

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Moments In Time

I have come to realize how there are only a few clear and distinct periods in my life that have driven and defined me as an educator. It is these successions of moments when, as a parent, I made the decision to become a teacher. It is also the time that I find myself continually returning to as I look to what sparks this study. In many ways, it was one of many beginnings for me, so let me begin at one of those beginnings.

First days of school.

Parents of children with special needs will often report how their first experience, of dealing with medical professionals often leaves them feeling helpless and powerless. Many of them will reflect on the moment that they received a doctor's diagnosis or prognosis for their child, as being a lost and lonely one. When my husband and I received our children's diagnosis' I cannot say I, personally, experienced those feelings. It wasn't until sometime later, in my oldest son's life, that I understood that emptiness. It came not through my interactions with the medical profession, but rather with the education system.

By the time my oldest son was five, I felt I had already begun to master the experience of dealing with the large number of professionals who tend to be part of the life of a child with special needs. I had two children, both of whom required therapeutic support for speech and language development as well as for their gross and fine motor functioning. I had also been involved with many medical specialists (neurology, gastroenterology, and orthopedics) who had

requested that my boys be studied for their rather unique condition. I had already experienced the feeling of sending my babies off to school when, at two and a half years of age, they both began early intervention programs outside our home. In those first five years of raising my sons, I felt I had already handled it all. However, I was wrong.

At the age of five, like most other children, my oldest son began kindergarten at our local community school. We had arranged with the support of our school board ahead of time for his special needs to be accommodated. As his parents, we felt confident that his new role as a student would be a healthy and happy one. What we did not expect or plan for were the beliefs and values of a school administration that narrowly defined how they could accommodate for him, when and where they would support him and under what conditions they would be willing to do either. It was a nightmare. I clearly remember those first few years, sitting in meeting after meeting with grade level teachers, teacher specialists, school administrators, psychologists and counselors all crowded around me in the act of making cooperative educational decisions for my son. I felt small, insignificant, power-less and, many times, coerced into believing that the concessions made on behalf of my son were done for us as a favor for which I should feel fortunate. It really was not until two years later, with a change in administration and the help of one exceptional teacher, that I began to realize how the stress and pressure we had experienced in those first few years was not necessarily the normal course of events. I clearly remember my first meeting with his grade two teacher. Just his grade two teacher, no armies of support personnel to act as backup for her, only her and I discussing how she could best embrace his unique needs and welcome him into her classroom. This teacher made me feel that the knowledge and dreams I held for my son were the very best resource she had to draw from. She truly made me feel I was an equal and worthy partner.

I cannot say it has been smooth sailing ever since. We have had years that reminded us of those first few years and other years that are clearly reminiscent of grade two. Still, even now as a high school student, my oldest son will easily recall grade two as one of the best years of his life, and I have to agree.

Finding A Focus

In beginning this work, I have asked myself repeatedly, what voice do I wish to use, what stories do I wish to tell? The basic focus of this study is to look at the experience of being a parent who teaches, since I believe our experiences away from school inform how we practice as teachers in school. To that end, I have been deeply inspired by the work of writers such as Coombs (1990), Sikes (1997), Palmer (1998) and Lightfoot-Lawrence (2003) each of whom have written about lived experiences, transformation and how it informs us in both our personal and professional lives. All four writers follow the constructivist approach, where our personal experiences inform the values and beliefs we hold about how we live and work.

Sikes (1997) tells how her priorities shifted and her values were altered through the process of becoming a mother, right from the onset of her pregnancy. She writes of how, upon returning to teaching after having her first child, her approach to teaching was drastically altered by the fact that she began to see her own daughter in each one of her students. Coombs (1990) says that the act of teaching cannot be reduced to a series of methods and techniques. He identifies expert teachers as having belief systems that, “are characteristically so all embracing that their behaviors both in and out of the classroom seem governed by the same general principles” (p.5). In the introduction of one of his texts, Palmer (1998) begins with the heading, “We Teach Who We Are”(p.1). He then goes on to refer to the act of teaching as a “mirror of the soul”(p.2). Later he states that, “teaching, like any human activity, emerges from ones

inwardness, for better or worse” (p.2). Finally, Lightfoot-Lawrence (2003) writes not about the act of teaching but about the relationships that exist between schools and their communities. Her research examines, specifically, the relationship that develops between the parent and the teacher in the parent/teacher interview:

To parents, their child is the most important person in their lives, the one who arouses their deepest passions and greatest vulnerabilities, the one who inspires their fiercest advocacy and protection. And it is teachers – society’s professional adults – who are the primary people with whom the parents must seek alliance and support in the crucial work of child rearing. They must quickly learn to release their child and trust that he or she will be well cared for by a perfect stranger whose role as teacher given her access to the most intimate territory, the deepest emotional places. (p.xxi)

Although Lightfoot-Lawrence’s (2003) work focuses on the differences in parent/teacher perspectives based on socioeconomic and cultural influences, the themes she visits around trust and distrust and how these are constructed, or deconstructed, based on lived experiences of both the parent and the teacher, speaks to my own experiences and the focus of my research question.

Still, to say that this is a study of parents who teach is really only one small portion of it. I am also interested in exploring the phenomenon of motherhood and how it affects the lives of women as teachers. However, the most salient element of the women I am focusing on is how each of them is not only a teacher and a mother but most significantly, to this study, each is a mother of a child or children with special needs. Although women who write about their experiences (Featherstone 1982; Kingsley 1987; Fialka 1997) would adamantly place the common label of mother far above that of mother with a child with special needs, the realities of raising a child whose needs extend beyond the traditional roles and responsibilities of mothering

suggests Lewin's (1994) referral to the transformative experience of becoming a mother as being, "an accomplishment that puts other achievements in their proper perspective" (p.348) may be a bit of an understatement.

Children with special needs: A unique parenting experience.

Why does it seem important to study the experience of being a woman teacher and a mother of a child with special needs? Research suggests the role of the parent of a child with special needs is, in many ways very similar, but also has some unique characteristics that set it apart from parenting a typically developing child.

