

Post-war (II) CASV discourse was peppered with sympathetic, considerate comments in reference to unwed mothers such as,

The Children’s Aid Society recognizes its deep responsibility to these girls and to the community. Practical help such as arranging

medical care and shelter does not fill the need. The unmarried mother has the usual conditions of pregnancy to face alone. She also has the additional complications of community condemnation and panic about the future of her child... (BCMCF, CASV 44th Annual Report, 1945, p. 5, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046).

Nevertheless, the ideological framing of the single mother family as abnormal and dysfunctional remained:

Improvement in the problem as a whole cannot be expected without a widespread educational program as to the responsibilities of parenthood – emphasizing the great need of children for love and security in a normal family group. Only as these girls face the reality of the responsibility involved in caring for children can they set standards for their future behavior. Every case presents a challenge (BCMCF, CASV 44th Annual Report, 1945, p. 5, Acc. # 95-4380, Box # 0046).

In the Baby Boom years, as social work became increasingly professionalized, unmarried motherhood was a central concern. Moving toward the 1960s, unwed motherhood was still viewed as being a problem. The Children's Aid Society was essential in creating the "single mother" as a distinct identity type. Their success in typifying single mothers is attested to by the fact that the "single mother as welfare bum" stereotype remains today.

The CAS of Vancouver began working with single mothers at the beginning of the 1900s. With the Society's aim of providing support for children in need, the mothers who created these children were never in a position to command respect. Throughout the decades, attitudes toward and the treatment of single mothers underwent significant shifts. In the early decades of the 20th century, single

motherhood was intimately connected to the vice of prostitution and was often labeled a crime. While the children that the CASV sought to help were often portrayed as victims of their parent's demoralization, they were also viewed as being part of a criminal underclass. Well into the twentieth century, threads of social Darwinian thought were emphasized within the CASV discourse.

While social work became increasingly professionalized as the century wore on, and the attitudes toward the children of single mothers softened, single mothers themselves continued to be vilified and were regarded as having character flaws, moral deficits, or psychological problems. Single mothers, for the most part, were mature young women in their 20's but, notably, were always referred to as "girls". This is a testament, not only to unwed pregnancy being socially inscribed as immature behavior, but testimony also to the fact that women must marry and fulfill traditional gender roles in order to gain a semblance of respect or acknowledgement and before they can assume the status of full grown women. Not until recent decades were single mothers considered capable of being independent heads of house.

At the turn of the 20th century, women began to organize into what is now known as the first wave of feminism. While these women actively promoted women's rights, this did not mean that the ideological emphasis on marriage and the family was overturned. As the case study of one important turn of the century feminist, Emily Murphy, illustrates, marriage remained the central goal for women with the

issue being how this may best be accomplished for the good of the children and the Nation. While these “first wave” maternal feminists were active in charity or aid organizations or in other types of work in which they sought to help women and children, in many ways they strengthened the feminine ideals which operated to keep women subordinate and the dichotomy between the good versus the bad woman was strengthened. In many cases, and certainly from Emily Murphy’s viewpoint, single mothers fell into the deviant category, far removed from the ideal of proper womanhood.

**Chapter 7. Western Female Social Reformers
and the Regulation of Unmarried Motherhood**

From the nineteenth century on, individual women and women's organizations played a large role in public life. Women became involved in politics and in social welfare movements; they became politicians, lobbied for women's rights, ran maternity homes, charities and worked for welfare agencies. By the late 1800s and early 1900s, more and more married women as well as single women, many drawn by potential opportunities, others sent as slave girls, domestic servants or young brides to strangers, were migrating or immigrating from other countries to western Canada (Prentice et al, 1988). Their willingness to move to the west demonstrated that many of these women were strong, independent women. Nevertheless, the harsh conditions that they faced in rural areas, as well as the lack of opportunity that young women believed they had on the farm, also caused a "rural exodus" to the cities of the western provinces (Prentice et al, 1988: 115). This made for an environment ripe for female activism. Women were particularly active in the progressive city of Vancouver.

The Vancouver Women's Building Ltd. was a sort of umbrella grouping of several women's organizations. Included under this rubric were numerous organizations such as the Auxiliary to the Vancouver Women's Building, Ltd., the American Women's Club, the Women's Auxiliary to Army and Navy Veterans of Canada, the IODE Municipal Chapter, the University Women's Club, the Vancouver Mothers' Pension Association, the Victoria Order of Nurses, and many, many more (COV Archives Pamphlets Collection, PAM 1922-18, Vancouver Women's Building, Ltd. Year Book, 1922).

The Vancouver Women's Building Ltd. Year Book was a record of the organizations, membership photographs and write-ups, as well as summaries of group philosophies, principles and goals. The statement for the Mothers' Pension Association for the 1922 Yearbook was typical of the maternal feminist doctrine of the time:

We are told that 'the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world'. If that be true, what is to come of the cradle rocking when the grim reaper gathers in the stalwart provider and protector of many a little family group, and the mother must leave the cradle rocking to someone else, and herself become the breadwinner, while her sore heart echoes Keats' 'Lullaby'. But we Canadians are more and more coming to realize the value of home-life – home versus institution for children; no matter how well managed that institution may be, it cannot take the place of mother love. So the Province of British Columbia has lined up with other provinces of the Dominion in bringing out some form of legislation to keep these indigent mothers at their 'cradle rocking' and the B.C. Mothers' Pensions Act is the very best in the Dominion..."(COV Archives Pamphlets Collection, PAM 1922-18, Vancouver Women's Building, Ltd. Year Book, 1922).

This speech went on to commend the many "splendid public spirited women" who had worked to keep mothers at home. This encapsulates the class contradictions of feminist activism in the early 20th century. The demand for women's rights and freedoms was often accompanied by changes that kept many, less privileged women, in their traditional roles. In other words, maternal feminists often secured valued public positions for themselves by supporting

changes that ensured less privileged women remained dependent on the male patriarch or the state.

In this respect, female reformers are implicated in fostering regulatory authority toward unmarried mothers. Nellie McClung's stance on sexual sterilization is an example of the way gender roles were reinforced, especially in regard to women's sexuality.

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In 1945, Nellie McClung, a prominent feminist, praised the Hon. George Hoadley, member of the Alberta Legislative Assembly, for his part in implementing the Sexual Sterilization Act: "Thanks to the foresight and courage of Mr. Hoadley, Alberta had the first Act authorizing the sterilization of the unfit in the British Empire"(McClung, 1945: 177). She went on to illustrate her support of this Act through an example of a case, to which she was privy not long after the Act went into effect. She described a young woman, aged 18, who was "unfortunately for herself" very attractive and possessing of a zest for life. The young woman, Katie, had never made it past grade 3, yet she was as "strong as a horse and as good as a man in the harvest field". Purportedly, the local young people were fond of playing tricks on Katie, at one time luring her to meet a young man on a cold winter evening. On the night in question, the young suitor never showed up, and Katie, upon returning home and fearing the rage of her abusive father, spent the night in the barn freezing and catching a deathly

pneumonia. The mother explained to Ms. McClung that Katie was no longer controllable, being the age she was, although her father “still thinks he can beat some sense into her”(178). The problem had become serious when she received a marriage proposal from a man ten years her senior, who was “not quite right either”(178). The father was in favour of letting Katie marry, but the mother thought it could be disastrous, saying that her daughter had the mind of a six year old and needed their protection. In regard to the coupling of the pair, the mother was quoted as saying, “I would rather see her dead”(178).

Ms. McClung brought the family (father, mother, and daughter) to a medical doctor, with the idea of sterilizing Katie and caring for her institutionally until she recovered from the operation. The doctor, Ms. McClung, and the father discussed the situation in private. The father was decidedly against the procedure, citing his religious belief that everyone had the right to reproduce. Lest one think this a kind gentle man, however, Ms. McClung was quick to point out that the mother had informed her of “the unmerciful beatings that the poor girl had received from her father”(179). Ms. McClung decided not to bring up the abuse in the discussion until the father argued that he could not bear to think of his daughter being hurt. At this point, Katie entered the room:

...Katie came in quietly. Her father had his back to the door so he didn't know that she had entered. I saw her unfastening her blouse, then she pulled one arm out, exposing her shoulder. She moved across the room and stood in front of the Doctor. Across her shoulder lay an angry welt like a burn.

Her father stared at her with eyes full of guilt and shame and for some time no one spoke. The Doctor looked from the daughter to the father and his eyes were full of pity for both of them.

“I think this settles it,” he said slowly.

Then he laid a paper on the table and handed the father his fountain pen.

“Sign here,” he said. “Your wife has already signed.”

Then he reached out his hand and shook hands with Katie’s father.

“I give you my word,” he said, “we will not hurt Katie.”

The operation was thus set up. As a follow up, Ms. McClung reported that she saw Katie and her mother a year later. Both looked well, the mother younger and happier, Katie neatly dressed. The home was reportedly back in working order; Katie had taken full charge of the chicken coop and was dedicating her spare time to knitting.

The above story was related by McClung as though it were obvious that the control of a young woman’s sexuality and her continued residence in an abusive, patriarchal home performing feminine chores was a successful, socially responsible solution to a (possibly intellectually slow?) young woman’s coming of age. Yet, the position of feminists at the turn of the century on issues like eugenics and single motherhood was complicated. Emily Murphy, who along with Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Henrietta Muir Edwards, was responsible for the passage of the 1929 Persons Act, had strong views on both issues. A brief case study of Emily Murphy illustrates the contradictions these issues raised from a feminist perspective.

Emily Murphy: Exemplar of Maternal Feminist Social Activism

Emily Murphy was a tour de force. A true maternal feminist, she “firmly stressed that motherly love should not be confined within the family but should extend to everyone”(PBC Archives, James, 1977: 28). Living and working in the early part of the 20th century, at a time when women had few rights and few public or professional opportunities, Murphy believed that women should be given rights and equal access to the public sphere in order to wield their special maternal powers for the good of society. She believed in a sisterhood of women, pointing out that everyone was a mixture of good and bad impulses and that the true mark of a really fine woman was loyalty to her own sex: “no woman can become or remain degraded without all women suffering”(PBC Archives, James, 1977: 47).

Murphy’s work on behalf of women’s and children’s rights was accomplished in several ways. She used her professional status and power, not to mention her outgoing personality, to vocally campaign for the issues that she thought were important. She used her mighty pen to write and publish prolifically about her social passions. Finally, she was very active at the grassroots level, getting involved in many clubs and organizations that transformed her platform into a widespread, public movement.

Murphy, along with her preacher husband Arthur Murphy, moved to Edmonton in 1907. Her feminism was demonstrated in her early work on securing property

rights for married women. She traveled by horseback to Alberta homesteads, talking to women and learning about their concerns. She reported the story of a woman who had built up a farm (including the buildings) herself, using the money she had saved from her teaching days. After three years of bad luck with crops, with the family having to live off of the sales from her poultry yard and dairy, her husband decided to sell the farm and move into town to open a boarding house. The wife objected to this plan, but found that she had no legal right to oppose it. This story prompted Murphy to investigate the law. She found that Alberta, since its incorporation as a province in 1905, followed English Common Law and that there were no laws pertaining to women's property rights. Only by passing Canadian statutes, to be built up case by case with individual appeals to personal or political rights, could the Common Law be surpassed (PBC Archives, James, 1977).

Murphy began her campaign to gain property rights for married women. She read law books, sat in the legislature listening to the procedures involved in enacting a new law, stopped politicians to urge them to change the laws and, finally, drew up a bill herself. She lobbied for political support from individual politicians and finally gained the support of R.B. Bennett, a member for Calgary, who presented the bill in the provincial assembly. The bill was thrown out on the second reading. However, a year later the newspapers took up the cause, lending support to Murphy's proposed bill. In 1911, the Dower Act was adopted, in which most of Murphy's proposed changes were incorporated (PBC Archives, James, 1977).

Getting the Dower Act implemented was Murphy's first major victory. From there, she forged on to secure many notable legal changes, as well as having considerable success in a variety of contexts. She was a journalist and novelist, known widely under the pen name of "Janey Canuck"; she became the Vice President of the National Council of Women; the President of the Canadian Women's Press Club, through which she befriended Nellie McClung of Winnipeg and Helen MacGill of Vancouver; she initiated and became President of the Federated Women's Institute, a national (and later an international) organization of rural women with an eventual membership 100,000 strong; she helped to establish a local Victorian Order of Nurses; in 1916 she was sworn in as Police Magistrate and Judge of Juvenile Court (all without having earned a law degree) and a year later as Police Magistrate for Alberta; she established and ran courts for female offenders; she worked toward the opening of public playgrounds and hospitals; along with Nellie McClung, she fought hard for the vote for women, which was granted, provincially, in 1916; she helped to gain the right for women to be elected to the School Board in Edmonton; and she lent her support to the (WWI) war effort, acting as a female volunteer and participating in the War Council of Women. (PBC Archives, James, 1977; Prentice et al., 1988; Mander, 1985; Sanders, 1945). Along with 4 colleagues, Murphy also fought long and hard for women to gain the right to be appointed to the Senate, and took the "Persons Case" to the Privy Council in London in 1929 to get women included in the definition of a "person". This was critical if women were to have the right to be

appointed to the Senate. After years of work, and despite the fact that she was the obvious candidate for the job, she was overlooked twice for the newly-won position as a female Senator (PBC Archives, James, 1977; Prentice et al, 1988).

Murphy was an extremely active, driven woman. There is a great deal of information preserved in the archival records of her writings, her activities and her successes. I have focused most specifically upon her ideas about marriage and other aspects of the personal relations between the sexes, upon her work and involvement with women's organizations and the fight for women's public rights, and upon her activism within the eugenics movement. Her example shows the degree to which women were involved in social change in the early 1900s.

Interestingly, there is much to indicate that Murphy (and other women like her) was working toward a sisterhood of women. And yet, it is equally evident that many other indicators of social status and worth were at play – such as marital status, race and wealth – that often eclipsed gender as a dominating factor in her work. Indeed, dichotomies of the good/bad woman were often (perhaps unintentionally) set up and were inherently divisive. As many a newspaper piece has indicated, Murphy belonged in elite circles. Despite the phenomenal amount of progress for women that was achieved largely due to Murphy's efforts, it is frustrating to recognize that her multiple allegiances have left the impression that she worked for the benefit of upper class women and, as a result, her work is often presented as misogynist, racist and morally elitist.

On Sex and Dating

The chief concern of society is with nests and birdlings. Any system that interferes with these should be promptly stepped upon by a heavy and well-shod shoe – rotary pressure to make sure. If civilization is to endure, we must preserve marriage. For all time, it must remain a matter of public concern, and not solely an arrangement between the parties thereto (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Companionate Marriage”, Emily Murphy, Vol. 1, No. 3, May 1928, *The Chatelaine*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 97).

It is interesting to examine Emily Murphy’s views on dating, intimacy and marriage with an eye toward her views of gender and of women’s place in the home and society. While she worked very hard to advance female rights by, for example, advocating for married women’s property rights, we can see that when it came to personal relations between men and women, her ideas about gendered human nature and about male/ female power differentials were rather traditional. Her many articles and advice pieces run the gamut of practically every gender stereotype one could imagine.

One strong thread running through Murphy’s writings on marriage, is the emphasis she places on the necessity of marriage for a woman and the burden that marriage is for men.

For the most part, her articles are written from a male point of view. Advice for both men and women is aimed toward ensuring what is best for “him” and what will make “him” most happy and pleased. Using one of her pen names, the article “Barkis Is Not Willin’” by Earl Yorke (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, June 1906, *Human Life*, MS 2, copies, File 59, Box 2) paints an

extremely negative portrait of marriage. At base, it tells how happy and carefree bachelors are before they foolishly fall in love. Murphy emphasizes the word “fall”, because love is a downfall for a man – or as she states, it is an instance of temporary insanity. Once a man falls in love, the poor thing marries the woman and discovers how horrible it is to be married.

For starters, the bridegroom soon discovers that the woman he fell in love with becomes “That Cold Monument of Dead romance –a Wife”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Barkis Is Not Willin’”, Earl Yorke, June 1906, *Human Life*, MS 2, copies, File 59, Box 2). Earl/Emily then goes on to summarily describe the married man’s situation as such:

And where are the people who lionized him heretofore? Where are last year’s snobs? He no longer goes softly? His waistcoat has no chamois lining; his umbrella is lost; his coat-cuffs shiny. He cuts the corners because of the butcher, baker, or candlestick maker. He – well, he tries to look cheerful and sporty lest “the boys” should catch on. He even advises them to lose no time in getting into double harness. But he’s a deceiver. He’s lying like a trooper. Don’t you believe him, for down in his heart of hearts he knows that the star attraction of heaven is that there will be neither marriage nor giving in marriage (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Barkis Is Not Willin’”, Earl Yorke, June 1906, *Human Life*, MS 2, copies, File 59, Box 2).