Turnbull and Turnbull (1986) first approach the concept of the uniqueness of families with children with special needs by being careful to state that all families have unique characteristics that impact their family dynamics. However, they go on to identify three "considerations" (p. 25) when assessing how families of children with special needs cope; (a) the characteristics of the exceptionality, (b) the characteristics of the family as a whole and (c) the characteristics of the individuals within the family. In subsequent editions of their text, *Families, Professionals and Exceptionality* (1990; 1997; 2001; 2006), they continue to write about the importance of ongoing, long term partnerships between parents and professionals.

Berry and Hardman (1998) are a little more forthcoming in their recognition of how having a child with a special need makes the family experience unique from the traditional family. Referring to Falik (1995), they note how the care-giving and educational needs of a child with a special need can result in changes for the family both as a whole and for each individual member. "These changes and choices are complicated for all families and particular for families that include a son or daughter with a disability" (p.29).

Seligman and Darling(1997) also note how family dynamics can be compromised when one or more members have a disability.

The major drawback of focusing on the person with a disability is that other affected family members are neglected. In some instances, a family member who is non-disabled may be coping poorly. The concentrated focus on the family member with a disability is also shortsighted in that it neglects the dynamic nature of family functioning. (p.2)

It is important to acknowledge how families often experience situations that impact them as a whole. Illness, death, loss of finances and changes to living conditions all speak to the same types of situations that might create a unique living experience for that family. However, the impact of a child with a special need on a family can and often does have its own set of societal expectations and assumptions that does make it unique. Few families are saved from the general societal view that having a child with a disability is burdensome, or as Hurtig (1994) states, “The diagnosis of a child’s disability is a significant stressor in the lives of families” (p.266)

Unique parenting in schools.

In many cases, the responsibilities for the parent of a child with a special need becomes far reaching and diverse. One of these areas of increased responsibility lies within the context of school and education. The expectations for involvement for parents of children with special needs, exceed the expectations placed on parents of other students in any given school. Although the definition of involvement can take on many different forms, from providing ongoing updates on a child’s condition to becoming the liaison in the process of building friendships with peers, one unifying school expectation for parents of children with special needs is that they will keep in close communication with their child’s classroom teacher. Unlike the traditional quarterly parent/teacher interview that often acts as the sole act of contact between most homes and

schools, parents of children with special needs are often drawn into daily conversations with teachers. As inconsequential as this may seem, the realities for many parents of children with special needs is that these interactions result in a high degree of dissatisfaction in the quality of the communication between themselves and their child's teacher. There is often a sense that teachers hold a poor understanding of the unique family dynamics of raising a child with special needs. Within the context of the education system, parents often feel unheard, devalued and pandered to by the very teachers they are supposed to be communicating with.

Calling Her By Her Name: Mother

I have chosen to specifically focus on mothers who are teachers for the very personal reason that I too am both a teacher and a mother of children with special needs. Our socialized gender roles imply that both biological and adoptive mothers are more often the primary caregiver for children. In turn, it has been my observation that the myriad of responsibilities of the parent, when it comes to addressing the unique characteristics of a child with special needs, is most often shouldered, solely, by the mother. Seltzer and Krauss (1989) and Heller and Factor (1991) support this observation. Both studies found that mothers, more often than any other family members, took on the care-giving duties of children with disabilities and often remained the primary caregiver for many decades. This was later validated by Heller, Hsieh and Rowitz (1997) in a study of 113 two parent families with adult children with special needs. Their findings indicated that mothers spent more time providing care, offered more types of support and perceived more burden of care than fathers. As such, fathers may become highly supportive in their role as parents, but it is primarily mothers who become the first line in cooperating with medical and therapeutic professionals, collaborating with social workers and support staff, and communicating with teachers. It is most often mothers who come together and share their

concerns and frustrations with other women who have similar lived experiences. It is mothers who, having gained a sense of mastery over their experience, then go on to create supportive services to other families in similar situations. Therefore, I ask if it is possible that a mother who has also shared in similar lived experiences of having a child with special needs might have the tools to better understand, nurture, support and communicate with the parents of the children with special needs whom she teaches.

Attaching Labels

It is important to note that my referral to the uniqueness of a woman's experience as mother of children with special needs was purposely chosen. There have been a variety of terms to describe individuals whose needs extend beyond those of the majority of society. From mentally retarded to cognitively impaired, from handicapped to disabled, from exceptionality to special need, each term reflects society's attempt to wrestle with the changing paradigm of what it means to be different. Although I recognize that all of these terms have had their place and time, I have chosen the term "special need" primarily because it reflects the language currently used within Alberta Education (2003):

The School Act specifies that school boards are responsible for determining if a child is in need of a special education program. Children with special needs, including those who are gifted and talented, require specialized learning opportunities in order to receive an education that is appropriate for their learning needs. School boards must provide programming for all school-age children, including children with special needs, who live in their district. (p.1.)

My Story

This is a study that has been born out of my own struggle to define myself as both a mother of children with special needs, and as a teacher to children with special needs. I find myself constantly searching for the common threads that might be found within the unique fabric of what has become my life. In truth, my early self-images did not come close to how my life looks today. Originally, as a health care professional, I spent more than fifteen years working as a medical laboratory technologist in anatomical pathology. This work demanded I work in an individualistic manner, often in isolation, with the curative mindset that defines the medical model. The focus of my work was to generate accurate, reproducible results that could stand up to the rigors of medical research and diagnosis. These demands meant I was given little time or opportunity for working collaboratively to share my workload. This was not really a dilemma for me as I absolutely loved the work but hated teaching someone else to do it!

As far as my personal image as a mother of a child with special needs, well the most I can say to that is to be careful what you ask for!

My first experience in becoming a mother came after an unexpected, but openly embraced pregnancy. Our daughter was born by emergency Caesarian after a long, difficult labor where she had repeatedly gone into fetal distress. Despite these short-lived complications, the potential risks and results of fetal anoxia never occurred to me, and I awoke to a bright, beautiful and healthy baby girl.

Her development seemed typical, although when I look back now there were certainly several red flags. Nevertheless, she appeared to be a happy healthy baby and we thought of ourselves as a happy healthy family. So much so that, after only seven months, when the opportunity for a perfect day home presented itself, we decided to take it and I returned to the lab

to work. The second day of my return I received a phone call from my day home mother that would set into motion an event that would transform and underscore the rest of my life.

I suddenly found myself standing alone in the emergency ward of the same hospital where my daughter was born earlier that year, waiting for an ambulance to bring my baby in. The panicked voice of my day home mother had cried how she had called an ambulance since she couldn't wake my daughter from her nap. So as I waited, I remember praying that her condition would simply be a case of sleep induced anoxia and she would be awake and crying when the ambulance arrived. At that time, my worse case scenario was that she would require medical help to start breathing. She was not crying and they could not restart her breathing, but in those short moments before my greatest fears were realized I clearly remember asking, "Please God, let her live . . . even if she has brain damage. I can handle that". That memory remains so very vivid in my mind simply because over the next three years I found myself with not one, but two beautiful sons both of whom were diagnosed with conditions involving mild to profound neurological damage.

Of course, I did handle it, in a variety of ways, as I believe any parent in the same situation would, however, things have not always moved along smoothly. My husband and I quickly realized that the demands of almost daily hospital appointments for two young children made it virtually impossible for both of us to work full time. Ironically, my associations with pathologists at the hospital made it possible for me to move from a full time hospital setting to a part time position at the medical examiners office assisting with autopsies. This, for me, became one of a number of full circle moments because I approached my work assisting with autopsies with the same gentleness and respect I hoped had been extended to my own daughter's body.

My time there also became a foundation for what I believe is my deepest personal philosophy for teaching.

Perhaps the most significant change in my personal life was how I found myself increasingly moving away from my encapsulated laboratory world to one that demanded I associate with a considerable number of different types of medical specialists, collaborate with various specialized therapists and cooperate with a variety of early intervention educators. I found myself totally engrossed in the process, not just for the benefit of my own sons, but with the many other children and families I met along the way. These new experiences culminated in a decision to leave my career in health care behind and begin to redefine myself in the mold of an educator.

My Personal Beliefs

It had always fascinated me, even after the death of my own daughter, how I would be so easily drawn to work in a morgue. At first, the thing that inspired me to work there was the very idea that I might be able to give back and to honor and respect the bodies of those who came through my lab. I knew, too well, how tortured I had felt waiting for her autopsy to be completed. Somehow I felt I identified with those families. However, the biggest lesson I learned in my time there did not become apparent to me until I actually began my studies in education.

Over the years that I had worked at the medical examiner's office I had looked upon the faces of many deceased people. Over the years that I have worked in education, and particularly in special education, I have looked upon the faces and into the eyes of many children with multiple and complex needs. Too often someone looks into the face of his/her lost loved ones and see him/her as if s/he was sleeping. More often someone will look into the face of a child with profound developmental delays and see him/her as being empty and lifeless.

What I believe, because of what I know about looking into the faces of all the people I have worked with, both alive and dead, is that whatever defines us as unique and distinct human beings, call it a soul, a spirit, a light, a spark of energy, whatever label one chooses, that which makes us individuals is gone from the bodies of those who have died. Conversely, I see that same spark, spirit, soul and light within the eyes of every complex or profoundly delayed child I have ever worked with.

The first time I acknowledged that spark of light was in the eyes of my youngest son, who, because of his profound physical and developmental delay, appeared empty and lifeless to most people who didn't know him well. Coombs (1990) says that all human organisms have a basic drive to learn, "From the moment of conception we begin an insatiable search for wholeness and health which never ceases until death has occurred in the last of our cells" (p.17). He goes on to say how, as teachers, we cannot make people learn, but rather, we must learn to work with that need for fulfillment. I cannot imagine how, without the help of my youngest son, I could have found that need for fulfillment in the eyes of the children I have taught had I not first seen it in his face.

Why This Study Is Relevant For Me

Since the completion of my teaching degree, the actual time I have spent in grade level classrooms has been short. This is due to a couple of reasons. First, over the past few years, the demands and responsibilities two teenage sons with special needs places on me has seemed to increase rather than decrease, as might often be the case with most maturing families. My husband and I have discovered that the easily found community supports we had previously become accustomed to accessing when our sons were younger are not so easily available for sixteen and seventeen year olds. Second, because the time demands for my sons had remained

consistent, it had never been my intention to look for a full time position when I graduated. I still wanted to continue on in graduate school and I knew I could not juggle school, work and home all on a full time basis. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the time I had spent in classrooms, team meetings and staff rooms, those first few years, left me terribly disillusioned about what it meant to be a teacher. I found myself questioning how the daily grind of teaching might weigh on me and possibly change what I valued. I had entered into this field with so many ideas about quality inclusion for all kids, lesson adaptation and accommodation and family centered support systems, yet I found myself, too many times, listening to the frustrated and angry voices of teachers who felt the demands of supporting a child with a special need in their classroom extended beyond their role, knowledge and expectations as a teacher. I heard, countless times, conversations that began with, “We work so hard with him all week and then the parents do nothing on the weekend.” or, “Those parents, they really are in denial about how much she will be able to do.”, “If they would just carry out the program at home.” or finally, “I really don’t get paid enough to have to deal with that kind of behaviour.” I heard children being referred to by their special education coding number rather than their name, and teachers describing the dynamics of each new classroom by identifying what percentage of their total class had an Individual Program Plan (IPP), a behaviour support plan (BSP) or needed medication. I was appalled, embarrassed for the profession I had entered into and heartsick for the students and parents they spoke of. I wondered if this would happen to me if I stayed in this field too long. Would the demands of the daily work jade me and begin to turn me away from the personal beliefs and values I had so purposefully constructed? Was I an idealist who would soon learn what it truly was like in the real world?

It became increasingly clear to me that if I hoped to answer my questions I needed to use the guidance and knowledge of women who had experience being both, a teacher and a mother of a child with special needs, to answer my questions. I needed to seek out women who had faced the demands inherent to each job and allow them share how they had used both experiences to inform their professional and personal lives. Since so many parents cite the lack of understanding or real appreciation for some of the unique demands of parenting a child with special needs as the reason they are dissatisfied with their parent/teacher relationship, I wondered if a parent who perhaps did understand and appreciate that uniqueness could or would forge a more supportive and effective parent/teacher relationship.