This article seems odd coming from such a strong proponent of marriage.

Nevertheless, she has several advice pieces, aimed toward women, instructing them on how to be a good wife – a character sketch that is near synonymous with bending over backwards to make certain that you give your husband everything he wants. *Barkis Is Not Willin’*(1906) is a satire designed to encourage women to

ease men's relationship with marriage. Some of Murphy's articles on dating and marriage made direct reference to unwed motherhood, such as "Companionate Marriage" (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, "Companionate Marriage", Emily Murphy, Vol. 1, No. 3, May 1928, *The Chatelaine*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 97). In her view, the institution of marriage should be preserved at all costs in order to avoid unwed motherhood. In other articles, such as "Matchmaking Mammias", written under one of her pennames (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, "Matchmaking Mammias", Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 144), she did not directly evoke the specter of the unmarried mother and her child, but from the great emphasis that Murphy placed on the importance of marriage, we can infer a grave bias against the single mother family.

"Matchmaking Mammias"(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, "Matchmaking Mammias", Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 144) was an advice column geared toward instructing mothers of girls in the role they should play in helping their daughters to select a husband. It started out exclaiming that, "Yes! A mother should be a matchmaker. Marriage is the most important contract in human society . . . 'If a girl does not get well married,' says a sage, 'it were better for her, and for her mother also if she had never been born, or had been cast with a millstone round her neck into the sea'"(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, "Matchmaking Mammias", Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4

(copy), pp. 144). A woman who does not land a good husband, apparently, is better off dead.

Murphy went on authoritatively to support social Darwinian guidelines for choosing a good husband. She stated that, “In reality beauty is the very best guide in the selection of a husband. So great an authority as Mr. Herbert Spencer has given it as his opinion that the saying, ‘Beauty is but skin-deep’ is itself a skin-deep saying”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Matchmaking Mammias”, Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 144). Good looks are important, she pointed out, because things like fine physique, clean skin, nice teeth “all imply a good circulation and a freedom from disease, hereditary, or acquired, all of which a wise woman knows are *absolute essentials* for the husband of her daughter”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Matchmaking Mammias”, Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 144). Beauty, in other words, is an indicator of good health and good genes. Young women, who do not know these things, are more likely to marry a “detrimental”. Furthermore, young women are blinded by their own feelings and for this reason cannot objectively choose an appropriate husband. Therefore, Murphy proclaimed, it is essential for a mother to be involved in choosing a mate for her daughter.

So as not to be unrealistic or to raise the husband-choosing expectations too debilitatingly high, Murphy urged mammias not to be too picky – if he is “straight,

clean, and a gentleman” (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Matchmaking Mammias”, Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 144), she said, then chances are he’ll be good enough for your daughter – if not too good for her! Indeed, we find that some daughters, according to Murphy, are lucky to find a man to marry them. To the dilemma as to when or at what age to marry your daughter off, Murphy stated that “[w]e like the old adage which advises to marry your son when you will, your daughter when you can”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Matchmaking Mammias”, Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 144).

A couple of words to the wise, however, our author declared. Firstly, while “[m]arriage without love is the greatest mistake in the world”, love is not everything (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Matchmaking Mammias”, Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 144). One must take great care in choosing an appropriate mate. Mixed race unions, for instance, were not viewed as being such a good idea: “In these days when so many ‘alliances’ are ‘arranged’, it is good now and *then* to give Sir Primitive a hand in the game. It keeps the race from running entirely to head and puts good warm blood in northern physiques. We have emphasized the word ‘then’ because we mean this should seldom happen ‘now’”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Matchmaking Mammias”, Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 144).

According to Murphy, once a marriage had been arranged, the young couple should be closely policed. When they are engaged, she advised, by all means let them get acquainted, and stated that the couple would need the practice for later on. But aside from superficial acquaintances being forged, a line should be drawn, “a big, white chalk line gone over twice: -- Don’t let Tottie sit up with Augustus after the family have gone to bed. It is not good form and may prove injurious to her health or morals – possibly to both . . . nine-tenths of the unfortunate women of America have been ruined by whom they were engaged . . .”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Matchmaking Mamas”, Emilie Ferguson, Sept 1905, *Modern Women*, MS 2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 144). Sex outside of marriage, with its links to unwed pregnancy, was viewed as a grave danger and moral tragedy.

Murphy stated very clearly, in a later article entitled “Companionate Marriage: From the Point of View of Mother and Child” (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Companionate Marriage”, Emily Murphy, Vol. 1, No. 3, May 1928, *The Chatelaine*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 97)²⁶ just why sex outside of marriage was so bad. This article was part of a special issue of *Chatelaine* magazine all about babies. The advertisement in *MacLean’s Magazine*, Vol. 1:3, May 1, 1928 read, “Dedicated to babies in particular, children in general, and

²⁶ Murphy’s usage of the term “companionate marriage” is not to be confused with the term used in sexology and popular culture to refer to a legal marriage that idealizes romantic love, friendship-like companionship and emotional satisfaction. Murphy, in contrast, used the term as a euphemism for common-law unions.

mothers first and last, the *Chatelaine's* third issue is a number that should be filed away as a reference in every family. Vital articles, delightful fiction and poetry all add contrast and interest to a brilliant May issue”(COE Archives, Vol. 1:3, May 1, 1928, *MacLean's Magazine*). And as the title of the article suggests, Murphy wrote about the perils of common-law unions for the mother and any babies that may be produced.

In a telling introduction to this article, Murphy stated that the only law against “companionate” or “trial” marriage at the time, was under the provisions 220(a) of the Criminal Code, which stated that anyone found guilty of sexual immorality in the home of a child could be fined up to \$500 , a term in prison of up to 1 year, or both. She decried the fact that “persons of note” approved of such arrangements “as if the young women of Canada were loose fish on the streets to be caught on any hook” (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Companionate Marriage”, Emily Murphy, Vol.1, No. 3, May 1928, *The Chatelaine*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 97). She argued that companionate marriage left young women with no stability: “the young girl who is to be thrown loose on the ocean of life with nothing upon which she can hang” (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Companionate Marriage”, Emily Murphy, Vol.1, No. 3, May 1928, *The Chatelaine*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 97).

Murphy feared, on the one hand, that young women and their children would be left alone and destitute. On the other hand, she warned that bolstering numbers of

common law unions and the resultant single mother families, could lead to rights for the child and respect for the unmarried mother, a possibility that she regarded with disdain.

Murphy appealed to the moral authorities to take a stand. She wrote at length about how the churches should be taking a lead. They should be preaching, she stated, that there is no good substitute for marriage and they should teach their congregations how to salvage rocky marriages and how to distinguish between “sacred” (lawful marriage) and ”profane” (common-law) unions. Common-law unions and unwed motherhood were evidence to Murphy of a moral downfall, and she clearly felt that something needed to be done to prevent these situations, to correct the immorality of the public, and to strengthen traditional marriage.

Reminiscent of today’s debates about gay marriage, she stated that marriage is essential to all subsequent social relationships: “How wonderful it would be if we were occasionally reminded that nothing is more essential to the social order than that marriage, upon which all subsequent relations are based, be jealously guarded against any and every form of attack”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Companionate Marriage”, Emily Murphy, Vol.1, No. 3, May 1928, *The Chatelaine*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 97). Murphy argued that the marital union should hold a special, sacred place in society because she felt that the chief concern of any society was to its children and that any threat to their

well-being (in this case, companionate marriage) should be immediately eliminated.

She explained the rise in companionate marriage as being a result of uncontrollable male sexual impulses. Such an arrangement, however, was viewed only as a matter of confusion and role stress for a woman. Murphy stated that

In olden times, the woman belonged to the conqueror but, nowadays, the companionate conqueror demands that she have qualifications as yet unspecified, or he will refuse to provide her with bed and board. As nearly as we can make out, these qualifications are generally denominated as “charm”, whatever that may mean. He, the conqueror, may like a hard-boiled air, or docility, or “pootiness and wirtue”. The maiden has to find out his preference for herself and then play the role. This may not be the role she assumed before becoming an actual entrant on the trial... (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Companionate Marriage”, Emily Murphy, Vol. 1, No. 3, May 1928, *The Chatelaine*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 97).

Clearly, the author believed that it is the woman who must accommodate herself to the man who holds all the power in the relationship.

Ultimately, Murphy argued that men want companionate marriage simply for the sake of having free sex. They like it because they are not then held accountable for what could result – specifically, a child. Such arrangements are a bad deal for women who are stuck with the full responsibility of a child, and bad for the children who, she believed, will not be provided for, not to mention what a grand mess it will leave for society to clean up:

What companionate marriage must mean to the children of such a union (we are presuming the failure, now and then, of contraceptives) is far beyond our wits' end. It is hard enough to make many deserting parents support the children of their first family, but when they have several families to support, who is going to police the situation?(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, "Companionate Marriage", Emily Murphy, Vol. 1, No. 3, May 1928, *The Chatelaine*, MS2, Scrapbook 3 (copy), pp. 97).

Marriage and its preservation was indeed a public matter of utmost importance to Emily Murphy. However, there were contradictions in her approach to women and marriage in her position on the need for women's independence. For example, in Murphy's writings, as in the wider society, it was the morality of girls and women that was under question in reference to dating and marital behavior. For instance, in the 1920s, there was much concern over the Flapper and her potentially wild behavior, a topic which drew much public attention. Prentice et al (1988) discuss a 1922 *MacLean's* article (Gertrude E.S. Pringle, June 15, 1922, *MacLean's*, Pp. 19) entitled "Is the Flapper a Menace?" in which the author argued that most young women followed chaste lifestyles, but that there was concern that modern "Flapper" women were falling into the trap of drinking parties, driving in cars with boys, and kissing. This article was a warning to girls and young women of the pitfalls of modern society.

In contrast, however, Murphy herself was outspoken on her views on this topic. In a newspaper article entitled "Modern Maids Maligned as to Passion for Petting Parties: Judge Emily Murphy Says Girls Better and Saner Today" (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, unknown Edmonton area newspaper, 1926,

MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 145), Murphy claimed that stories of wild petting parties – and likewise, of men taking girls out riding in cars with alcohol – were nonsense. She reportedly said that girls were dressing more appropriately than they had in centuries, that their health was better, the working conditions under which they were employed were better and the employers more concerned for the girl employees' social welfare. Furthermore, she maintained that modern girls read more than romances and that they were more informed and independent. Indeed, she claimed that the presence of delinquent girls in her court had decreased. Of course there were exceptions to good girl behavior, but that the blame for the behavior of wild girls should be placed on the mothers. The article closed with the statement, "The average girl today glories in her independence, and the more independent girls are the less need they have for petting".

Women's independence was something that was of utmost importance to Emily Murphy. She worked tirelessly toward securing public and political rights for women. Early in her career, she was incensed by the lack of property rights of married women. In an article written by Emily F. Murphy, under the pen name Janey Canuck, in the *Canadian Home Journal*, "Why Do Wives Leave Home?" (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, n.d., MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 210-11), she tackled the issue of female poverty within marriage.

She began her article by answering the title question with “There are many reasons why wives leave home but, just now, we will concern ourselves with one . . . They leave for hairpins”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Why Do Wives Leave Home?”, Emily F. Murphy, n.d., *Canadian Home Journal*, MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 210-11). She went on to tell the story of a farm woman who did half the work, but ended up owning nothing and was not given a cent of money – not for clothes for her kids (clothes were sent to her by relatives), not for dental work, not for hairpins. Murphy argued that there are different solutions to such a problem. One way, the route taken by the heroine in the story, was to take the young children and leave – to live with her own family or wherever she could find a place. Murphy pointed out that women may move into town to work at a legitimate establishment, or to work at a construction camp, or even to go into prostitution.

Leaving the husband was not, however, the route Murphy thought all women should take. She said,

Other women of other temper, refuse to disappear, and insist on something approximating a settlement by way of pin money. Leave their children and ‘him’? – Never! These are the stalwart, well-fibred souls who are studying the laws and those other abstract things which, hitherto, no ‘perfect lady’ was even supposed to think of. They are of the opinion that the more you know, the more luck you have. These modern Amazons take the horses out of the stable; the car out of the garage, and hie [sic] them off to the meetings of the United Farm Women, or the Women’s Institutes. In stress of circumstances, they may even walk a few miles in order not to miss the paper, the debate, or the discussion on who is going to carry their resolutions up to the Premier of the Province, and to the Attorney-General, or they may want to decide whether it

would not be good policy for the whole lot of them to go, just to let the Government see they are in earnest and do not intend to be coughed down (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, "Why Do Wives Leave Home?", Emily F. Murphy, n.d., *Canadian Home Journal*, MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 210-11).

In short, Murphy argued that although marriage is unjust to women and sometimes constitutes an intolerable environment for a woman and children, this is not necessarily sufficient justification for the termination of the marriage, or to marriage in general. She did not see female headed families – and complete independence from husbands – as a viable choice. Single mother families were not an alternative family form Murphy thought was worth fighting for. To her, there were no real alternatives to marriage. The solution, according to Murphy, was for women to stay put in their marriages and to fight for (their own and) women's rights.

Emily Murphy on the Law, the Welfare System and Raising Children

Convinced that motherhood was one of the most important roles in life, Emily firmly stressed that motherly love should not be confined within the family but should extend to everyone. Women could not even vote at this time, nor could they be politicians, lawyers, doctors, or members of any profession (save teaching). Emily believed that women should insist on taking an equal place with men so they could use their power to change society and improve the lives of all people (PBC Archives, James, 1977: 28).

Murphy's work within the early women's movement was twofold. On the one hand, she worked tirelessly to gain equality rights for women, most prominently by gaining property rights for women within marriage, and in securing legal

political rights for women at all levels of government. Her dedication, resolve and success in these areas of her activist work is a testament to the great respect she must have had for her fellow women, or at least those within her own class. On the other hand, a great deal of Murphy's energies were also poured into chastising, preaching and attempting to "help" girls and women whom she evidently regarded as morally inferior. It is disturbing to note that this benevolent work was specifically gendered. While she targeted groups such as Chinese men who were opium users and dealers, and "mentally unfit" males, the other targets were female and one particular focus was the "fallen girl".

Murphy applied her philosophy on women's rights to her professional life. Balking at the sentiment of the time that no "decent" woman should be privy to stories about "immoral" sexual practices, she devised a plan to counteract the traditional custom of keeping "good" women away from "bad" women. As such, her philosophical viewpoint and social activism were, in addition to being highly gendered, decidedly class-based. She reasoned that if the offenses of women such as prostitutes were not to be heard in mixed company, then a separate court for women and run by women should be set up. It was in this way – that is, on the basis that "decent" women could help "immoral" women like prostitutes and unwed mothers – that Murphy, who was not herself a lawyer, was appointed as the first female judge in the whole of the British Empire.

Judge Murphy encouraged wealthy women to sit in her courtroom to learn about the law. Many of the women and girls appearing before Murphy were not guilty

of breaking any law, but “they were classified as delinquent because they were pregnant and unmarried”(PBC Archives, James, 1977: 47). Murphy purportedly worked to help, rather than punish, these women and other juvenile delinquents. She helped to establish maternity homes for unwed mothers, industrial schools with instruction in the trades, and psychiatric clinics for the “mentally unfit”.

As we have seen, Murphy had much to say about young, unmarried women having babies. Her ideas on single mothers become clearer when we look at her work with on child welfare, and particularly in her exchange of ideas with Miss Charlotte Whitton.

In a discussion by the Welfare Council on the morality of the child immigrant, Murphy suggested that British immigrants were generally healthy in morals and in character”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Welfare Council Defends British Child Immigrant: director of Juvenile Immigration of Dominion Says Criticism Is Unfair; Says British Child Is Better Trained; Ethical and Religious Influence of Schools Discussed”, Ottawa, 1925, n.d., MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 75). Murphy stated that it was the social situation in Canada that brought on the downfall of young girls. She said, “These immigrant children that come to Canada from the Old Land are better trained than many of the children among whom they are placed here” (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Welfare Council Defends British Child Immigrant: director of Juvenile Immigration of Dominion Says Criticism Is Unfair; Says British Child Is

Better Trained; Ethical and Religious Influence of Schools Discussed”, Ottawa, 1925, n.d., MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 75). The problem, she continued, is that these “little girls who go astray” are not given the proper supervision and direction upon entrance into Canadian society.