How This Work Is Organized

The following chapters are organized in such a manner as to tell and explore the stories of the eight women who have consented to help me explore my questions. Each woman was chosen for this study based on her involvement both as a mother of children with special needs, and as a teacher who has experienced working with students with special needs and their parents.

The chapter two literature review sets the groundwork for the rationale behind this study. It delves into the research that has preceded and informed what I have learned and experienced about parenting children with special needs, teaching and the parent/teacher relationship. Grounded in the assumption that raising a child with special needs creates a commonly unique family experience, it explores this notion from a number of viewpoints. I present both professional models for understanding family dynamics, and personal writings, by individuals with children with special needs, of their experience.

It also considers the history of disability in society both on a general scale and, in particular, from the education system's viewpoint. It looks at research conducted on how

teachers position themselves in relation to their own values and beliefs versus the movement within the education system towards inclusion of students with special needs into their regular education classrooms. Finally, it explores some of the dynamics that have currently been put into place through legislation that places parents in a consultative, cooperative and collaborative role in partnership with the education system.

The chapter three methodology section introduces the approaches I have chosen to complete this study. It examines Moustakas' (1990) writings on the heuristic inquiry approach. In addition, it addresses the biographical, narrative style in which I am retelling the stories of the women who are participating in this research. Finally it takes into account the feminist perspective, in particular, as it applies to how I collected the data.

In chapter four, my data analysis results examine the lived experiences of eight different women. It explores how their personal lives have served to act as a scaffold to their approaches to teaching and how these women, as teacher, use their lived experiences to guide their professional lives. It examines how the perspectives each woman holds, regarding how she sees herself as a mother and a woman teacher, has informed how she relates to the parents of the children she teaches.

Chapter five presents an analysis and discussion of some of the insights I have gained by examining the stories of the eight women in this study. Within this analysis and discussion are the correlations within each woman's individual stories and some of the theoretical assumptions about parenting children with special needs (specifically grief, coping and stress) and the commonalities between each woman's stories.

My final thoughts are presented in chapter six. These thoughts are based on the fact that it is not my intention to present a conclusion that can act as a universal truth about whether or not

mothers of children with special needs are more effective in the parent/teacher relationships. Rather, it is a process to developing a broader understanding of what counts as knowing for each of the women who took part in this study, both as mothers and as women teachers and how they have used that knowing to extend their teaching responsibilities in parent/teacher relationships.

Within chapter six I also discuss the various limitations to this study and my future intentions for what I hope to accomplish as a result of this work.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This is a study of ways of knowing or being in the world. Central to this theme of knowing or being is an exploration of relationships and communication. I want to look at the relationship that evolves inside women who are mothers of children with special needs and who are also teachers. I want to consider, within the dynamics of this relationship, what kinds of knowing might take precedence in an educational setting, how she decides what parts of her personal life she might use in her professional life. Finally, I want to extend this analysis of relationships to looking at how women, who are mothers of children with special needs and teachers, communicate with the parents of the students with special needs whom they teach to see how they use each type of knowing (as mothers and as teachers) might inform that particular professional relationship.

My initial assumption is; women teachers who are mothers of children with special needs might have a greater capacity to engage in positive relationships with parents of students with special needs, simply because they share a common kind of knowing. Therefore, I am asking if their unique knowing as mothers of children with special needs informs their knowledge as teachers in relationship with parents of students with special needs.

In the search for understanding something about relationships within mothers who are teachers and the relationships between these teachers, with the parents of their students, I acknowledge that my own story has, and continues to be, a progression of events toward how I draw myself both as a mother and a teacher. Therefore, I wondered if other mothers of children with special needs, who are also teachers, might have similar stories that represent a progression in their understanding about themselves, their lives as mothers and their professional

responsibilities as teachers. Since I could not find research that would give me insights into this particular personal/professional position I decided to explore this question for myself.

However, the research that I did find provided insights into how some of those relationships resolve themselves. I found information that suggested gaps in how professionalized models for understanding families who have children with special needs differ from the experiences real families with children with special needs write about. This difference drew me to examine how disability has been, and is still, perceived from the general societal view, the education system view and finally from the individual parent and teacher view. I then looked at literature that addresses the need for teachers and parents of children with special needs to work together as partners in the process of providing specialized education programs. It was within this final research theme that I returned to the issues of difference between how parents and teachers measure the success of these partnering relationships.

Disability As A Difference

My own experience has been that most professionals (including teachers) in the lives of my own children have been so focused on their particular area of expertise that they often fail to see beyond the special needs of my children. They do not look to see my children as already whole, or our family as being total and complete. Their knowledge, as professionals, seems to be more influenced by what is missing than what is already present. Disability somehow becomes portrayed as a difference, something apart from what might be considered normal for both the child and the family, something that requires fixing. What I often challenge the professionals in my son's lives with is the notion that their disabilities do not make them different so much as it defines them as individuals. Our experiences, as a family, do not make us different in terms of other families but rather unique in how we live our lives.

Flying blind - without a familiar flight plan.

One of the foundational blocks that I base this study on is the notion that having a child with a special need changes the dynamics of the family and that those dynamics are often unique across many families who have a child with special needs. Certainly, anyone could argue that simply having a child changes the dynamics of a family, however, the concept of disability as a difference, an other, something atypical or abnormal often seems to extend beyond the child with the special need to the family as a whole.

Prior to having children, I often imagined I would raise a family using the resources I had gained from my own family experiences, both positive and negative. However, as a mother of children with special needs, sometimes I feel I have no resources to draw on, no model to follow, experiences to recreate, or mentor to seek advice from. This notion of 'flying blind', without a preset, familiar plan, in the experience of being a parent, is often at the heart of how I view the concept of uniqueness within the context of having a child with a special need.

The metaphor of flying blind, or moving toward an unplanned or uncharted destination, is the theme to a poem written by Kingsley (1987). As a mother of a child with special needs, she likens giving birth to her child to arriving at a destination that was not the intended or preplanned one:

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip -to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says,

"Welcome to Holland".

" Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy".

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay. (p.1)

Parents who arrive 'in Holland' often must reconfigure their own impressions of what disability as a difference means to them individually and to their family as a whole. This new destination does not come with an alternate, yet still clearly defined, plan, but rather, for many parents, it sets them on a more difficult and confusing course to follow; a course that transects the fear of the unknown with the naturally occurring phenomenon of simply loving your child:

Parenthood of a retarded person . . . is a kaleidoscope of feeling and experience.

It has its beauty, but is always changing.

It is irritation at ineffectual hands plucking endlessly at a knotted shoelace.

It is guilt at the irritation

It is a surge of love for this person who needs your protection, and a surge of horror that he will always need it. . .

It is a glowing admiration for his learning achievements, against such odds.

It is a horror at the inexorable ticking of the developmental clock.

It is a prayer that he will painlessly cease to live

It is the desperate rush to the doctor because he is looking ill . . .

It is 365 days a year.

Max, 1985, in Seligman & Darling (1999, p.57)

Professional prewritten flight plans.

In contrast to the parent voice, the professional sector is often world's apart in its understanding of the experience of raising a child with special needs. Much of the professional writing, that attempts to explain this particular family experience, seeks to try to analyze, diagnose and prescribe cures or file clearly defined flight plans in the course of keeping parents from flying blind. Many writers in the course of designing these flight plans for professionals to follow, in working with parents, invoke a notion of stages, steps or checkpoints that parents must be encouraged to travel through on the course to absorbing, assimilating, recognizing and accepting their role as parents of children with special needs. It is even suggested that parents must move through all these stages (most often in a linear fashion) in order to best construct their own personal coping strategies for dealing with raising a child with a disability. Some researchers (Mary, 1990; Blacher, 1984; O'Hara & Levy 1984) reference Kubler-Ross's (1969) steps for grieving in response to a death, in their plans for understanding the course that parents of children with special needs should follow.

Kubler-Ross identified five steps to her model of grieving in response to a death: (a) denial and isolation, (b) anger, (c) bargaining, (d) depression, and finally, (e) acceptance of their loss. Bristol (1984) later typified the professional thinking of using Kubler-Ross's model with parents of children with special needs when he stated the emotions they experience should be viewed as grieving the loss of their image of the perfect child they had imagined having (p.26)

Galinsky (1985) also refers to the idea of image making in her six stages for parenting. She says that during pregnancy a mother and father will imagine what their baby will be like and how they will parent their child. Although Galinsky's theory of image making is an important initial step within her larger stage theory of parenting, the trap to overlaying Kubler Ross's

model onto Galinsky's theory is that parents of children with special needs are then at risk of being viewed, by professionals, as getting stuck in their grief, becoming immobilized by their depression or seen as being in denial of the child they do have as opposed to the loss of the child they imagined having.

Still, the model of grief and loss is central to many professional perspectives. Berry and Hardman (1996) also explain how Kubler-Ross's model for grief can be applied to families who have a child with special needs:

These models presume that the birth or diagnosis of a child with a disability brings about an initial period of shock followed by a period of disorganization and disequilibrium, which can include feelings of denial, anxiety, guilt, blame, depression, anger and fear. Bargaining or shopping for a cure or better diagnosis may also occur. These negative feelings are eventually replaced by acceptance and reorganization. (p.49)

Moses (1987) attempted to further understand families of children with special needs by taking a different approach to the stage process. His professional model addressed feeling states rather than systematic stage processes. His model suggested a widening progression of four feeling states; (a) denial, (b) anxiety, (c) fear/guilt/depression/anger and (d) coping that he said mothers and fathers uniquely experience in the course of reforming their individual understanding of how they will have to change their image of themselves as parents. His approach highlighted the gender specific roles and expectations of parenting and acknowledged that although both parents would progress through these four feeling states, it would be individualized by their gender.

Rolland (1993) tried to adapt the plan for understanding families via the grief model when he suggested that family adjustment and adaptation is more in tune with the patterns of

response to a chronic long term illness rather than death. Rolland's model drew closer parallels between disability and chronic illness in the areas of; (a) onset (acute or gradual), (b) course (progressive, constant or relapsing/episodic), (c) outcome (fatal or nonfatal), and (d) degree of incapacitation and time phases involved (crisis, chronic or terminal). He applied the emotional states described by Kubler-Ross but determined that their demonstration would be impacted by the characteristics of the disability.

Bruce, Schultz, Smyrnios and Schultz (1994) did not necessarily believe that Kubler-Ross's model of grief was a good fit for parents of children with special needs. Inspired by the propensity for professionals to measure family response by how quickly they could reach the stage of acceptance of their child, they researched 60 families in the course of creating an alternate plan for professionals to apply to parents. They worked from the notion that not all parents must be made to work through Kubler Ross's stages, that parents who failed to follow her step- like progressions should not be viewed as having unresolved feeling of grief or that acceptance of a child's condition might not be achievable for all parents. Rather, they concluded that even though emotions such as grieving were a natural response, the parents in their study did not just claim to grieve an imagined child but rather, that their grief came from three sources; (a) the loss of the perfect child, (b) the remaining child and the challenges s/he presents and (c) the impact that child will have on the family. As such, their model spoke more to the adaptations families make while still acknowledging a sense of grief.

Bruce and Schlutz continued to explore their original theories on grief and families with children with special needs. They later developed an additional twist to this adaptation on grief. In *Nonfinite Loss and Grief: A psychoeducational approach* (2001), they went on to explore grief from their position that families of children with special needs actually experience a type of

ongoing, long-term grief that is rooted in the knowledge that life will continually fail to meet their expectations.

Seligman and Darling (1997) reported a fifth mode of understanding the course families should expect to follow:

Studies suggest that certain kinds of families and/or certain kinds of children contribute to a family's ability to accept a child's disability. For example, family size, composition, SES or ethnicity determines the reaction to the birth of a child with a disability. Others suggest a connection between the sex, age, birth-order position or severity of a child's disability and family acceptance. (p.37)

Regardless of stage or mode to understanding, Trout (1983) points to what might be considered, in my opinion, the most obvious reality presented by any professional. He reminds us that whether or not stages are real and experienced in similar ways by all parents, any effort to classify such events will always be controversial since every family is different and families are never that straightforward and simple. In short, the clearly established plans that professionals tend to want to research, develop and apply rarely acknowledges the fact that families often may begin with no flight plan, but still learn to find their own way.