Charlotte Whitton, a party to the immigrant debate, disagreed that immigrants were as well trained in morals as Canadians, saying that “In Toronto 1,000 cases of unmarried mothers had been studied, and the number of British immigrant girls among these had been proportionately much greater than of Canadian girls””(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Welfare Council Defends British Child Immigrant: director of Juvenile Immigration of Dominion Says Criticism Is Unfair; Says British Child Is Better Trained; Ethical and Religious Influence of Schools Discussed”, Ottawa, 1925, n.d., MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 75). For that reason, Whitton pointed out, the council had made a special study of the problem of unwed pregnancy and had found similar results outside of Toronto: i.e., that there were larger numbers of British born girls having babies out of wedlock than native born girls. She clarified the point that “We are not charging these girls with inherent immorality . . . but we insist there is not sufficient care in their selection, in placing them in Canada, and in supervising them when they have come to Canada”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Welfare Council Defends British Child Immigrant: director of Juvenile Immigration of Dominion Says Criticism Is Unfair; Says British Child Is Better Trained; Ethical and Religious Influence of Schools Discussed”, Ottawa,

1925, n.d., MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 75). Immorality in immigrant children was closely associated with female unmarried sexual behavior and unwed pregnancy.

Whitton was very concerned with the problem of unwed pregnancy and mothers in need of financial assistance. Indeed, as discussed in an earlier section, a decade after her correspondence (below) with Mrs. Murphy, she led the attack on the British Columbia Mothers' Pension Act, in her capacity as executive director of the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare (Guest, 1980: esp. 58-63). In 1931, the BC provincial government asked Whitton to review the Pension Act and she proceeded from a traditional charity organization philosophy that a maximum of individual responsibility, a minimum of state assistance, and a continuation of local charity involvement was the best way to deal with poverty (Ibid). As Guest put it, "[t]he impact of the council's report was a significant cutback in services to poverty-stricken mothers and their children"(Guest, 1980: 58)²⁷.

In a letter to Emily Murphy dated at Toronto, December 19, 1919, Whitton requested Murphy's thoughts, opinions, and any information that she could offer on the subject of unwed motherhood for a report that she was preparing for the annual meeting of the Social Service Council of Canada (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, Various Social and Legal Problems, Child Welfare,

²⁷ Guest (1980) cites the Whitton report as: British Columbia, Provincial Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Report on the Administration of Mothers' Pensions in British Columbia 1920-1 to 1930-1: Summary of Findings and Recommendations, [n.d.] ppgs, 21;1;49;42-45, 26 and 17.

Box 2, MS2, copies, File 17). She stated that she had prepared the legal part of the document, but required more social commentary on unwed motherhood. She says,

I have thought further of including a general summary of the relations existing between this and other social problems, both in cause and effect, and specifically the respective claims for consideration in this problem of the child, the mother, the father and the community. Therefore, I am writing to ask you whether from your rich experience you would help me by furnishing me with any information or observations regarding these various phases of this problem. For instance, from what sections, age groups and occupations the majority of illegitimate mothers come, whether in your opinion remedial social circumstances or the individuals themselves are the more to be condemned in this problem, whether amendment of our laws to carry greater penalties for the putative father are altogether to be desired, and also your judgment on the separation of the mother and the child (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, Letter from Charlotte Whitton to Emily Murphy, Dec 19, 1919, Various Social and Legal Problems, Child Welfare, Box 2, MS2, copies, File 17).

Murphy replied to Whitton's request in January 1920. In reference to the social status of the girls in question, Murphy told Whitton that "[t]he majority of illegitimate children are brought in by girls in domestic service" but stated that "[p]erhaps this is hardly a fair grouping, because the term 'domestic service' includes girls who work in cafeterias and hotels, in which there is little supervision of the conduct of the girls, and in which places they are subject to unusual temptations. I always feel that we are doing an injustice to the home in grouping these purely as domestic servants" (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, Letter from Emily Murphy to Charlotte Whitton, January 2, 1920, Various Social and Legal Problems, Child Welfare, Box 2, MS2, copies, File 17). In other words, she said that unwed mothers are most often poor,

working class girls, but not necessarily those working in the service of wealthy men in their homes.

Murphy told Whitton that unwed mothers are overwhelmingly young, usually under the age of 20 years. Furthermore, she pointed out that in the province of Alberta, the great majority of unwed mothers were foreign girls, or the daughters of foreigners. She suggested that it was the crowded conditions of country homes, and the lack of moral instruction given these girls that led to the majority of unwed pregnancies.

In terms of her views on what was to be done in dealing with the parents of children born outside of marriage, she stated that she was in favor of the father paying support for the child, in accordance with the means and social status of the father. Furthermore, she believed the father should financially support the mother for one month before and one month after the birth of the child. As for the mother, she said,

Concerning the separation of mother and child, this is a vexed question, but I usually favor their separation, first, because where an infant is adopted into a home, it is adopted because the people wish to make it their own child. No one can possibly exploit an infant, in this way the child gets a better start in life. Second, it is removed from any stigma of illegitimacy. Third, the mother does not fall so easy a prey to other unscrupulous men, who, seeing her with a child would feel she was special game. Fourth, the mother is not so handicapped as a wage earner. Fifth, she has a better opportunity of marrying (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, Letter from Emily Murphy to Charlotte Whitton, January 2, 1920, Various Social and Legal Problems, Child Welfare, Box 2, MS2, copies, File 17).

The picture Murphy painted of the unwed mother was that of a poor, young, uneducated, immigrant girl, a pitiful subject to be sure. Murphy's vision for saving the unwed mother was to remove her child, hide her misdeeds from society, and hope for a future marriage. As we have seen, this was Murphy's benevolent vision in contrast to repeat offenders, or those who end up in mental institutes, who she was more likely to slate as candidates for reproductive surgery.

When it came to immoral sexual behavior, Murphy pointedly implicated parents in poorly raising their children. In an article published by arrangement with the Canadian Social Hygiene Council, "Educating Parents"(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, "Educating Parents", Judge Emily F. Murphy, Police Magistrate, Edmonton, Alberta, *Syndicated*, 1927, MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 261), she stated that she was nearly ready to give up on educating parents. The task, she stated was almost impossible – the good parents seem to know how to do it, the bad ones seem to be unteachable – but she felt that it was necessary to keep trying.

In a letter to the then Acting Prime Minister, Sir George Foster, dated February 17, 1920, Murphy stated that she was concerned over the direction of the Child Welfare Bureau: "I need hardly say that health conditions are largely dependent on home conditions, and on the morality of the parents. A drunken or diseased mother cannot rear healthy children, so that in dealing with the child's health one must of necessity deal with the mother's, which are relevant"(COE Archives,

Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, letter to George Foster from Emily Murphy, February 17, 1920, MS2, copies, File 17: Various Social and Legal Problems, Child Welfare, Box 2). She stated that the Bureau was in need of several people, not just one, working on this problem. She went on to state the importance of a country taking care of its young, and argued that child welfare was the most important undertaking of any country. She stated that she hoped that serious consideration would be taken of the scope of the issue.

In 1925, Murphy publicly blamed parents for problem children (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Blame Parent For Troubles of Children: Judge Emily Murphy Scores Commercializing of the Sex Instinct”, 1925, no paper title or specific date on record, MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 63). The article stated that “[m]ost of the blame for juvenile delinquency was laid at the door of the parents by Judge Emily Murphy of Edmonton, who addressed the evening meeting yesterday of the Child Welfare Council conference on the causes of juvenile delinquency”. She steered away from placing all the blame on the mother, speaking instead of the failure of both parents to keep the family together: “Family desertion, separation and divorce contributed to delinquency. So did children street vending. The state should either give a prisoner’s earnings to his family, or support the needy children of those sent to jail – otherwise they usually became delinquents”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Blame Parent For Troubles of Children”, 1925, no paper title or specific date on record, MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 63).

Murphy also blamed increasingly lax sexual morality for the problem of juvenile delinquency saying that “the sex instinct is being commercialized in songs, literature, drinks, pictures, vaudeville and jazz”(COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Blame Parent For Troubles of Children”, 1925, no paper title or specific date on record, MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 63). She argued that children were learning too much about sex at too young an age. She stated that she felt that this was a grave problem, but that having more women in politics could help remove it. Other remedies suggested by Judge Murphy included a need for better housing, a plan to send delinquent boys to a farm colony away from where they could corrupt other boys, and greater provision of ethical and religious instruction in schools. She stated that instead of being taught “the spiritual tenets of the gentle Christ”, foreign born students were being taught about other religious traditions outside of school (COE Archives, Emily Ferguson Murphy Collection, “Blame Parent For Troubles of Children”, 1925, no paper title or specific date on record, MS2, Scrapbook 4 (copy), pp. 63).

Morality was a grave concern for Murphy. She viewed a lack of proper instruction – to immigrants, poorly parented children, and impoverished children – as leading to delinquency and unwed pregnancy. Murphy was evidently gentler with children than with young adults. She was aware of the influence of environment on human behavior. Where birth control was at issue, she urged the voluntary usage of it by women of reproductive age. However, where it was not going to be used

voluntarily, Murphy suggested it was necessary to sterilize those people who had demonstrated that they were reproductively irresponsible or mentally incapable of following the reproductive advice of their superior social engineers. While Murphy was concerned with other groups of people that were a menace to society, it is apparent that the morality of mothers and their reproductive behavior was of the utmost importance to her ideas of forging the perfect society.

* * * * *

From many perspectives, Emily Murphy's life and work provides a fascinating case study. For the purposes of this thesis, her prolific commentaries on love, marriage and reproduction are of utmost significance. Her writings were instrumental in solidifying gendered roles and identities.

While much of what Murphy wrote about gender relations appears to be "conventional wisdom" (e.g., a mother should be a discerning match-maker for her daughter; fiancés should be closely supervised so as to avoid unwed pregnancies, etc.), the fact that there was a felt need to communicate these ideas is itself revealing. The clear articulation and authority of voice with which she speaks in her various articles has the air of controlled instruction. They are written from a particular moral perspective and directed toward a broad audience.

The cultural commentary embedded within Murphy's work encapsulates much of the ideology being discussed in this thesis. She is clearly a nationalist who is concerned over reproductive hygiene and the health and "fitness" of society at large. The enactment of social activism accomplished through her writing is admirable – she took her social beliefs and ideas and translated them so that they had personal meaning to the individual, thereby instructing the reader on how to conduct herself in her own private life. This was brilliant and yet, a concealment of fundamental purpose is detectable.

Reading Murphy's articles on subjects such as dating, sex, marriage and childrearing is not unlike reading any modern women's magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* or *Chatelaine*. The specific content, of course, is different but there is the same advice-giving quality delivered with a conspiratorial, witty pen. The consumption of her writing, quite plainly, is pleasurable. Her ideological position is abstracted to the level of the reader's own life, an irresistible subject to many a reader. This method of abstraction effectively conceals the underlying ideological agenda. As such, her written work is the perfect example of hegemonic heterosexuality in operation.

Murphy clearly delineates proper gendered behavior in personal matters. And to her, these things are what matter most, particularly for women²⁸. She gave specific instructions for intimate conduct, for example, by banning all pre-marital

²⁸ For instance, in one article, cited above, Murphy claimed that a woman who does not marry well (i.e., properly, appropriately) is better off not even existing.

sex and strongly condemning unwed motherhood and common-law unions. While she was simultaneously fighting politically for women's rights, she was staunchly upholding stereotypical gender roles and attitudes. She believed that women were lucky to "catch" a man, and that men would gladly accept "free" sex as a way of life if women let them get away with it.

Murphy fought hard to portray the heterosexual nuclear family unit as the backbone of civil society, and to taint all variations as a travesty. She did this gently, with an appeal to convince her audience to police themselves in these matters. Murphy wanted to "help" those girls and women who strayed from her view of proper gender, sexual and family life. Her written work was an exercise in soliciting social conformity. As such, she contributed to the solidification of hegemonic heterosexuality. She helped to stabilize gendered identities and roles within personal relationships and she attempted to teach the public to operate in line with the proper roles and to seek proper personal arrangements of their own accord, on the basis that they would be acting responsibly, maturely and for their own ultimate good.

Murphy's commentaries on proper personal behavior provided a touchstone for comparatively improper behavior. Her views on unwed motherhood were also stereotypical. To her, the majority of unwed mothers were immoral (lacking proper instruction from their own mothers), young (*girls* to be sure), and from

poor, immigrant families not schooled in the superior ways of the socially enlightened Canadian culture.

Unwed mothers were, in her view, un-hygienic in their morals, their mental health, and their actions. One way she sought to repair this was through proper moral instruction to impressionable youth who had not yet been “ruined”. Unwed motherhood should not, in Murphy’s view, represent a viable alternative to married motherhood. These families were viewed as a deviation of what was right and what was proper and as such, their existence was perceived as social erosion. The “survival of the fittest” was the natural law of greatest social importance during the period in which Murphy wrote. Unwed mothers, in this context, represented the “unfitness” – that part doomed to extinction – in nature.

The case of Judge Emily Murphy is evidence of the complex nature of female involvement in public life in the early 1900’s, and indeed throughout the century. Countless women were involved in social welfare work, and dealt directly with unwed mothers. They worked tirelessly and with great conviction. It is evident that the women involved with the charity work often worked from a privileged position (whether religiously, financially, politically, or otherwise) that prejudiced their views.

But, there are indications that the female reformers were working toward a sisterhood. It could be argued, for instance, that Emily Murphy was trying to help

rather than punish deviant women in her courtroom. However, the divisions between women, dichotomized as good versus bad woman, made many of the reformer's attitudes and deeds seem condescending and destructive to less privileged women's lives. In short, social status and ethnicity as well as gender influenced the views and actions of social reformers. These factors – marital status, wealth and race, even political viewpoint – did, and still do, stand in the way of a unified sisterhood.

This is a reminder that social life and identities are complex entities and that people and social movements are multi-faceted. While women work to help one another, they are bound to have a multitude of differences among them. This may cause serious problems, with conflicting interests causing harm to the people that these individuals and organizations are attempting to help. But we can be certain that these women were indeed trying to help, and that their efforts, in many respects, forged great advances for Canadian women as a whole.

Nevertheless, female reformers and activists must be implicated in the production of the negative identity position of the single mother. Emily Murphy's writing was a significant contribution to the discourse surrounding proper female gender roles, and her work in the courts and in her advocacy of eugenic sterilization legislation gave her ample opportunity to put her ideological viewpoint into action. The problems of unwed mothers and single parent mothers remain despite the second-wave feminist movement of the second half of the 20th century.

Chapter 8. The “Egalitarian” 1960s and Onward

“To An Unwed Mother”

Take your bastard breed,
Your soul-less seed,
And go
Yes go

I want you no more,
You poor, heart-sore
Laden
Maiden

It's no good praying.
You're always paying
For deed
And breed.

It is all your fault.
'Twas not assault.
O go!
You crow.

Yes.....

Take your bastard breed
And flee

(COV Archives, Malcolm F. Crane, 1960, Add. MSS 1229, 614-G-1 File 19).

The 1960's, the decade in which various civil rights movements blossomed, thus earning it the title of the “egalitarian” decade, brought with it a sea change in public attitudes surrounding personal and familial rights. Despite views such as those trumpeted by the human rights activist Malcolm Crane, above, attitudes toward single mothers were indeed changing, but slowly.

While an overhaul in the social services industry had begun – greater governmental involvement, more routinization, more professionalism – negative attitudes toward single motherhood remained intact in the early 1960s. For instance, the story of a young woman designated “Joanne” is reviewed in the 1963 publication of the Vancouver CAS News²⁹.

This woman had been referred to the Vancouver CAS during her pregnancy in 1949 and had given the baby up for adoption. Joanne, who was now, in 1963, in her 30's, had written to the Society inquiring after the baby she had given up for adoption and said, in part, “I would always want her to remain with her parents but I was wondering, in case of sickness or death, who would be asked to take responsibility for her”(COV Archives, CAS News 1962-1974, 1963 edition, Add. MSS 672, Vol. 127, file 1, **restricted access**). The CASV worker condescendingly pointed out, in the newsletter, that in case of sickness or death of the adoptive parents, the adoptive family network – pending official wills and

²⁹ The following CASV citations are from the original research conducted at the COV Archives. Presumably, these have also been moved to the BCMCF. I used the original reference numbers here because these reports were not among the copies that I had sent from the BCMCF office for re-checking purposes.

guardianship – would take care of the child, as would be the case in any other family grouping. The worker stated that what Joanne was really looking for was reassurance that her baby was alright and informed the reader that information had been sent back to the birth mother assuring her that her baby was safe and happy.

To sum up her story, the worker reported that Joanne had written that the baby's still unmarried father had "asked [her] several times to marry him" and thereby concluded that "perhaps this story has a happy ending for Joanne as it has for the baby girl she will always remember"(COV Archives, CAS News 1962-1974, 1963 edition, Add. MSS 672, Vol. 127, file 1, **restricted access**). While this story is held out as an example of the success of the system and of a former client, it seems more likely that a mother, who had given a child up for adoption some 14 years earlier and who was still worrying about her baby, was more in a state of despair than joyousness.