Families finding their own way.

The linear or progressive step-like nature of most professionalized models has been rejected by many parents who actually have children with special needs as being too simplistic (Searl,1978) and too rigid and overly negative (Blacher,1984). Along the same thinking as Bruce, Schultz, Smyrnios and Schultz (1994), Berry and Zimmerman (1983) criticized the bereavement model for not taking into account the fact that superimposed over the loss of the image of the imagined child were the realities of the day to day task of caring for the child they

did have. As such, perhaps the best documented writing that might indicate a better professional understanding of the course families follow, is by the parents themselves. Their writing reflects Berry and Zimmerman's findings and Bruce et al's conclusions in that they often speak to a very different and very important point that is not addressed by Kubler-Ross' stages of grieving or any other methodology that attempts to consolidate and categorize families into stages and processes. Mother and fathers write quite exclusively about being immersed in the act of raising a child with a special need. Sometimes they write about anger, isolation and depressive feelings that accompany that act, as is demonstrated by Max (cited in Seligman & Darling, 1997) at the start of this section. Other times they write about the uncertainty of the future, or that need to simply live in the present to prevent one from feeling uncertain about the future, as Kingsley(1987) alludes to. But most importantly they write about the fact that they are living with their child, raising their child, loving their child, not stuck in mourning the loss of an imagined child.

In a later passage of *Welcome to Holland*, Kingsley (1987) speaks of the disbelief and denial she felt upon learning of the unanticipated destination. She also alludes to the depression she felt when she found herself in Holland, even though everyone else she knew has visited Italy:

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned.

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very very (sic) significant loss (p.1).

However, she concludes her poem with words, not so much of simplified acceptance, but rather of embracing that notion of 'flying blind':

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland (p.1).

Other parents also understand that the experience of raising a child with special needs is something unique and perhaps not wholly appreciated, for its complexity, by the professionals who strive to support them.

Featherstone (1983), also the mother of a child with special needs, acknowledges that parents do enter into their own emotional process but argues that not all parents fit into such prescriptive, linear steps as has otherwise been suggested:

Families grope toward their own solutions. What works for one may be unacceptable to another. Few people find shortcuts or detours around unhappiness. Nonetheless, most parents quite rightly resist any interpretation of their lives that would convert them in objects of public pity. (p.10)

Featherstone does write of a number of situational emotions that she states are common among families and across family members. These include; fear of the unknown, anger towards themselves and toward those who offer diagnosis, loneliness at the isolation they perceive will ensue for themselves and their child and the guilt and self-doubt they may feel over causation of their child's condition.

Another mother of a child with special needs, McGill Smith (1996), reports similar reactions and notes that regardless of the isolated and unique experiences that each new parent encounters, few of the parents she studied reported a deviation from feeling at least some of these emotions. In addition to Featherstone's four aforementioned emotions, she also adds the possibility of feelings of confusion and powerlessness.

Turnbull and Turnbull (1986), themselves parents of a child with a special need, also address the issues of confusion when they reflect on the experience many parents encounter when diagnosis is later coming:

When awareness of an exceptionality dawns gradually, a model of grief parallel to the loss of an imagined child may not fit. For some parents the diagnosis when it finally comes, is less a blow than a relief. The nagging doubts have a name. They weren't crazy after all. (p.91)

Finally, Fialka (1997) writes about how her image of her child was not necessarily affected by her son's birth as it was by the picture various professionals in his life eventually presented to her:

Before the case conference I would look at my almost five year old son and see a golden haired boy who giggled at his baby sister's attempts to clap her hands. Who charmed adults by his spontaneous hugs and hellos. Who captured his parents with his rapture with music and his care for white-haired folks who walked a walk a bit slower than younger folks.

After the case conference, I look at my almost five year-old son. He seemed to have lost his golden hair. I saw only words plastered on his face. Words that drowned us in fear and revolting nausea. Words like: Primary expressive speech and language disorder. Severe visual motor delay. Sensory Integration dysfunction.

I want my son back. That's all. I want him back now. Then I'll get on with my life. (p.19)

When looking at both the professional research and hearing the voices of families, the notion that having a child with a special need does make the experience of the family different. However, that difference does not have to be viewed as being pathological, requiring professionalized plans for action. The voices of parents who have grown comfortable in the process of flying blind have attempted to shed light on the fact that it might not be blind flight at all. There does not have to be a prescriptive model that can be applied to families to cure them of their grief. There does not have to be long term plans that will allow professionals to guide families through all the unimagined detours. There are common threads, reoccurring emotions, similar experiences that many families with children with special needs share. Parents who write of their personal experiences with their children with special needs do so in order to better enlighten the professionals in their lives. As Fialka (1997) states, "The poem tells about my desire to have the well-intentioned professionals who were in attendance at this meeting do more than give a well-formulated clinical report". (p.7).

If parent writing disputes the professional models that are rooted in grief, might their be other models that are more in keeping with what parents are writing about?

Adapting and coping, not grieving.

When looking over the writings of parents of children with special needs and considering theories for professionals to follow, the models that speak to family adaptations through stress and coping (Hill, 1958; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) rather than grief stages, seems to be more fitting with their documented experiences.

Hill (1958) first developed his model for stress and coping by interviewing families who both had and had not survived the Great Depression. As he collected data and compared these two groups of families, he also looked for common factors which might have contributed to each family's circumstance. From his findings he developed the ABCX model for stress and coping. In this model, "A" stood for the stressor or the stressful event. "B" represented each family's internal resources and their access to both informal and formal sources of support. When looking at sources of support he considered how well the family was connected to, or isolated from, their communities and to other families within those communities. Hill's third component to this model was "C", the family's perception of the stressful event. According to Hill, the impact each family felt regarding the degree of devastation over the stressor was a significant predictor to the final component of his model. "X" according to Hill, represented the crisis itself, or rather the state of crisis each family found themselves in. When put together, Hill proposed that the degree to which a family viewed a stressful event as being a crisis was dependent on the family's resources and their perceptions of the event as being a stressor.

McCubbin and Patterson (1983) later took Hill's model and expanded it to include how families then adapt over the long term to a crisis. In the Double ABCX model, McCubbin and Patterson identified Hill's theory as part of the pre-crisis response. They then studied 217

military families who were forced to change their routines due to overseas postings by one parent. As such, their research examined a post-crisis response to how each family adapted to their new situation.