It is evident that "Joanne" realized that the one thing she did not have then, that prevented her from keeping her baby, was a marriage. Even in mature adulthood, she was holding out the promise of a marriage as the one piece of evidence that she was now capable of raising her child. One must wonder, if this relationship was healthy and if the marriage was important to this woman and this man – beyond the importance of it being the vital societal script that the mother must follow to win the prize of her own baby – why the marriage had not occurred

much earlier, somewhere within the 14 year span. One must also wonder why the CASV would then conclude from the letter that finally getting this man to marry her would be a happy ending. Would it not be more logical to call it a tragedy that this young woman had held on for so many years to the prospect of a marriage to someone who, over a decade and a half, cared so little as to lead her along with promise after promise of it happening one day?

In the eyes of the social service industry, only married women were considered to be good and proper mothers whereas unmarried women were considered to be bad mothers or, in many cases, not mothers at all. Nevertheless, there is evidence of a good deal of compassion on behalf of the Children's Aid Society of the time for the unwed mother. A 1962 report described the problems faced by the unmarried mother:

An unmarried mother faces the prospect of many lonely months, and of grave decisions for the future which must be made by her alone. Often she does not have family or friends for support, having been ostracized by them, or perhaps having chosen to maintain secrecy and handle the situation by herself. She faces the disapproval of society, is frequently in financial difficulties, and may have medical problems complicating her pregnancy. In many instances, she must live with the disappointment of desertion by the alleged father of her child, and the end of her hopes for marriage and a family. She experiences guilt about what she has done, fear of "being found out", anxiety about her future (COV Archives, CAS News, 1962, CAS News 1962-1974, Add. MSS 672, Vol. 127, file 1, **restricted access**).

The CASV pledged to assist unwed mothers in various ways, from giving them a place to live, to medical and emotional assistance, to financial assistance and

community care. Clearly, the Society had come a long way, attitudinally speaking, from its days when criminological terminology was used to describe unwed mothers and their children. Nevertheless, in 1962, the idea that the situation of unwed pregnancy was a deviation from the normal was alive and well.

Unwed motherhood was still being portrayed as a dire social problem. The alarm bell was being tolled for high rates of unwed motherhood and the precarious position of the unwed mother. In 1965, a Vancouver area newspaper reported that Children's Aid Society statistics showed that unwed motherhood had doubled over the previous 4 years (*Vancouver Sun*, "Illegitimacy Toll At Alarming Stage", March 10, 1965). At the same time, the CAS was pointing to an impending "Crisis in Child Welfare" brought on by an ever-increasing number of unmarried mothers and a simultaneous decrease in adoption applications (COV Archives, CAS News, Vol. 3, No. 1, March 1964, CAS News 1962-1974, Add. MSS 672, Vol. 127, file 1, **restricted access**). Discussions were held in which the problem was assessed, defined and solutions suggested. The city of Vancouver's capacity to care for unwed mothers and their offspring was being pushed to the limits. There were reports of difficulties in finding adoptive homes of relinquished babies and an expressed need for maternity homes to be opened in rural areas (*Vancouver Sun*, "Maternity Homes Outside City Urged", February 19, 1965).

During this period, one Vancouver area newspaper article stated that "A girl who has a child out of wedlock no longer is considered ruined for life" (*Vancouver Sun* "Unwed Mother Gets a Break In Friendly Chest Agency" by Naomi Lang, Nov 4,

1963). Nevertheless, such a young woman was still considered a problem. The journalist Naomi Lang quoted a CAS supervisor at length in her piece:

‘Just think of the spot these youngsters are in ... They are overcome by guilt. They face many lonely uncomfortable months, cut off from school and friends, with nothing to look forward to except a heart-breaking decision over the future of their child ... If the girl decides to keep the child, she is in for a very difficult time. She will have to farm the baby out while she works to support it, she will have to accept the disapproval of society, she cannot protect it from the hurt of its illegitimate status’ (*Vancouver Sun*, “Unwed Mother Gets a Break In Friendly Chest Agency” by Naomi Lang, Nov 4, 1963).

Evidently, though she may not be “ruined for life”, and while the social agencies purported to lend a “helping hand rather than accusing fingers” (Ibid), this quotation points to the fact that the status of the unwed mother and that of her child remained a social problem, and her plight in life had definitely worsened. Furthermore, this article makes it clear that the social agencies saw their role as rehabilitative: they were there to help with financial assistance but also to help the girl get back to being a “normal” teenager.

In 1964, a special CASV panel discussion on the issue of unwed pregnancy resulted in the conclusion that sex education in the schools was needed in order to better inform young people about sexuality and sexual protection because the current cohort of parents evidently were not able to provide this information to their children. In a forward-thinking move, the panel concluded that

The problem of illegitimacy rests squarely with society as a whole. Society must either accept the situation and remove the stigma it

places on unmarried parenthood or take practical steps to prevent it – by education and information or by raising its own adult standards (COV Archives, CAS News, Vol. 3, No. 1, March 1964, CAS News 1962-1974, Add. MSS 672, Vol. 127, file 1, **restricted access**).

In other words, the CAS began to recognize that unwed motherhood was so common that it was becoming *normal* for members of society to become pregnant out of wedlock. The only logical conclusions to be drawn, therefore, were for society to accept it as normal and tolerable or to take the responsibility of changing people's behaviors so that young people no longer engaged in sexual behaviors that led to unwed pregnancy³⁰.

In 1968, the Executive Director of the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver publicly advocated for sex education in the school system. He stated that "[i]t's up to the schools to give a family life education to kids and enlighten them naturally about the responsibilities of sexual involvement with each other" (*Vancouver Sun*, "Teach Sex to Youngsters, Says Children's Aid Boss", Nov. 29, 1968). There was a belief that young people were, en mass, engaging in sexual activities and that parents were not educating their children on such matters. Consequently the

³⁰ To point out the obvious, this is a debate – sex education versus abstinence training – that is still going on. The CBC television program *The Passionate Eye* recently aired a documentary film on this subject entitled "American Virgins" (Monday, March 22, 2005 at 10pm ET/PT on CBC Television). This documentary covers a faith based organization run by Denny Pattyn of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania called "The Silver Ring thing", the organization which has spearheaded the campaign in the US which convinces young people to don a silver ring as a reminder that they will remain abstinent until marriage. "American Virgins" explores the increasingly successful attempt by the religious right to quash sex education in schools and its links to the government. The Silver Ring thing organization received \$700,000 in funding from the Bush Administration in 2004. In light of the growing popularity of abstinence-only sex education in schools, the film also explores the likelihood that greater numbers of young people are getting their sex education from the streets and from the media.

Director argued that if children were given information about sex, there would be fewer unwanted pregnancies.

By the late 1960s, changing ideas about the family were filtering into CAS discourse. For instance, a talk delivered at a Special Conference on Foster Care of Children in New Orleans by Dr. Halbert Robinson, director of the Child Development Research Institute at the University of North Carolina, entitled “How Does the American Culture Deal with Child Rearing” was reviewed in a 1968 issue of the CAS News. Executive Director of the Vancouver CAS, Mr. S. H. Pinkerton, who had attended the conference, gave a comprehensive review of Dr. Robinson’s paper, noting that great pressures are placed on parents to provide a comprehensive upbringing of children with little instruction and little community involvement. He pointed out that

We require parents to be contractors for specialized and fragmental services of all kinds; prenatal medical attention and delivery, pediatric supervision, dental services, special-interest experiences (music, dancing, Scouts), day care (if mother works), nursery school, kindergarten, contact with welfare agencies when necessary, remedial therapy when called for, etc., etc. That many families cannot carry out these complex tasks is not surprising. The surprising fact is that most parents function reasonably well within this fragmented system... (COV Archives, CAS News, Vol. 6, No. 4, February, 1968, CAS News 1962-1974, Add. MSS 672, Vol. 127, file 1, **restricted access**).

To answer the question posed by Dr. Robinson, Pinkerton suggested that “American” culture was not ideally supportive of families in raising children.

While culture idealized the family unit, holding it out as the repository of all that

is good, Pinkerton (along with Robinson) stated that there never was an “idealized family”, that it was something of a cultural myth, and that it was therefore unfair to blame supposedly non-ideal family units for all that goes wrong in society. In short, families are important, but they need societal and community support and services in order to give children what they need to grow up to be healthy, productive individuals.

Apparently then, conservative attitudes about the family and about single mothers were loosening toward the end of the 1960s. A 1970 article printed in the *Vancouver Sun*, evidently sensitive to the moral stigma attached to unwed motherhood, was entitled “Girls living in co-op houses: ‘Call us single people with children’”(*Vancouver Sun*, Irene Thompson, August 5, 1970). In this article the plight of Inger Cruickshank, a single mother, was laid out – the pain of loneliness, difficulties in finding a landlord not prejudiced against her and a rent that she could afford – and her solution to it. Cruickshank found a large house which she rented and, with the help of the Children’s Aid Society, found three other single mothers to move in with her. According to the article, three more such “single mother co-ops” were set up in Vancouver, subsidized by the provincial and federal governments. Cruickshank (who had, in the meantime married) had turned her energies into working full-time to help single mothers by promoting co-op living for them.

The article covering the co-ops depicted single mothers as being in a “desperate” situation, yet also illuminated the changing societal attitude toward the single

mother. One expectant, unwed mother stated that “People often refer to us as unmarried mothers but there shouldn’t be any distinction made between us and widowed or divorced women’ she said. ‘We are just single people with children’” (*Vancouver Sun*, “Girls living in co-op houses” by Irene Thompson, Aug. 5, 1970).

The Children’s Aid Society viewed the co-ops in a positive light. One CAS News issue reported on the development of single mother residents:

An interesting development in Vancouver, originated by the young women themselves, is the establishment of Single Mothers’ Residents. Five or six girls and their children arrange to rent a large house; one provides day care for the children while the others work and share all living expenses. During the past eighteen months, half a dozen of these residences have been established here, partly subsidized by the Provincial Government. So far the plan is working extremely well, providing both practical assistance and emotional support in dealing with common problems... We feel this is a development which shows much promise and should be further explored and encouraged (COV Archives, CAS News, May 1968, CAS News 1962-1974, Add. MSS 672, Vol. 127, file 1, **restricted access**).

The tide was evidently beginning to change at this time and single mothers were beginning to demand some respect and some support.

In 1971, the Children’s Aid Society awarded a single mother the Catherine Collier Memorial Award, granted to a CAS client who showed “special determination and endeavor” (*Vancouver Sun*, “Single Mother Wins Acclaim From CAS”, May 31, 1971). While this incident is notable *because* it was notable, showing a single

mother winning an award for integrity was something of a surprise, a newsworthy event. The presentation of the award also shows that attitudes were changing.

The CAS underwent a “crisis” in its child placement programs in the 1960s.

Adoption requests decreased until, by the late part of the decade, the CAS increased its public education campaign to inform potential adoptive families of the great need for adoption homes. In 1968 the CAS had close to 100 children in its care awaiting adoptions (COV Archives, CAS News, 1968, CAS News 1962-1974, Add. MSS 672, Vol. 127, file 1, **restricted access**) while B.C. orphanages were simultaneously being closed down (*Vancouver Sun*, “Orphanages in B.C. Obsolete”, Dec 21, 1968, By Martha Robinson) to be followed by an increase in foster care.

At this time, public anger and curiosity surrounding the ethics and procedures of adoption were on the upswing. Starting in the early 1970’s we begin to see instances of protest against the censure of single mother families and against child welfare agencies that interfered with non-traditional family life. The Children’s Aid Society of Vancouver, along with other agencies, increasingly came under attack.

One protest in front of the Vancouver Children’s Aid Society brought picketers who complained about the difficulty that parents faced in getting children back

once they had been seized by the Society. A spokesperson for the picketers claimed that

The procedures do not allow parents to exhibit any eccentricities and if the society stepped into every family situation few parents would ever see their children again (*Vancouver Sun*, “Children’s Aid Society rejects pickets’ claims”, Oct. 5, 1970).

Another Vancouver newspaper account told of an angry protest taking place with about 25 placard waving protesters. The piece stated that “parents charged that the [Children’s Aid] society does more to break up families than to rehabilitate them”(COV Archives microfiche collection, “Protesters accuse Children’s Aid of Refusing to return children” Feb 10, 1971, *Vancouver Sun*).

Similar protests and activities surrounding unwed mothers occurred in other provinces. For example, MOVE: The Association for Assistance to Unwed Mothers, a organization that sprang up in the Edmonton area in 1970, provides a fine example of a forthright, highly motivated, organized effort to liberate the single mother from her (morally stigmatized) oppression.

MOVE was established by a single mother, Bette Walkey, in 1970. At the time, MOVE was the only organization of its kind in Canada (PA Archives, “‘MOVE’ Organizational Statistics”, Acc.# 83.328/ 125). The mandate of the organization was laid out in an information brief which read, in part,

This organization is working to overcome the social injustice inflicted upon unwed mothers and their children as well as to help

these families to establish a good self-image. Until society learns to accept unwed mothers as people who need help and understanding instead of social banishment, there is a definite need for an organization to help overcome the obstacles which they are faced with (PA Archives, “MOVE: Association for Assistance to Unwed Mothers”, information brief, Acc.# 83.328/ 125).

Practically speaking, MOVE offered a number of services to unwed mothers including programs to keep unwed mothers in school, meetings to provide mutual friendship, childcare counseling, information on abortion and adoption, connections with doctors and lawyers who had been retained by MOVE to assist on a volunteer basis, connections with wage homes where a girl could get room and board as well as being paid \$65./mo. in exchange for babysitting and housecleaning (PA Archives, “MOVE: Association for Assistance to Unwed Mothers”, information brief, Acc.# 83.328/125).

While Ms. Walkey started her work with MOVE in February 1970, it did not become an official organization until it received provincial funding under the Opportunities for Youth Program on May 17, 1971. The funding was withdrawn (reportedly, due to a change in government) on September 13, 1971 after a period of only four months. Ms. Walkey, her full-time employee Heather Johnson, as well as a number of part-time staff members and volunteer workers, continued to operate the organization’s services after the funding ran out because “they [were] convinced that it served such a vital purpose that it must be continued” (PA Archives, emphasis in original, Unitarian Church of Edmonton, Oct. 12, 1971 letter to parishioners, Acc. # 83.328/ 125).

The organizers appealed to the Pastor of the Unitarian Church of Edmonton for financial assistance³¹. The Pastor, “Rob”, responded enthusiastically to their plea by organizing an information session at the Church and by encouraging his congregation to become involved and to donate funds on a short-term basis (PA Archives, Unitarian Church of Edmonton, letters dated Sept. 29, 1971 and Oct. 12, 1971, Acc.# 83.328/ 125). Two letters written to the Unitarian Church congregation by Pastor “Rob” prove that the leadership of the church was supportive of this organization. In quoting from the organization’s leaflet’s and informing the congregation of the work that MOVE was doing, and in providing a donation slip for church member to fill out, Pastor “Rob” was evidently keen on helping out: “Maybe we can do something!” he enthused (PA Archives, Unitarian Church of Edmonton, letters dated Sept. 29, 1971 and Oct. 12, 1971, Acc. # 83.328/ 125).

Parishioners of the Unitarian Church were also interested in assisting MOVE with their financial troubles. One man wrote to Pastor Rob, along with a donation,

These cheques are coming quite late. We were flat broke . . . we had a young girl living with us for two years [an unwed mother from an Indian Reservation] so we are very concerned that Canada lacks behind the Scandinavian countries as far as the unwed mother is concerned so we are concerned about improving the lot

³¹ MOVE also had the support of Trust House, an Edmonton based drug addiction centre, which provided office space, and of the Augustana Lutheran Church, who donated space for weekly meetings (Unitarian Church of Edmonton, Oct. 12, 1971 letter to parishioners, Acc. # 83.328/ 125, Provincial Archives of Alberta).

too (PA Archives, letter from a parishioner, "Dear Rob", dated November 14, 1971, Acc. # 83.328/ 125).

The views expressed by this church member, as well as those expressed by the Pastor of the Church reveal their social consciousness in regards to single motherhood. Evidently, they were interested in supporting MOVE because they wanted to help foster social change in this area. They believed they were working toward social justice.

The organization MOVE was a group of women who were evidently angered and motivated by the negative societal attitudes toward, and treatment of, single mothers. They collected statistics to show that unwed pregnancy was a widespread phenomenon and cited an article published in the *Edmonton Journal* on February 28, 1970 claiming that there were 3683 illegitimate births in Alberta in 1968-69, and another (published in the *Edmonton Journal*, date unknown) reporting that 1 in 8 women in Edmonton was a single mother (PA Archives, "General Statistics Compiled By Dominion Bureau Of Statistics", Acc. # 83.328/ 125). In the face of the frequency of unwed pregnancy, the MOVE women emphasized the isolation and loneliness of the single mother as being their foremost concern. They stated that,

In the past, the attitudes of society in general have placed both mother and child into a position of total isolation causing a vacuum of depression, boredom and emotional turmoil. Pregnancy out of wedlock is not an illness and shouldn't be treated as such. (PA Archives, "MOVE: Association for Assistance to Unwed Mothers", information brief, Acc. # 83.328/ 125).

Clearly, this organization believed that the problems faced by single mothers were a result of unjust, negative societal attitudes. They were working to provide the support that they felt society had unfairly denied the unwed mother.

Unfortunately, they were struggling financially in their efforts. More disturbing is the fact that MOVE went under completely when the founder, Bette Walkey, was found murdered in her apartment in October, 1971 – at the very time that the Unitarian Church was arranging to assist Walkey and her organization in their endeavors.

* * * * *

In the early 1970s, there was a push – by the BC Association of Welfare Workers, among others – for a government takeover of children’s services, with proponents arguing that these services should be public (*Vancouver Sun*, “Welfare takeover cost hike feared”, Sept 23, 1971). In 1974, after 73 years of service, the Children’s Aid Society was shut down, its functions taken over by the provincial government (*The Province*, “New Role Proposed for volunteer group: Children’s Aid Society closing shop”, March 21, 1974.).

Despite greater societal tolerance for premarital sexual behavior, the outrage of self-proclaimed victims of the child welfare system, and greater social acceptance of “eccentric” or non-traditional family forms, toward the end of the 1970s,

unwed mothers were still being depicted as irresponsible little girls. In an Edmonton area newspaper, a representative of the pro-life organization Birthright was quoted summing up the situation of the unmarried mother as such,

At first, they're all tangled up, they don't know what to do... later they realize that a baby needs more than they have to offer right now. It takes a mature girl to surrender her baby – she doesn't do it for herself, she does it for her baby's sake (*Edmonton Journal*, "Birthright offers counseling and shelter", June 28, 1978).

Into the 1980s, coverage of unwed motherhood still presented it as a social problem. The Edmonton area newspapers continued to report on the strain unwed motherhood imposed on the social welfare system. While profiling agencies that were there to help – like the Terra House and Woodside Home for Unwed Mothers – unwed motherhood was portrayed as a grave, and growing, situation. For instance, it was reported that in 1984, 1 in 5 births in Edmonton were to unmarried girls or women (*Edmonton Journal*, "Number of unwed moms squeezes social agencies", June 26, 1985). The same article reported that the majority of these unwed mothers were now keeping their babies. John Lackey, a general manager of the city's social services department was quoted as condescendingly saying, "Most unmarried women keep their babies today because its socially acceptable, even 'glamorous' to do so" (*Edmonton Journal*, "Number of unwed moms squeezes social agencies", June 26, 1985). Evidently, while it was becoming more feasible to have and keep an illegitimate child late in the 20th century, it was still relatively easy to publicly criticize single mothers.

In contrast, as far back as 1968, attempts by single men to gain custody of their own illegitimate children had been met with great enthusiasm. One Vancouver case brought the Children's Aid Society to take a closer look at their own policies regarding unwed fathers. Seldom, a representative was reported as stating, has a father who admitted paternity ever shown interest or a sense of responsibility for a woman he had impregnated out of wedlock, or for the baby of that union (*Vancouver Sun*, "Now Baby's Guardian: Unwed Father's Concern Cuts Through Red Tape", Nov 2, 1968). Expectations of unwed fathers were very low at the time, "But the concern of one young father for his baby has brought about a change in climate. So impressed by his concern were the courts and the Children's Aid that red tape was cut and a precedence set" (*Vancouver Sun*, "Now Baby's Guardian: Unwed Father's Concern Cuts Through Red Tape", Nov 2, 1968). The CAS was "delighted" to see this father awarded custody of his child.³²

Again, unwed fathers seeking custody were regarded as having exceptional character. A high profile case regarding an unwed father unfolded in Edmonton in the late-1980s which sparked a series of debates over reproductive issues. In that case, the mother wanted to give the baby up for adoption, while the father wanted to keep the child. He even offered to marry the mother, an offer she turned down (*The Edmonton Sun*, "Dad Sues For Baby", July 10, 1989). The man reportedly

³² According to the newspaper article, the father, upon being awarded custody, promptly delivered the child to be raised by his parents in Germany. He returned to B.C. to work. While he was being praised for taking responsibility for his child, and while he made the effort to enfold the child within his extended family unit, it must be noted that there was no room in the public imagination for hands-on male care giving. In the end, evidently, it was another woman, his own mother, who did the actual work of raising the child.

said that unwed mothers raised children on their own all the time and questioned why he could not do the same. A rousing opinion piece by journalist Valerie Hauch, printed in the *Edmonton Sun*, brought up the issue of abortion. Hauch noted that the case had emerged at a time when men in other provinces were seeking court injunctions to prevent pregnant partners from obtaining abortions, and that this case naturally brought up these issues. Nevertheless, she stated, this case was different because the child was already born. She went on to argue that a father, aside from any impending issues such as paternity disputes, should automatically have the right to custody of his own child: “Any law under which an unwed father must apply for custody or access is archaic and unresponsive to the realities of modern times...” (*The Edmonton Sun*, “Unwed father has just cause” by Valerie Hauch, July 12, 1989).

In her editorial, Hauch went on to criticize traditional gender role scripting. She pointed out that women in the past were saddled with sole responsibility for children born outside of marriage and that the thought of a man raising his own child was unthinkable, that such a phenomenon lay outside of the realm of what was thought of as masculine. Those stringent gender roles, she observed, still held fast:

Sadly, even today, married dads who stay home still conjure raised eyebrows and a “wimp” label...But women are not made with a magic gene that automatically makes them a better parent (*The Edmonton Sun*, “Unwed father has just cause” by Valerie Hauch, July 12, 1989).

Times have changed, and many men today are raising their children as unwed or (otherwise) single fathers. While they may have their own battles with public attitudes about acceptable gender roles, in many respects they face a much more accepting public than women do under the same circumstances. In short, single mothers are still often viewed or portrayed as being *irresponsible*, while single fathers are praised for *taking* responsibility.

The differential valuation of males and females as single parents reveals the subtle power structure embedded within the hierarchical arrangement of the respective gender roles. Much of this power differential is, indeed, perfectly obvious. As discussed, feminists and other welfare scholars have long pointed out the two-tiered nature of the welfare apparatus, with male recipients situated as fully entitled worker/ citizens, and with female clients institutionally regarded as dependents rather than household heads. In this way, welfare benefits awarded to single mothers have never been intended to be financially sufficient. The same can be argued for women's lower work force wages, as opposed to the male "family" wage.

The respective gender roles have, fundamentally, been depicted and accepted as categorically distinct and naturally differentiated by biological sex. Belief in such natural sexual dimorphism would, presumably, preclude the mixing and matching of gender role tasks. Thus, single mothers are deemed "irresponsible" for becoming (or needing to become) breadwinners, a socially unacceptable and difficult task. Single fathers, on the other hand, obviously hold the privileged

position insofar as the care giving aspects of raising a child are often assumed to be taken care of – perhaps by another female family member or by a hired female caregiver³³. The highest responsibility in raising a child, according to this viewpoint, is the financial responsibility. All other “minor” (unskilled, undervalued) tasks will, one way or another, get done.

This raises the highly important issue of the intrinsic value of the respective gender roles within the nuclear family unit. It is not a novel observation being made in pointing out that women (and mothers in particular) are placed upon a pedestal, elevated to a superior moral standing, all the while being undercut and devalued. It would seem, when it comes to real life, that this moral gloss and worship of femininity is nothing but a smokescreen to conceal the lack of respect actually socially afforded to women and mothers.

* * * * *

There is little doubt that societal attitudes toward, and conditions for, single mothers have changed over the years. Unwed pregnancy is no longer such an egregious condition: not everyone feels shame at becoming pregnant out of wedlock, some women even seek it, and no longer is such a pregnancy necessarily hidden. While termination of unwed pregnancies has become safer, more

³³ Stay at home fathers are a different case, and they are often socially criticized for shirking their breadwinning responsibilities, for being wimps who let their wives do the important work, and for being men doing a woman’s job.

acceptable and common, more women also opt to keep the children and fewer feel the need to marry because of pregnancy.

While the rates of single motherhood have remained relatively stable throughout the 20th century, the societal response towards it has changed dramatically and the demographics have changed. By the year 2000, over half (58%) of Canada's 1.1 million lone parents were separated or divorced, about one quarter (22%) were never-married, and one-fifth (20%) were widowed (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2000)³⁴. This compares with the early and mid part of the century when the majority (60%) of single parents were widows. The proportion of Canadian families that were led by a single parent reached a low point in the 1960s, with the proportion dropping from 13.6% of all families in 1931, to 8.2% in 1966. Then the numbers accelerated, with the number of lone parents increasing by close to 250% between 1971 and 1996. In short, up until the last quarter of the century, widowhood was the largest factor leading to single parenthood; now, most children in single parent families have another live parent (usually a father) living in another household. Soaring divorce rates have created a situation which adds to the mainstreaming of the single mother family, although many segments of society decry easy-access divorce as a serious social problem for this very reason. All in all, society frowns less on single motherhood than it used to. But problems still remain for the single mother family in contemporary Canada.

³⁴ These figures, discussed in the Vanier Institute of the Family (2000), *Profiling Canada's Families II*, are taken from the Statistics Canada 1996 Census.

Single parenthood is still a gender issue. The majority of single parents in Canada are women: out of every 100 families, 12 are female single parent families, while 3 are male single parent families (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2000). Female and male single parents do not face the same problems and the problems associated with parenting alone are, by and large, problems that are faced by women and their children. For instance, for the year 1995, the average income of male single parent families was \$40, 974, whereas the average income of female single parent families was \$27, 721 – a substantial difference (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 93F0029XDB96008). Single mothers and their children are the most impoverished group in Canada. A recent National Council of Welfare Report (2000), using 1998 data, shows that single parent mothers have higher rates of poverty than either single unattached women <65 and single unattached women 65+ (the second and third highest poverty ratings) and have a poverty rate many times the rate of two parent families. While 11.7% of two parent families (<65) are living below the poverty line in Canada, a full 57.1% of single parent mother families are living below the poverty line. This alarming rate of poverty is even worse for young single mothers. For example, for single parent female-headed families, where the mother is under the age of 25, the poverty rate is “an inexcusably high” 85.4% (National Council of Welfare, 2000: 40).

Poverty figures are equally disturbing if you look at child poverty rates: 18.8% (or 1, 327, 000) of Canadian children are living in poverty (National Council of Welfare, 2000). Of these, 41% are living in single parent mother families. The

depth of the poverty of these families is also significant. For those single mother families who were deemed to be “poor”, they were living, on average \$9,230. below the poverty line. Campaign 2000, a cross-Canada coalition of over 85 groups working to end child and family poverty, has recently published a *Report Card on Child Poverty 2000*, in which they assess the state of poverty among Canadian children. They point out that in 1989, the House of Commons unanimously resolved to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. But they report that, within the 11-year span between 1989 and 2000, child poverty has increased by 43% in Canada and the number of poor children living in lone parent families has increased within that time span by 49% (Campaign 2000).

While poverty is a general problem in Canada, it is even more so for single mothers and their children. Initiatives designed to assist single mothers have done little to help this situation. Many provinces developed policies to get single mothers into the workforce. However, they neglected to provide supports such as adequate training and adequate childcare. As a result, some of these mothers managed to get off of social assistance, but joined the ranks of the working poor. Indeed, Campaign 2000 reports that the number of mothers who joined the labour market on a full time basis and yet who remained in poverty, increased by 61% between 1996 and 1998. Low wages (37% of single mothers in the labour force earn less than \$10/hr, according to Campaign 2000) combined with childcare costs, kept these women below the poverty line, even though they could not be charged with being “welfare bums”.

The most recent Statistics Canada figures, however, show that the situation for single mother families and for children is improving. Reports based on 2003 data (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, May 2005) indicate that single mothers made significant gains in income between 1996 and 2001, with a 52% average gain in market income in this time span, and that this gain has remained level through 2003. While 62% of single mothers were employed in 1996, 82% were employed in 2003. Nevertheless, in 2003, about 38% of single mothers were living below the poverty line, a poverty rate that is about 4 times that of other family types (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, May 2005). The number of children living in poverty decreased within this time period, with the 1.3 million figure falling to a total of 843 000 in 2003 (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, May 2005). While the financial situation for single mothers and their children has evidently brightened within recent years, it is important to keep in mind that thousands of these families are still struggling greatly in this respect.

In a Summer 1990 report, *Women and Poverty Revisited*, the National Council of Welfare examined what has often been called the “feminization of poverty”. Based on 1987 figures, they showed that, among non-poor two parent families, 51% would plunge below the poverty line if the “husbands left and did not pay support payments”, a rate made lower by the inclusion of couples with no children (National Council of Welfare, 1990). Furthermore, in looking at the life patterns of Canadian women, they found that through various routes (13% never marry,

30% are separated or divorced, 41% are widowed), 84% of women must support themselves and (often) their children in husbandless households for a significant part of their adult lives (National Council of Welfare, 1990: 16). Women are far more likely than men to live outside of a traditional family unit at some point in their adult lives. These facts led the authors of the study to conclude that instead of holding up the traditional nuclear family as an ideal to girls and young women, we should instead proclaim it as being a hazard to their well-being. Girls might expect that part of being an adult woman is having a man to provide for her and her children and yet, as we have seen, official Canadian statistics tell a far different story.

Feminists argue that single mothers experience various types of problems because of gender inequality. Veronica Strong-Boag (1979) has argued that, “[t]oday’s welfare mothers are, at least in part, the direct casualties of a society’s failure to distinguish between the cause of women and that of children”. In a patriarchal society, girls and women are not socialized into a “breadwinner” role, nor are they given the training and the opportunities to provide for themselves and their dependents. Men, not women, are prepared for, and treated as the primary “breadwinners”. Men are paid the breadwinner wage. Indeed, recent Statistics Canada figures show that the earnings ratio of women to men is 63.6% (Statistics Canada, CANSIM, Table 202-0102, May 2005). Evidently, in a vast number of cases, women are not paid enough to support themselves and their families.

Single motherhood is tied to female independence from individual men, to female dependence on the state, to breaches in religious and moral codes, and to poverty and class issues that portray poor parents as bad parents. As such, it is a significant enemy of western society in terms of the norms of hegemonic heterosexuality that still provide the means of social control of women in Canada and other western countries.

Chapter 9. Discussion and Conclusions

I have argued that single mothers are discriminated against because they are positioned as deviant within a master societal framework of hegemonic heterosexuality. By looking at a variety of historical discourses surrounding single motherhood – public advocacy of the eugenics movement, which included single mothers as a target group, by doctors and lawmakers, through maternity home newsletters, poetry, and adoption advertisements in local newspapers, annual reports of aid agencies, the writings of female reformers, accounts of the social activism of various individuals, from academics, to women’s groups, clergy and religious groups, medical doctors, and social commentators like newspaper journalists – it has become clear how various groups and individuals in society can act in tandem to structure a meaningful, if sometimes contentious or variable, concept of the single mother. This has been accomplished through both positive and negative means. In other words, it has been accomplished through a normative ideological advocacy of proper gender roles within the nuclear family, paired with the construction of single motherhood as being an unacceptable deviation from this family form.

Together these various sources of information on single mothers -- the causes and effects of unwed motherhood, the meanings attached to these reproductive situations, as well as the repercussions on the individuals involved, to society as a whole and to the health of the western ‘race’ -- comprise what Hall (1997) calls a discursive formation. This discursive formation of the single mother draws on ideas, images and practices that delineate rules and regulations for such women

and their children and that shape the public perception of the character and likely conduct of single mothers and their children.

This research addressed the variety of ways in which moral regulation, in respect to single motherhood, has been constructed in the Canadian West throughout the early and late middle 20th Century. It broadens the scope of Canadian research on the moral regulation of single motherhood beyond Ontario, where the bulk (although by no means all) of the research has been conducted, by adding to the research on these processes in Alberta and British Columbia. This study shows how these various approaches to the regulation of single motherhood have, collectively, contributed to the development and maintenance of hegemonic heterosexuality in 20th Century Canada.

The cases examined in this study –the Eugenics Movement, the Beulah Home, the Children’s Aid Society and the Feminist Reformers role in supporting and propelling these practices and programs – provides examples of several approaches that this society has taken to deal with unwed mothers. These approaches have focused on eliminating or controlling this particular reproductive form that has been deemed deviant. These efforts illuminate the entrenchment of hegemonic heterosexuality within our society. In each of these cases, my goal has been to chart the moral regulation of the single mother, but it is equally clear that these case studies reveal a search for the “perfect” family form on which to build a strong nation. This research illuminates the investment of our society in policing

the gendered behaviors of girls and their reproductive strategies. It is evident that an ideal feminine role exists (and a concomitant ideal male role) and that society attempts to correct deviations from this role. As such, attempts are made to actively educate girls and women into their “proper” female roles. The attempts may vary in the prescriptions offered but the end result is the same – the condemnation of the single mother.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, female sexual behavior that deviated from married motherhood was deemed immoral and dangerous to society. Marriage, motherhood and the legally united family were viewed as being central to society’s most deeply held morals and unwed motherhood was seen as being a threat which would undermine this most dearly held institution (Chapman, 1995; Cook and Mitchenson, 1976; Gordon, 1977). Much support for such a viewpoint was found during the course of this research.