The double ABCX model brought a temporal aspect to Hill's original ABCX model which evaluated how well a family was coping with the original stressful event. According to McCubbin and Patterson "aA" represented the pileup of stressful events that accompany the original stressor over time. "bB" represented both the existing family resources and the newly acquired resources families had incorporated into their coping strategy during the post crisis period. "cC" took into account the families pre-crisis perceptions of the stressful event and their current views. All of these factors, according to the Double ABCX model, established a measure of how well a family was adjusting to the original stressor that had been the source of the crisis.

McCubbin and Patterson concluded that families adjust to stressful events in one of three ways. The first was through stimulus regulation, "to selectively let, delay, or shut out demands with the intention of minimizing family disruption and exhaustion of resources"(pp. 39–40). The second is through environmental control, "which involves efforts to influence the type and quality of both the demands to which the family may be exposed and the resources needed to facilitate adaptation". (p. 40). Finally, the family responds through balancing, which is, "the family's effort to maintain equilibrium or to achieve another more functional level of equilibrium" (p. 41). Ballard-Reisch and Wiegel (2004) summarize family response using this model:

Over time, the changing resources available to the family, as well as the family's perception of the situation, continue to affect their ability to successfully adapt to

stress. Family adaptation is considered the outcome measure of the model and is measured on a continuum ranging from positive adaptation, which signifies positive outcomes, to maladaptation, which signifies negative outcomes or the emergence of a crisis situation. Coping is understood as the ability of the family to restore balance in the face of the stressful event.(p.66)

The Family Adaptation and Adaptive Response (FAAR) model also looked at family response to stress as it pertains to resiliency. Uncomfortable with how the concept of maladaptation could be perceived, Patterson (1988) used her findings from the Double ABCX model to further examine adaptive responses in regard to family demands, family capabilities and family meaning. In short, her model examined the actual stressors that had become part of a family's life, how the family was responding to those stressors and what type of meaning they had assigned to their responses. She concluded that families develop a series of protection (to adjust) and recovery (to adapt) factors in the face of factors that cause family vulnerability and crisis.

Another model for looking at family adaptation focused on an evaluation of family functioning. Beavers Systems Model (Beavers & Hampson,1993) evaluated families from two perspectives, family competence and family style. Other models for examining family function and communication (Miller, Ryan, Keitner,, Bishop, & Epstein, 2000; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994) also examined the family as a whole, their interactions as a unit as opposed to interactions between members of a unit.

Although none of these models considered the impact of having a child with special needs as being a source of stress, researchers such as Bristol(1984), Cherry (1989) and

Pakenham, Samios and Sofronoff (2005), all based their studies on family coping responses on families where the stressful event was having a child with special needs.

Learning to Adapt

Seligman and Darling (1997) propose that once families establish an adaptive coping response, they take on adaptations that may reflect their lifestyle prior to having their child with special needs. They reported that most families, post crisis, resort back to a normalized family pattern (which is also reflected in McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). However, they suggest that accomplishing what might be considered a normalized lifestyle is less dependant on the severity of the child's disability, or the parent's ability to cope, but rather, the family's access to services, or what Seligman and Darling refer to as the, "opportunity structure to which the family resides" (p.73). They suggest that families who live in areas where there is good access to healthcare and education, social supports and specific programs are more likely to establish themselves into routines that reflect the original rhythm and tone of their family prior to the birth of their child with special needs .

They go on to cite a study by Goodman (1980) who found that families who struggle or fail to achieve such normalization (either by choice or because of geographical location) tend to adapt in other ways. Goodman identified three types of adaptation; (a) crusadership - the parent who initiates new programs or takes on leadership roles within existing programs for the benefit of their own child, (b) altruism - the parent who initiates programs, or maintains their position of leadership within a program, or organization, even after it no longer meets the needs of their child, and (c) resignation – the parent who, despite their inability to achieve a normalized lifestyle, do not initiate or become involved in programs that might help them attain it. In short,

they resign themselves to what they perceive as a different lifestyle, “They become stigmatized by “normal” society, and yet they never become integrated into alternate support groups”. (p.78)

Although the work of Hill (1958) , McCubbin and Patterson (1983), Patterson (1988) and Goodman (1980), as well as the others who explore family stress and coping, have designed models for professional use, their models seem to reflect a more complex picture of what parents of children with special needs are also writing about. They acknowledge that some family’s experiences may include grieving the loss of an imagined child, but it also allows for the family whose perceptions and resources are such that they do not.

So far, I have presented literature and research (from professionals and parents) that suggests how parenting a child with a special need is a unique experience. Up to this point however, I have approached the parent and the professional as two different individuals with two different perspectives in relation to one another. However, part of the focus of this study is on the relationship that must develop and exist when the parent and professional are one in the same. Where do we start to consider how these two perspectives might co-exist within one individual?

Considering How Disability Is Viewed

In order to best appreciate this notion of disability as a difference, perhaps it is important to acknowledge some of the lenses that have been historically applied, by society, to view disability as a difference and how those lenses color the general society’s present view.

Historical perspectives.

As an historian of disability, Berkson (2003) developed a comprehensive view of both physical and intellectual disability in prehistoric and early civilizations. He moved from the

survival of fittest perspective during prehistoric times, to the more protectionist view from biblical times. He located numerous passages that speak not only to the isolation and labeling of individuals as being defective, but also to the call for divine imperative to care and protect such individuals with the Old Testament, the New Testament and from the Quran,

He goes on to use the writings of Plato and Aristotle to provide insight into the societal view of disability during Greek and Roman times. He points out how the utopian elitism of that time period placed high value on both physical and intellectual perfection resulting in the devaluation of individuals who did not or could not achieve that preconceived level of perfection. This resulted in decrements by Plato that children with disabilities be, “hidden away” (p.201) and their parents no longer be allowed to procreate. Later, more drastic decrements by his protégé Aristotle, claimed that children with imperfections should not be allowed to live.