The research on the eugenics movement reveals a nationalistic view of proper families and the social support that would rightfully be given to them: the underlying fear of the eugenics movement was that the “unfit” were using up the bulk of the resources in society, leaving the “fit” with little support. Eugenicists felt that this was weakening the nation. The Beulah Home data, likewise, reveals an emphasis on proper family structure. Broken homes and lack of motherly guidance are “blamed” for unwed pregnancies, rehabilitative success was often defined as eventual marriage, and womanhood itself was routinely defined as

married womanhood. The CASV praised a particular type of motherhood: those women who cared for children within the realm of “proper” family life. Biological motherhood did not a proper mother make. Rather, only those who were appropriately prepared to carry out child rearing within the traditional, patriarchal family mode were viewed as praiseworthy although unwed mothers could be saved by marriage. During the post WWII period, rising female employment was viewed as bad for children and welfare agencies felt that single mothers, in their immaturity, could not be successful at shouldering financial responsibility. The feminist reformers, such as Emily Murphy, felt that children should be the chief concern of society and civilization and that society needed legal marriage in order for civilization to endure. Common-law unions and unwed motherhood were seen by Emily Murphy to be evidence of a moral downfall that all those of good moral repute should rally against. She felt that these practices would lead to destitution of women and children or, equally as bad, lead to dignity, respect, and rights for children of unwed unions.

There has been a great deal of debate surrounding the motivations of the female reformers of so-called first wave feminism such as Emily Murphy. These women purportedly acted in response to the nationalism and imperialism of the time (Prentice et al., 1988). In particular, they adhered to the ideology of separate spheres in which married motherhood was cast as the ideal role for women. Furthermore, scholars argue that female reformers were motivated largely out of concern over the welfare of children (over and above and any concern for women)

and that they were attempting to socialize children into what they deemed to be proper value systems, perhaps holding out aid as a reward for compliant behavior (Gordon, 1994; Smith, 1997; Little, 1998; Arnup, 1994). The desire to help keep families and marriages together and to guard against breakdown of the family unit contributed to a system of moral deservedness in which some women were given support while others were given less support or no support at all, depending on how closely their own situations resembled the perfect family unit and the gender roles inherent in it. The success of the reformers, therefore, is a matter of discussion: it is viewed as a sort of double-edged sword since they supported many women at a bare subsistence level rather than giving them the tools to be self-sufficient or that would lead to more structural reforms.

A related issue is that which is exemplified by the work of Comacchio (1993) in Canada, which showcased the class privilege of professionals (doctors, capitalists) and how their interests in the area of health campaigns overrode those of women (mothers) and children. The charge here is that building a strong capitalist nation took priority over the needs of women (Comacchio, 1993; Brush, 1996; Howe, 1996). Little's (1998) work points to a similar, cynical conclusion: that middle and upper class women who helped shape the welfare system in Canada were exercising privilege and gaining social power at the expense of poor, unwed mothers in need of assistance (Dobrowolsky, 2000). Thus, an important question is whether social agencies, charities, and reformers were first and foremost,

helpful, or whether their approach to unwed motherhood was more restrictive and regulatory. What were their motivations?

The paramount motivation of the eugenicists was to rid society of “inferior stock” and to guard against the crippling of the social resources of the nation. The motivational impulse of the Beulah Home workers was to spread the love of Jesus and they saw themselves as missionaries with a special calling from God: they were acting in the spirit of Christianity doing God’s will, which was a type of elitism in itself. The CASV were working through an obligation of the state in the role of “*Parens Patriae*” to socialize children and protect them from poor influence. With the rise of social welfare professionalism in the late 1920s, social workers took pride in teaching mothers responsibility and self-respect, to rehabilitate the mother from being a liability and into a useful citizen. Emily Murphy worked to ensure the continuation of traditional male and female roles and to preserve the rights and privileges based on right and proper gendered ideals. It is evident that each of the groups examined in this research had overriding, ulterior motives. None were primarily motivated through a concern for unwed mothers, even though some were evidently more genuinely interested in these girls and women in their own right than were others. The social nature of these various projects -- such as advancing the welfare of the nation as a whole, or upholding traditionally idealized family and social patterns -- were the main concerns for those involved and the motivation for extending services. While the CASV, for instance, was concerned with protecting children and the female

reformers were looking out for women's rights, defending a particular type of proper motherhood and family life, with the ultimate purpose of building a strong and safe society, took precedence. By all appearances, these were good hearted, charitable, and socially progressive people who had the greater good in mind. Nevertheless, we can see, through the advantageous lens of historical retrospect, that they certainly had their (by today's standards) offensive opinions and, furthermore, it is evident that what they accomplished was not always beneficial for women or for society.

The literature points to the different ideological approaches of the agencies surveyed in this research. Kunzel (1993), in the United States, applied the concept of the "fallen woman" to evangelical Christian charities and found that these women saw their clients as victims of male sexuality and attempted to reform them through a spirit of sisterhood and good will. The rise of the professionalization of social work, however, (Kunzel, 1993; Ladd-Taylor, 1995; Kornbluh, 1996) ushered in a more criminological approach which set unwed mothers up as problem girls who were unfit for motherhood. Levesque's (1994) study of unwed pregnancy in Quebec in the early part of the 20thC reveals a strictly punitive and criminological approach to unwed pregnancy where clients' identities underwent a sort of erasure and reform. Levesque (1994) found that the mothers were deemed as variably criminal or feeble-minded but that all were treated as being in violation of the patriarchal structure of society, strictly punished and harangued into conformity with patriarchal ideals. The outcome of

the pregnancy was influenced by the ideological approach of the agencies with the charitable organizations being more favorable to a woman keeping her child as opposed to giving it up for adoption, that is, a victim being deemed more capable of raising a child than a criminal or mentally defective woman. The eugenics movement shows the extreme end of a continuum that sought to define how able an unwed mother was to raise (or not raise) her child(ren). The question, in reference to the approach taken by different organizations, is how conducive were the “helping” organizations to allowing for female dignity and agency?

The approach to unwed motherhood adopted by the eugenics movement was not conducive to agency on the part of unwed mothers. These women were viewed as weak and unfit to raise children. The idea was that these women must be stopped before their substandard kind became an irreparable drain on the resources of society. Their reproductive rights were rendered void. Indeed, the eugenics movement is an extreme example of restricting female agency in the face of what was viewed as unrestrained female sexual license. In contrast to the negative eugenics program, was an ideology that promoted action on the part of those women who were deemed “fit”. Murphy, for instance, argued that birth control provided a chance for women to influence human history. She advocated the spread of birth control in the interest of peace in combating world problems such as war and famine. Nevertheless, Murphy also advocated traditional female roles: in the greater moral scheme, she argued that “proper” family life was the keystone of civilization and that women should exercise their influence from within a

specific moral framework. The Beulah staff also worked from the perspective that there was a “real” family structure, ordained by God, and that was alone the proper environment for children. This organization worked to break unwed mothers of their will and to reform and move them into traditional female roles, to work toward marriage and “proper” family life. As such, female agency from the Beulah point of view was only deemed permissible when it took on the form of work done by “real”, grown up, married women, and certainly not the lost and broken, distorted will of unfortunate girls who had lost (or had never been guided to) the right path. The CASV viewed the activities of the unwed mothers as criminal. Certainly, the adopted approaches varied over the years (from a view of these mothers as part of the “criminal classes” to the later view of psychological infirmity), but overall, there was a cynical view of active female agency: it wasn’t just that these women were weak or victimized or that they lacked in guidance or resources, but that they were bad, law-breaking individuals. For all of those involved in this study, where female agency was acknowledged at all in the context of unwed pregnancy, it was viewed in a negative light: where female agency was encouraged, it was done so under strict moral rules of engagement.

This research adds to current literature on intra-gender relations in respect to moral regulation, particularly in terms of the class tilt involved in the regulation of “deviant” girls and boys. It is clear that middle and upper class women were involved in regulatory modes that were aimed at women possessing few resources. Nevertheless, this research also makes it clear that these approaches

were not always coercive and that many unwed mothers who had no place to turn, sought out the assistance of women from, for example, the Beulah Missionaries or the VCAS. In turn, it is evident the female activists and maternalist reformers, while often maligned for targeting less powerful women for regulation, prove to be, historically, both progressive *and* oppressive.

Another important issue brought up in the literature is female citizenship. Christie (2000) pointed out that the emphasis on the male breadwinner began with the onset of World War I, took full sway by the 1940s and had great influence on the making of the modern welfare state. In this scheme, the rights of the male worker took priority over the rights of women in the home and men, as heads of household, were given greater support in times of financial need. Women, on the other hand, devoid of full citizenship rights as workers and family heads, were viewed as dependent members of a male led and supported family. This places women in a dependent financial position and makes marriage coercive (Gordon, 1988). The programs and activities examined in this study, by virtue of their views (and applied policies) on unwed mothers' morals, abilities and health, are also commentaries on women's citizenship rights. The eugenics movement in particular was primarily concerned with women's sexual and reproductive rights and the adjudicators were responsible for choosing who did, who did not, have the right to reproduce. The Beulah missionaries did not view unwed pregnant girls and women as having full citizenship rights and responsibilities: they called them "girls" because their condition defined them as irresponsible rather than

responsible adults. Since they encouraged married womanhood as being the ideal goal for their clients, I would argue that they saw adult women as being junior citizens, under the authority of the male head of household. The CASV displayed a great deal of interest in the rights of the child and viewed their role as protecting the children against the irresponsible activity of the unwed mother. At times unwed mothers were defined as being lazy and wanting everything done for them, and even married women were characterized as being incapable of running a household during a husband's absence. To the CASV, a woman's responsibility was to find a husband so that the child would be well taken care of.

Emily Murphy certainly was concerned with women's citizenship rights, as evidenced by her pioneering work in fighting to have women defined as persons. She commended women's work in society and advocated for women's political roles, but often this was, in true maternalist feminist form, in the context of working to keep women in the home. She worked to secure rights for married women but these rights seemed contingent upon what she believed to be appropriate or proper roles for women, with women being viewed as equal as long as they were lawfully married. This was a unique and defining characteristic of maternalism: they fought for equal rights in order to secure morally-sanctioned separate gender roles.

Citizenship rights, then, were morally regulated along traditional, patriarchal lines. Women, even to female reformers, have been pigeonholed into marriage as

dependent individuals who, at best, are junior citizens. To be an unwed mother within such a context is to defy social reason: in the end, there is no way to positively place such a woman within society because according to proper, healthy, idealized social structure, she simply does not exist except as a criminal, a victim, or a disease.

The cases explored in this study are all examples of social activism. You might even argue that some of the more extreme efforts at social change that we have looked at could be described as social engineering. In all of these cases, the people involved were striving to change society (and people's sexual/reproductive behavior in particular) in order to make it a better place. What they all had in common was a belief in the superiority of heterosexual marriage, the innate suitability of traditional gender roles within the nuclear family, and the social utility of raising children within this family form. While some of these social actors were more compassionate toward single mothers than others, they all agreed, in principle, that single women should not be having babies. Indeed, as a rule, the social activists in this study did not even define single mothers as mature women, this was an honor reserved for married women and married mothers.

We have seen how single motherhood has been the focus of a moral regulation movement based on the idea of a normative heterosexual nuclear family ideal. This study adds to the feminist literature that challenges the gender blindness of traditional historical research on family, welfare and regulation. This research

provides documentation of the specifically gendered nature of moral regulation of girls and women by demonstrating that the conceptions of ideal or hegemonic femininity, as well as masculinity, underpinned the various regulatory approaches to single motherhood. As such, it gives credence to feminist theories that suggest that boys and girls need to be educated into their respective gendered roles; particularly, in this case, that girls must be *taught* to fill traditional female roles, that they must follow particular societal rules in order to become “women” and proper citizens.

Moral Regulation and Identity

Feminist empirical research on social welfare movements, such as Ladd-Taylor & Hagemann’s (1997) concept of social rationalization, as well as from queer and gay liberation theorists’ formulation of heterosexuality as a governing regime of society (Wittig, 1976, 1981, 1989, 1992; Butler, 1990a, 1990b; Kinsman, 1996) point to western society and its institutions being constructed around assumptions of the nuclear family and its attendant gender roles as the normal, “natural” form of human organization. A Foucauldian view of discursive formulations is informative in revealing how the structures of knowledge and power come together to produce and maintain subjectivities or identity categories such as single motherhood and assists us in sorting out how the diverse elements that we have reviewed in this study work as a coherent whole. Single motherhood has been positioned as a distinct, deviant identity category within the context of a

society that is structured upon the basis of heterosexual norms. Hegemonic heterosexuality has, for example, been the master category used as a tool for nation building. It has been used to corral diverse elements within our society's history, such as immigrants, poor people, and aboriginals and to regulate their behavior and social organization.

As I mentioned in my introduction, it is an element of the individualism of our time for society's members to believe that we live our lives on the basis of our own free will. In this context, I have brought up ontological questions pertaining to the roles of agency and of structure in society. The concept of hegemonic heterosexuality allows us to supercede this debate to the degree that hegemony includes elements of both the coercion and consent of the individuals involved. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the possibility that consent (or individual agency) is also socially constitutive, as Foucault (1975) pointed out in his theoretical construct of docile bodies. Western forms of discipline involve the calculated manipulation and control of the body, methods to which we are all subject as we go about our normal lives, interacting within society's institutions – as we go to school, to church, to the doctor, etc. This makes us uniquely subject to societal control although we may indeed believe, in following the rules and regulations of society, that we are acting of our own free will. In this case, the term “hegemony” itself suggests that the agency of the individual actor is not necessarily “free will” but the ideological winning over of the hearts and minds of

the population. We move smoothly through our lives unless we act in a deviant way.

It is also worth noting that deviance, especially deviance acted out on a large scale (like the large numbers of unwed mothers), represents the possibility of blatant free will: by definition, these individuals proceed with their actions despite the formidable social ordinances against such behaviour. Such action, having sex and becoming pregnant outside of marriage, may be the result of ignorance or assault or even a personal rebellion, but it may well, in many cases, be the exercise of free will. At this point, she may find herself within the confines of what society thinks of and expects of the unwed mother. For the woman who has arrived at this point in life of her own accord, despite social pressure for her to act otherwise, there is still a better than average chance that she will attempt to exercise agency - up and against social structure. In a very profound sense, however, reality itself is constructed through the social: we are the results of our social interactions and it is difficult, if not impossible to tease out actions that are based on our own agency and those which are socially forced upon us.

All of the agencies and charities that we have examined did, of course, involve individuals who did act socially and in accordance (purportedly) to their own understanding of social ideals. Many of these individuals were regular people going about their daily lives and daily work. It is at least comforting to note that people do act on their own principles and that their actions can make a difference

in the larger order of things. Indeed, the written materials that these individuals left behind, that comprise the empirical basis for this thesis, are an example of human agency itself. As Fairclough (2003: 22) points out, while there are real social constraints at work, “[s]ocial agents structure texts” with a fair degree of freedom. In the written word – in reporters’ words, in CASV manager’s reports, in Emily Murphy’s magazine articles – there are real opinions, strength, determination and action.

Moral regulation movements deal with deviance in society through the sanctions and constraints put on people who fall outside of the acceptable societal norms and through the exertion of pressure to conform, as Hunt illustrated in *Governing Morals: A Social History of Moral Regulation* (1999). He pointed out that moral regulation movements can be “socially constitutive” insofar as they construct identities and subjectivities which are then assumed to be natural and normal. In this respect, moral regulation movements are extremely powerful social processes that create the taken-for-granted realities of everyday life. Moral regulation movements demarcate what is normative and what is deviant and define the social reality of groups and of individuals, operating both on an objective and a subjective level. Diverse elements have connected through various social practices, discourses and symbols to create a regulatory “umbrella” effect (Hunt, 1999) in the moral policing of the single mother.

Hunt (1999) pointed out that, first, moral regulation movements create a moralized subject. The subject created in this instance is, of course, the single mother. While women becoming pregnant or being mothers without having a male partner who is alive and married to her have always been in existence, the single mother as a distinct subject position or identity has been socially constructed and moralized. In other words, “the single mother” has been given special meaning as a specific type of person in a specific historical-social context. We do not need to know a given single mother in order to assume a specific characterization of a given single mother. This is not to say that there are not different types of single mothers (unwed mother, divorced mother, widow, etc.) who are differentially valued, nor does it mean that the meaning is rigidly fixed. Certainly, there is evidence of a type of hierarchy of the single mother following lines of social stratification. Indeed, some forms of single motherhood are more normative than others, and there can be deep dividing lines between single mothers. This in itself is part and parcel of moral regulation. There will always be divisions among moralized subjects in attempts to distance themselves from the socially stigmatized subject position. For example, Queer Theory lends insight into the way binary positions are set up in a relational context to one another.

While the gay liberation movement sought to gain respectability through identification with mainstream, white, middle-class society, their mainstreaming effectively reinforced the deviancy of other gay, lesbian, bi, transsexual, individuals and groups – as discussed earlier on in this dissertation. This brought

the “Queer” community into existence. In the same way, single mothers who seek acceptance in mainstream society by seeking approximation with the white middle class heterosexual ideal, effectively reinforce the deviance of other single mothers. They strengthen the deviant position of “single mothers” as a whole. The fact that some single mothers become somewhat socially acceptable does not detract from the fact that there are certain assumptions made about the single mother in general: her character, her social situation, her behavior and her abilities. In distancing themselves from “deviant” single mothers, they are, in effect, fortifying the deviant social labeling applied to others. A caricature of sorts is constructed, for example, of the poor, young, non-white, sexually promiscuous single mother who retains the status of a social pariah.

This is not to say that single mothers who seek to represent themselves as upstanding citizens are working against themselves, so to speak. Rather, it is a commentary on social stratification that manifests itself through sexuality and concomitant personal living styles. It is this idea that prompted Robert Scheer to claim, in referencing homosexual marriage as a civil rights issue, that “Sexual fascism – the violent denial of the fundamental right of human beings to define their essential nature in an open and accountable manner – is at the heart of totalitarianism, whether in an Islamic, a Christian or a Marxist context” (“Scandal’s Shame, Massachusetts’ Pride” by Robert Scheer, May 18, 2004, www.alternet.org). Holding up one sexual arrangement (heterosexual marriage) as the ideal to which everyone must conform, and pegging other arrangements (from

homosexualities to single motherhood) as being immoral deviations from the norm, is akin to a totalitarian regime that robs a great number of people of their personal dignity, sexual expression, and fundamental societal rights and privileges. This is why Queer theorists assert that Queer theory is a general social theory. They believe that more attention needs to be given to the study of the knowledges and social practices that organize society as a whole through the sexualizing of society's institutions (Seidman, 1996).

This study contributes to a Queer program of general social theory. This focus on single motherhood is, obviously, not about lesbianism and homosexuality but it is directly concerned with the sexualization of society and its institutions. Single mothers compose an identity group who have been historically, socially constructed and defined through their deviation from culturally and institutionally sanctioned sexual, familial, reproductive behavior. The quality of their lives, their ability to provide adequately for themselves and their families, to be healthy and to thrive, are all compromised because they are socially positioned as sexual deviants. Their status as single mothers contributes to the erasure of other salient identity characteristics and accomplishments. As one single mother, Inger Cruickshank, stated, "Call us single people with children" ("Girls living in co-op houses: 'Call us single people with children'", COV Archives microfiche collection, Irene Thompson, August 5, 1970, *Vancouver Sun*). In other words, we are just people, not the stereotype that you are trying to brand us with.

As “single mothers” are women, gender is at issue. Gender roles are an integral part of hegemonic heterosexuality. For many of the subjects in this study, single mothers were not considered to be women. Only married women who followed the proper path were deemed to be fully women. Being called “girls” commanded less respect than the term “woman”, but even being a “woman” in this context connotes a subordinate position within a hierarchy that places men in a position of power over women. Being a woman, then, is a result of a social/sexual arrangement in opposition to a man. Just as married, heterosexual, reproductive units had a role to play within a healthy society, so too did individual men and women have their respective parts to play.

Heterosexual Hegemony in the 21st Century

The common thread running through the historic identity formulation of single motherhood is the challenge it poses to the hegemonic heterosexual regime. Consequently, single mothers are always in need of some form of moral regulation. We have seen how a complex knowledge base was constructed by the professional elite composed of religious, academic, charitable, maternal feminist, medical and legal individuals and groups. This knowledge discourse composed of a set of morally acceptable practices, in the form of proper gender roles and proper familial formations, was held up as an ideal alternative to the deviant behaviour and arrangements that would generate disruption if women were allowed to have and raise children outside of the nuclear family form. In the past

(and indeed into the present) concerns surrounding sexuality and reproduction were an integral part of how Canadian society was to develop.

Today, the ideal of the nuclear family is as strong as ever. While other family forms continue to persist, the patriarchal, heterosexual nuclear family form remains the powerful, normative institution,

married-with-children nuclear family remains as dominant as a Humvee, barreling through the media and forcing images of other, different, and just as legitimate family arrangements off to the side (Douglas & Michaels, 2004: 22).

Because hegemonic heterosexuality and its attendant gender roles are culturally depicted as being natural, deviations from the norm can be depicted as “unnatural”. When we depict unwed mothers as unnatural individuals with individual problems or defects, then we can, as a society, justify minimal, controlled social support. It is also easy to demonize “deviant” women, to find them immoral or unfit, isolating them and more easily justifying the minimization of societal support in raising her children.

Douglas and Michaels (2004) discussed this point in reference to the scapegoating of the single mother in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States. In an echo of the turn of the century illustrated in this research, male politicians and pundits routinely blamed single mothers for the social problems of the nation – from drug use, to the national debt, to rising crime rates. It was in this way, the authors argued, that

Conservatives kept the coals of misogyny warm without offending the politically prized “soccer mom”. And they succeeded. The poor mother no longer represented the failing of American society to take care of its own. She represented the failure of individual women to take their maternal responsibilities as seriously as possible (Douglas & Michaels, 2004: 180).

In this way, Douglas & Michaels observed, deviant women and those who toe the line are played off one another as a “cat-fight” between stay-at-home and working mothers. Through the media’s creation of the “supermom” image, along with the challenges (juggling it all) and the potential dangers (to the kids, to mom’s sanity), the idea that kids are the responsibility of individual women is reinforced. The notion of a “supermom” who could handle both work and home (house and kids) was not, the authors pointed out, what second wave feminism had in mind. Many feminists endorse the position that husbands and the government should be held responsible for the care of children as well as women. As Douglas and Michaels put it, when it became evident that average women couldn’t comfortably juggle all of these responsibilities on their own, “the supermom was discredited as something we allegedly aspired to but couldn’t achieve, and thus we were supposed to go back to the kitchen”(2004: 206).

The media constructed battle between the over-achieving supermoms and the virtuous stay-at-home moms portrayed the stay-at-homers as wise, humane, and triumphant, and, as a result propagated the view that true satisfaction for women lay in the domestic realm. If women couldn’t hack “it all”, then any real woman

would choose her children's health and well-being over her career. Nowhere in the media spotlight did we get a clear focus on the real problem that normative gender roles and sexist social structures let individual fathers off the hook and that the government were continuing to cut back on social programs supportive of families. Once again, individual women – mothers – were saddled with the sole responsibility for raising the next generation, and for any of the failures that might result.

Despite it being a rather obvious point that there are social aspects involved in reproduction, we as a society continue to perpetuate the illusion that reproduction is a matter of personal choice. Women are often held responsible for their position as unwed mothers (even the very young) because they are viewed as having made a choice. This is held true even when unwed motherhood creates a predicament of spectacular proportions for a young woman. Nevertheless, the concept of “choice” does not necessarily include notions of women's “rights”. Young, unmarried women or girls who, historically, were forced or pressured to put babies up for adoption, or who were sterilized under the permission of parents, guardians, or a spouse were denied motherhood because they were deemed unfit or feeble-minded. As such, they were denied *rights*. All choice is not created equal when, for instance, a different societal value is placed on motherhood in different strata of society, varying by class, race, age, marital status, and so on. We think of “choice” as encompassing all the available options and making them accessible for all the people in question. But that simply is not the case: if it were, we could

then refer to “reproductive rights”. Diane Richardson summed it up nicely when she said

Choice is not a very meaningful word unless it is used in relation to the circumstances in which people live their lives. Women are not all equally able to choose to have – or not to have – children (Richardson, 1993: 62).

We speak of reproductive choice, not reproductive rights. Among other things, the use of the term choice, as Solinger (1998) outlined it, connotes individual freedom and agency on a private level. It denies societal or public responsibility and involvement in ‘personal’ affairs. It perpetuates the idea that, no matter how destitute a young mother may be, she deserves her plight since she made her *choices* in the matter. There has been an assumption (since Roe Vs Wade) that choice could be carried out by all women regardless of socioeconomic factors with the logical consequence that women are held fully responsible for their decisions surrounding reproduction. Consequently, young, poor, single women are now viewed as making the “choice” to carry a pregnancy to term. And this “choice” being a devalued, “poor” choice, once made, they are, in many ways, on their own.

It is appropriate in a consumer society to draw an analogy between reproductive choice and the marketplace, as Solinger (1998) did in her argument on the subject. Without resources (i.e., money), the notion of choice in the marketplace is a farce. Can we say that a penniless individual at the mall has choices? There may be a multitude of goods to choose from at the mall, but if she has no money or credit to

purchase any of them, in what way can we refer to her empty-handedness as her individual choice amongst all the goodies she could have purchased, that are right in front of her face? She personally witnesses other citizens purchasing items, she sees the evidence of purchases made surrounding her in her environment, on the street, on the television. She knows all too well what is *available*. Would it then be fair or logical to say of this poverty-stricken individual that she has “chosen” to wear clothes from the Salvation Army, that she obviously has “poor taste” in home furnishings, that she *prefers* that her family does not have a nutritious diet? These things are only true choices if all the options are open to the shopper to begin with. We might say that her poverty is the result of laziness, but as sociologists we know that socio-economic success is not simply a matter of individual ambition, but a complex result of social, political and economic factors which are often outside of the influence of individual striving.

The notion of a true individual reproductive choice, likewise, rests upon all individuals being equal. It also rests upon the existence of appropriate choices. Does adequate and accessible birth control exist for everyone? Is abortion affordable, available, safe, and (not least of all) morally acceptable to all women? Furthermore, does the decision to create and then to keep or to terminate a pregnancy or to relinquish a child rest solely with the woman in question? What influence is exerted upon her by parents, by a spouse, boyfriend, lover, or rapist, by her financial or career situation, by her religious community, by her social circle or community at large, by her doctor and the medical establishment, by the

local social services organization, by the media, public opinion, anti-abortion protesters, by her own life circumstances, dreams and opportunities? What supports are available to her – does her high school offer daycare? There are many social factors that affect the decisions made by the pregnant woman, and not all women have a choice, or the same degree of choice as one another. It simply is not an individual matter bereft of social context, especially given the social definitions of womanhood, female sexuality and motherhood.

Women who are married are expected to want and to have children, and there is such pressure on heterosexual, married women to have children, that it may be difficult for a married woman to decide not to have children. As Richardson (1993) argued, this leaves us with something of a paradox. The desire for children has long been touted as a natural part of being female. However, having children outside of heterosexual marriage is highly questionable, which prompts the question, why should this natural desire for maternity only be present in married, heterosexual women?

Societal confusion over women's desire to have children outside of the properly sanctioned arena for motherhood – i.e., heterosexual marriage – has long been dealt with through different explanations for why different women want children (Richardson, 1993). Traditionally, it has been assumed that married women naturally want babies and that a further, different explanation is required for women who are having babies outside of marriage. Explanations proposed for

out-of-wedlock pregnancy and child raising include the following: that it fulfills a need for a woman to be valued and needed; it provides a way for a woman to ensure that a lover or boyfriend will marry her; or, more patronizingly, that it occurs as a result of contraceptive laziness or by accident (Richardson, 1993). In short, a non-married woman has a child not because she really desires to have a child for its own sake, but because she has some selfish, ulterior, unfortunate, or “bad” motive for having a child.

While social trends in recent years have shifted towards more and more single and lesbian childbearing and rearing, there is still a general societal perplexity and discomfort over single pregnancy and single mothering. Furthermore, the dominant discourse within the helping professions assumes that children, and particularly boys, need their fathers in order to be adequately provided for, healthy and happy (Schnitzer, 1998). In this respect, women’s voices are silenced on the issue – it is as if there *is* no good reason for why a single mother family should exist. The assumption that a single mother family is a deviant family in need eclipses the many possible factors involved in a woman’s decision to raise a child without that child’s biological father. However, it is important to recognize that fathers are all different and, among other possibilities, many of them may be abusive or alcoholic or otherwise a danger to the family. We need to be prepared to accept the fact that some women genuinely want to raise children whether in a partnership or not, and that in many cases, father absence may not be the problem in these families but, rather, the solution. It is on this note that Phoebe Schnitzer

(1998) suggested that “we should consider the possibility that the worldwide increases in single mothering express a growing intolerance for problematic implementations of marriage and family”(169).

Recent theoretical steps have been taken to “queer” the notion of the family in relation to lesbian parenting (Malone and Cleary, 2002). Karen Malone and Rose Cleary (2002) pointed out that although contemporary research shows that children raised by lesbian parents are equally – if not better – adjusted than children raised in more traditional homes by heterosexual couples, we do not dig deeply enough into this social phenomenon if we simply assume that lesbian parents are a type of neutered heterosexual couple. They argued that it is not sufficient to ignore the sexuality of parents just because the reproductive aspect of sexuality – that is, how the child was biologically produced – is not a continuous part of the child’s life (i.e., remaining in the care of the two biological parents from conception on through to adulthood and beyond). These theorists drew on queer theory and its conception of the anormativity of homosexuality, with its role as a site of resistance to traditional societal norms at the same time recognizing that “the family” is a societal institution charged with responsibility for normative societal reproduction. To put these two contradictory expectations together – the anormativity of homosexuality, along with the normativity of the family – is a novel theoretical endeavor. Malone and Cleary (2002: 286) suggested that, as a beginning, researchers explore “how families, sexualities and subjectivities are interrelated” and ask lesbians how they “fantasize” their families, whether with a

mind toward tradition or as a break away from earlier generations within their families. By looking at sexuality and the formative aspects of relating to an “other” (or not), and questioning the relationship between these things and how they operate within the family, how they create meanings and subjectivities in children, we can begin to see how gender (or its subversion) and sexuality can play a revolutionary role within the family, and thus, in society.

A “queer” take on single mothering has not been popular within cultural studies. Juffer (2006: 17) wonders why this may be the case, considering that single motherhood falls easily within the purview of queer studies. She concludes that “cultural studies has failed to take seriously the politics of domesticity, family, parenting, and children, perhaps because domesticity seems so irrevocably bourgeois, so linked to property, containment, and essentialized identities – so unable to be rearticulated to something more in line with the perceived politics of cultural studies” (Juffer, 2006: 17-18). This is where a feminist viewpoint comes in: feminism has long included children and the “private sphere” amongst its theoretical and practical concerns.

Perhaps, as Schnitzer (1998) suggested, alternative forms of the family -- such as single mothering and lesbian mothering – do point to a more or less conscious effort to alter unacceptable patriarchal traditions and gender roles within the basic familial unit. If you look at the family as a microcosm of the larger society, single mothering (as well as lesbian and gay parenting) can be viewed in itself as a sort

of feminist activism. Jane Juffer (2006) contends that single mothers are becoming a strong, respectable, alternative family form in the U.S.: “Single mothers are the exemplars of the shifting American family, showing that women can raise children in non-patriarchal households”(4).

But using single mothering as a personal political tool is risky. While the status of the single mother was being questioned during the 1960s and 1970s – in the Alberta and B.C. newspapers, by single mothers themselves, and by those who worked with them – this status is still contested today, decades later. The moral stigma attached to the single mother remains intact into the 21st century. It is the “moral stigma” that justifies continuing human rights abuses against single mothers.

Looking at Canada as a whole, it is evident that women’s equality has been advanced significantly since the early 1900s. Women’s wages have risen steadily, women’s educational opportunities have increased, there are more women in the professions, and their health is good. Nevertheless, according to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, women in Canada still fall short of gender equality. Many women are still segregated into low paying, traditionally female-dominated jobs that are part time and lack benefits; there is a distinct division of labour in the home, with women performing the bulk of unpaid work, particularly where small children are present; poverty among some groups, including single mothers, is very high; funding for

legal aid in matters of poverty and family law have been decreased at the discretion of provincial governments; there have been significant recent cuts to social services; violence against women and girls continues; there is a lack of affordable and reliable childcare; and women's political involvement is still very low (UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 28 Session, 13-31 January, 2003, www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw).

Clearly, there is a strong political trend in western states toward conservative policies and law making that erodes women's rights and their ability to become self-sufficient citizens in their own right. This, obviously, affects women as a whole but, more specifically, it also plunges single mothers and other vulnerable groups of women into a (more) precarious financial and social position that is reminiscent of the past history that this research documents.

Taken as a whole, we can see how various elements in society such as eugenics, charitable, religious, welfare and women's movements have operated to construct an image of the single mother as a distinct identity type. While she has been variably depicted between the extremes of criminal and victim, she is almost always cast as an individual actor whose personal problems are explained in individual, apolitical terms. It is here that the term "choice" is applied. While collectively "single mothers" have been problematized on a social level, to the extent where they are blamed for various societal ills, their circumstances are

explained as being the result of individual deviance, folly, emotional, psychological or biological defects, or of a crime committed against her person. She is, foremost, morally suspect, and viewed as being deserving of moral guidance, whether softly or strictly delivered. A sociologically discerning analysis has rarely been forthcoming in society's dealings with single motherhood.

The current rhetoric of choice serves to perpetuate the ideology of the individual. Portraying contemporary women as being liberated women, free to make their own choices in reproductive, professional and other matters, glosses over the very real inequalities that exist in a patriarchal, stratified society. This being the case, society cannot help but place full responsibility, both for becoming a single mother and for maintaining herself and her family once she is there, directly upon single mothers themselves. Society lets itself off the hook when it comes to assisting its members who do not conform to its ideal of social organization. This remains a problem, not only for those people who deviate from the hegemonic, heterosexual ideal and suffer the consequences, but also for those more conformist individuals who are aware of their own oppression within conventional lifestyles.

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Appendix 1

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Address: #110-3885 Ricket Road, Prince George, BC.

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 another purpose (describe) Ph.D dissertation - Social

Construction of Single Motherhood

and is intended for:

personal use
 use by another individual (name) _____

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Annual reports	1919 - 1926	Vol.127, file 3
Constitution and By-laws	1917-1967	Vol.127, file 8
Association of C.A.S.		
Constitution and By-laws	1963-1970	Vol.131, file 5

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[March 11/02]

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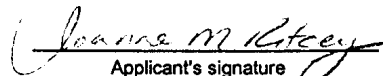
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Name in full: Joanne Marie Pitkey Tel #: (250) 962-9871

Address: #110-3885 Ricket Road, Prince George, BC.

My research is for:
 historical purposes
 another purpose (describe) Ph.D dissertation - Social Construction of Single Motherhood

and is intended for:
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 use by another individual (name) _____
 use by a company/organization (name) _____

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Association of C.A.S.		
Constitution and By-laws	1963-1970	Vol.131, file 5

and CAS Ms. (trans letter) Vol. 127 f. 1 AS

is hereby granted from Feb. 20 2002 to Feb. 28, 2002 2002

in accordance with this application and **subject to the following conditions:** *March 15, 2002 MS [March 11/02]*

1. The following types of information are restricted and shall not be used in such a way as to permit identification of individuals or families:

- a) information about an individual's health care history, including a physical or mental disability;
- b) information about an individual's educational, financial, criminal or employment history;
- c) information contained in communications between lawyers and their clients.

Exceptions to this rule will be made only with the prior written consent of the City Archivist.

2. I understand that I am responsible for maintaining the security and confidentiality of all such information found in or taken from these records.

3. I further agree to maintain the security and confidentiality of the following types of information (to be completed by Archives staff):

over →

4. Reports, papers, presentations, theses, or any other works which describe the results of the research undertaken will be written and/or presented in such a way that no linkages can be made between any restricted information found in the requested records and information that is publicly available from other sources. Exceptions to this rule will be made only with the prior written consent of the City Archivist.

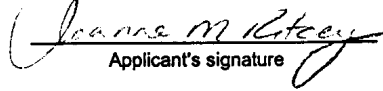
5. The City Archivist has the right to review a draft of the product of my research (paper, article, manuscript, etc.) before publication or release to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement.

6. The documents identified as fragile by an archivist may preclude photocopying and shall be handled only as directed by an archivist.

7. Any photocopies of requested records containing restricted information will be destroyed as soon as the information contained in the records is no longer required for the purposes of this research project. Destruction of the copies will be carried out in a manner which ensures that the information contained in them will not become accidentally available to any other person.

8. Access and permission to use may be withdrawn by the City Archivist at any time without notice.

I agree that I am bound by the terms and conditions contained in this agreement.


Applicant's signature


City Archivist/per

Date: Feb. 22, 2002

**CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES
AGREEMENT FOR ACCESS TO RESTRICTED RECORDS**

Date: Feb 20, 2002

Name in full: Joanne Marie Ritey Tel. (250)962-9871

Address: #110-3885 Ricket Rd., Prince George, B.C.

Research project description: PhD Dissertation - Social Construction of Single Motherhood.

My research is for: _____ and is intended for: _____
 historical purposes personal use
 another purpose (describe): _____
PhD Dissertation. use by another individual (name): _____
_____ use by a company/organization (name): _____

Access to and permission to use the records described as 75-B-3 FILE 16 TITLE: CHILDREN'S AND SOCIETY; VANCOUVER BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONER'S FONDS, SERIES 181 GENERAL FILES

is hereby granted from FEB-20, 2002 to FEB 28, 2002.

in accordance with this application and **subject to the following conditions:**

1. The information from records named above shall not be used in such a way as to permit identification of individuals or families, and shall be in compliance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
2. The City Archivist has the right to review a draft of the product of my research (paper, article, manuscript) before publication or release to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement.
3. The City Archivist may request a copy of the product of my research to be deposited permanently at the City of Vancouver Archives.
4. The documents identified as fragile by an archivist may preclude photocopying and shall be handled only as directed by an archivist.
5. Any photocopies of requested records containing restricted information will be destroyed as soon as the information contained in the records is no longer required for the purposes of this research project. Destruction of the copies will be carried out in a manner which ensures that the information contained in them will not become accidentally available to any other person.
6. Access and permission to use may be withdrawn by the City Archivist at any time without notice.
7. I agree to comply with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the policies and procedures of the City of Vancouver archives relating to the confidentiality of the record, and the use of the records and the conditions imposed above by the City Archivist.
8. Other conditions where applicable - see attached.

I agree that I am bound by the terms and conditions contained in this agreement.

Joanne M Ritey
APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE

[Signature]
CITY ARCHIVIST/PER

]:\allform\RESTRICpub (01/2002)

ACCESS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

INTRODUCTION TO THE AGREEMENT FORM

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

The Act covers all records in the custody or control of public bodies in British Columbia with only a few exceptions. The purpose of the Act is to make public bodies more accountable to the public and to protect personal privacy. To achieve this, the Act contains the following features:

- ▶ The public has a general right of access to records.
- ▶ Exceptions to the right of access are limited and specific. These exceptions protect the legitimate needs of government for confidentiality in certain instances.
- ▶ Individuals have a right of access to, and a right to request correction of, personal information about themselves.
- ▶ Privacy is protected by the prevention of unauthorized collection, use or disclosure of personal information by public bodies. Personal information may not be disclosed to any person other than the individual to whom the information relates, except in certain limited circumstances.
- ▶ Decisions to disclose or withhold information under the Act are subject to independent review by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Under the Act's appeal provisions, any decision relating to access to records can be appealed by the person requesting access or by an affected third party.

Personal Information

Section 22 of the Act determines whether the release of personal information would constitute an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy and requires us to refuse to disclose the information if this is the case.

The Act defines personal information as "recorded information about an identifiable individual". This includes the following types of information:

- a) the individual's name, address or telephone number;
- b) the individual's race, national or ethnic origin, colour, or religious or political beliefs or associations;
- c) the individual's age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or family status;
- d) an identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual;
- e) the individual's fingerprints, blood type or inheritable characteristics;
- f) information about the individual's health care history, including a physical or mental disability;
- g) information about the individual's educational, financial, criminal or employment history;
- h) anyone else's opinions about the individual; and
- i) the individual's personal views or opinions, except if they are about someone else.

Research Agreements

One circumstance where personal information may be disclosed is when the disclosure is for research purposes. Section 35 of the Act allows public bodies to grant researchers the privilege of access to records containing other people's personal information, but only if:

- a) the research purpose cannot reasonably be accomplished unless that information is provided in individually identifiable form or the research purpose has been approved by the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the province;
- b) any record linkage is not harmful to the individuals that information is about and the benefits to be derived from the record linkage are clearly in the public interest;
- c) the City of Vancouver Archives has approved conditions relating to the following:
 - (i) security and confidentiality;
 - (ii) the removal or destruction of individual identifiers at the earliest reasonable time;
 - (iii) the prohibition of any subsequent use or disclosure of that information in individually identifiable form without the express authorization of the City of Vancouver Archives; and
- d) the person to whom that information is disclosed has signed an agreement to comply with the approved conditions, this Act and any of the public body's policies and procedures relating to the confidentiality of personal information.

Requests by researchers for access to records in the custody and control of the City of Vancouver Archives which contain personal information are administered through the use of an "Agreement for Access to Restricted Records"; generally referred to as a research agreement. This is a legal agreement and will only be authorized for a bona fide research project. Access privileges are granted only to the person or persons who enter into the research agreement and only for the purpose stated in the agreement.

A research agreement, once approved, gives the researcher access to the requested records.

Appendix 2

Archival Sources

Archival and Ancillary Sites

Alberta:

City of Edmonton Archives (COE Archives)

Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAB Archives)

University of Alberta Special Collections

British Columbia:

City of Vancouver Archives (COV Archives)

British Columbia Archives (PBC Archives)

British Columbia Ministry of Children and Families (BCMCF)

At each archival site I took extensive notes during the research process. At the City of Vancouver Archives, for example, my records, in part, show the following:

- The Malcolm R. Crane Pride Archives, 1946-1993, Add MSS 1229.
Photocopied poetry and articles pertaining to the 1976 Conference on the Family.
- Photocopied pamphlet entitled “Social Vice in Vancouver”, published by the Moral and Social Reform Council of British Columbia in 1912. Made note of the moral tone of the photocopied pamphlet and the commentary

within pertaining to the relationship between immigration and vice in the city; also noted the affiliation between this organization and the VCAS.

- Extensive notes taking down important points from “You’ve Come A Long Way Baby/ A brief history of women in Vancouver”, compiled by *Vancouver Magazine*, July 1997 (In *Guide to manuscripts Pertaining to Women*, City of Vancouver Archives). For example, I noted that in 1892 the Alexandria Orphanage was founded and the WCTU started a movement for a Children’s Aid Society; that in 1911, the first meeting of the Vancouver Women’s Building Limited was held, with twelve organizations attending and that, also in 1911, the Child Welfare Department was established; and that in the 1920’s, British Columbia had the lowest birth rate of any province, and the highest maternal mortality rate.
- Notes taken on the Ann Angus Fonds: Add MSS No. 351, File 2. Ann Angus was apparently acting as a secretary for the Vancouver Children’s Aid Society and the file featured VCAS newsletters and annual reports, many of them drafts written in her own handwriting. In my notes, I noted technical points, such as the 1934 statistics stating that of 721 families who were given assistance, 118 unmarried mothers were aid recipients, as well as philosophical commentary.³⁵

³⁵ For instance, the following is a pasting from my own notes taken at the Vancouver City Archives:

1917 Ald. Hamilton

- Extensive notes were taken based on the Jessie Hall Fonds, AddMSS. 97, 1904-1935. As pointed out in the Archives's "Preliminary Inventory" description, Jessie Hall was a social activist in Vancouver and she and her Kitsilano residence ("Killarney") "became a center for many community organizations..." She was president of the Victorian Order of Nurses, an original member of Christ Church, a founding member of St. Mark's Church. She also worked for the VCAS, the Vancouver Welfare Federation, was on the Local Council of Women, and won the 1931 Citizen of the Year Award. I took notes on (and quotes from) various speeches that she delivered, and on various items in the scrapbooks, such as letters and poems, newspaper clippings, etc. detailing the hosting of socials and various fundraisers and social support she gave to the troops in WWI as well as "cool pics" within the file.³⁶

Sounds like this was a speech given by someone. Ann is quoting him and giving his opinion: "Mentally defective: makes strong plea for their care, and for physical defectives. Moral defectives: prevention. "Give them [children] the best food, care for their clothing; but there is something more vital and necessary than all that. ___?___ should be placed where they will be surrounded and influenced by love and there you will not have to watch them as they go out into the world, for they will go along the right line as naturally as the needle points to the north". (p.36 in file).

³⁶ For example, the following is taken from my own notes on the Jessie Hall Fonds at the Vancouver City Archives:

A clipping in the scrapbook reads:

"Mrs. J.Z. Hall, "killarney". Dear Madam – When you convinced our city council that a grant of \$500. for the Victorian Order of Nurses would help a lot, you made an excellent plea in a worthy cause, and we are glad that you were successful in your mission on behalf of sick and suffering families. It takes time, thought and energy to do these things. (NP)Your energies are in marked contrast to those of the ladies who spend their mornings on the golf links, their afternoons and evenings at bridge and mah jong. Your lovely home, "killarney", on Point Grey road, was open practically day and night during the war for entertainments for raising funds, and as a home away

- I gained access to restricted files such as the Children’s Aid Society Annual Reports, Constitution and By-Laws, Newsletter and the Vancouver Board of Police Commission Fonds, Series 181, General files: Children’s Aid Society (See Appendix 1: Archival Access Permission Forms). I read through these documents, taking notes, with an eye to any social comments such as philosophical viewpoints on the running of the society, the role of society in caring for the young, on charity work and welfare, as well as religious or moral views being proclaimed as pertained to children deemed needy and any views professed about their mothers or fathers, etc. I also looked for any commentary or information on the clientele, such as the reasons for care and any special commentary on unmarried mothers as well as references to broader social issues such as war or influenza epidemics that might effect the work of the Children’s Aid Society. I also took note of how trends or attitudes seemed to shift or change over time.³⁷

from home for the patients from the military hospitals. It is still frequently at the disposal of patriotic and charitable enterprises. Your practical interest in the V.O.N. should be greatly valued by the community, and your ideas for obtaining the necessary funds will doubtless be successful. Yours for V.O. N. support, Junius Jr.”.

³⁷ For example, the following is an example of the a portion of the notes taken from one of my files on one VCAS annual newsletter:

Restricted access

Annual Report 1918, The Clarke & Stuart Co., Ltd., Printers, Vancouver, B.C.
 The Children’s Aid Society of Vancouver, Incorporated under the Children’s Protection Act of British Columbia “We Protect the Little Ones”
 -epidemic – left many children motherless and in some cases fatherless
 -19 children committed over the year, average in home per month was 159, would have been greatly reduced if so many soldiers children weren’t there.
 -acknowledge VGH doctors and nurses and the superintendent for their kindnesses over the past year...

- I have, in my records, a listing of materials that I thought, during my research at the archives, might come in handy through the future course of the research, including some location numbers for the following: the Alexandria Neighbourhood House Fonds, 1891-1972, Add MSS 421; the Vancouver City Creche Fonds, Add MSS 124; the Vancouver BC Social Service Department, Series 453; the City Social Service Department Fonds; the Child Welfare Records, 1924-1970; the Alexandria Non-Sectarian Orphanage and Children's Home Case Files, 1924 – 1941. Included are notes on the method involved in gaining access to these (restricted) files, as well as query to self as to whether going through these motions, and going before an ethics committee in order to gain access to some of these materials, over and above the materials that were already accessible to me, was necessary for this project.

Mentally Deficient Children: “Your Directors are heartily in accord with the various organizations in this province who are working so hard to secure a Home for Deficient Children. We know how detrimental it is to have this class of children in the Home. We have had three there for some time, and it is not fair either to the deficient child or to the more favored child in any public or private home. We trust action will be taken”.

From the President's Address (p16)

“If the boys and girls are the greatest asset for a young country like Canada to have, we have to ask ourselves what our attitude towards them should be, more particularly the less fortunate ones. Is it too much to ask the government to give a little paternal care to the unfortunate child? Is it too much to ask our government to appoint a Supervisor or Superintendent – call him whatever you like – to try and obtain homes for them, to visit those who have gone out from the different institutions, and to see their welfare? We do not ask this alone for our Society, but for all similar societies, especially those obtaining monetary assistance from the government” [This is so familiar – I've read it elsewhere – maybe in ann angus' handwritten notes...]

- I have notes taken from speaking to the archivist on duty at the City of Vancouver Archives, citing contact names for individuals she thought might be helpful to me: Sue Baptie, the City Archivist; Karin Bodreau, the Manager of Records; the Ministry for Children and Families; and the phone number for Inquiry BC.
- I have listed three Thesis titles from UBC's Department of Social Work as well as a note added at UBC, saying that the two theses that were on the shelf at the Department of Social Work were not very informative for my purposes and did not seem to warrant any more of my time.