Clapton and Fitzgerald (1997) identified the eras of enlightenment and industrialization as periods when a person’s worth was measured by their work value and profitability within the family. Individuals whose needs were such that they could not independently care for themselves or contribute in monetary ways to their family’s income became seen as tragic and burdensome. They were viewed as being a potential loss to the independence of the family.

Fitzgerald (2002) characterizes twentieth century attitudes by organizing the treatment of families into four approaches, all of which tried to diagnose the parent as much as the child. From the psychodynamic approach he says professionals considered the parent neurotic and attempted to attach an equally disabling label on them. The functionalist treatment viewed parents as being dysfunctional or damaged and again, requiring medical intervention of some kind. The psychosocial approach viewed the parent as suffering; hence the grief model became

attached to families. Finally, Fitzgerald identifies the powerless parent and it is from this position, that he claims most present day reforms are rooted.

These same general themes of degradation, devaluation and protectionism (sometimes bordering on deification) can be found throughout subsequent evaluation of historical ages. Knowing some of our history, we can consider from where our present day perceptions of disability are informed

Current general social views.

In 2004, the Special Olympics organization conducted a nine nation survey of the perception of persons with intellectual disabilities entitled *Changing Attitudes, Changing the World*. Although Canada was not one of the nine nations, the United States was included. According to their findings American society held a significantly higher perception of the abilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities than any of the other eight countries surveyed. Despite this, the study provided evidence that the beliefs that underscore the community inclusion movement (that being, individuals with disabilities living their lives within a community rather than in an institution) still remain rather elusive to the general society at large. This statement is supported by the results that showed how even though the majority of respondents believed the most appropriate living arrangement for someone with a disability was in their home (as opposed to institutions) they still believed education should be conducted with specialized classrooms, work should be completed within sheltered workshops and recreation activities should be enjoyed with other individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Also in 2004, the Government of Canada, through the Office of Disability Issues, conducted a survey of Canadian perspectives of disability. Findings from this study closely mirrored those found by the Special Olympics on one aspect and differed on another. When asked about their picture of disability, most Canadian participants referred to an individual with a physical (wheelchair) or sensory (deafness, blindness) challenge. Many Canadians based their responses to questions regarding personal experiences involving someone with a disability and their perceptions of discrimination and barriers from this rather narrow perspective. As a result, the responses indicated that full inclusion in the workplace, in schools and within the community, for persons with disabilities, was highly supported by Canadians. In contrast, their same findings, when referring to individuals with emotional, medical (HIV AIDS) or developmental/intellectual disabilities were considerably different. In these cases only one third, or less, of Canadian respondents believed that full inclusion should be extended to these individuals within the workplace or schools. Like the Special Olympics findings, Canadians supported the community inclusion movement for individuals with emotional, medical or developmental/intellectual disabilities in theory, but had a difficult time understanding how this could be accomplished within an independent living or learning situation. Although on the surface, one might assume that this survey demonstrates that Canadians are, perhaps, more accepting and supportive of all individuals with disabilities, it is important to acknowledge that the Special Olympics movement caters primarily to individuals with intellectual disabilities, and as such, Canada seems to fall in line with the other nine nations involved in their study.

Disability and schools - the educational perspective.

Perhaps the skewed Canadian view of disability and community can be attributed to the fact that in education, programs for children with special needs (segregated or inclusive) does not extend far back into our history. Hutchinson (2006) reports that, in Canada, special education classes have been offered, sporadically, for children with special needs since the 1920's. However, she also indicates that the growth of consistently offered educational programs for students with special needs did not actually begin to happen until the 1950's as a result of parent demand, initiation and implementation.

In Alberta, the creation of segregated schools for students with special needs developed, during the 1950's, directly from families' resistance to continued institutional placement and the desire by parents to have their children educated, even though they had no legal rights under the Alberta School Act to access public education services. As a result, private schools across the province were created by women like Christine Mickle, Emily Follensbee, Dorothy Goodson and Winnifred Stewart, who each started teaching her own child with special needs from her kitchen or local church basement.

Still, these segregated programs remained separate entities from the public education system until the socially charged 1970s. During this time, as women's social rights were being challenged, and racial issues were forefront, so too were the social injustices perpetrated on individuals with disabilities.

Roberts and Lazure's (1970) report, *One Million Children*, advocated for integration, the right to free public education and teaching based on individual learning needs in Canada. In 1971 the Standards for Education of Exceptional Children in Canada (Hardy, McLeod, Minto, Perkins

& Quance) recommended that teacher preparation programs include courses in special education. According to Hutchinson (2006), the United Nations Declaration of the Right of Disabled Persons in 1975 and the passing of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States (which ensured the rights of children with special needs to receive education from publicly funded schools) also in 1975, sparked the National Institute on Mental Retardation (NIMR) in Toronto to take up advocating against specialized segregated services in schools in favor of integrated services. Using Wolfensberger's (1972) concept of normalization (where all persons, regardless of disability, live and learn in environments as close to typical as possible) the NIMR began to critically assess the atypical learning environment of the segregated classroom.

With the subsequent adoption of The Canadian Human Rights Act in 1977, The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 and the inclusion of section 15 within the Charter in 1985, individuals with disabilities gained both the right and the protection of the law in their quest for access to public education in every province and territory in Canada. Nevertheless, despite the NIMR's efforts to promote integrated practices in public education, school boards still reserved the right to decide how and where students with special needs would or could be educated. As a result, parents of children with special needs often discovered that within the education system, protection under the law and the right to public education did not necessarily equate to a choice of how that education could be delivered for their child.

Parent "choice", from the educational view.

To date, parents who decide to place their child with special needs into a segregated education program have largely been supported by the education system for making that choice. However parents who choose to place their child with special needs into the regular education

system have repeatedly been challenged by those same education systems. As a result, regardless of the protection of human rights, inclusion into a general education classroom for students with special needs, has largely been accomplished through litigation rather than legislation. Writing for the Canadian Association for Community Living, McKay and Burt-Gerrans (2002) cite court cases such as Alberta's *Carriere v. Lamont County* (1978), *Bales v. Okanagan School District* (1984), *Bales v. Halifax Bedford County* (1989) and most importantly the *Eaton v. Brant County* (1991) in Ontario as proof of the legal process special education and inclusion has followed in Canada. McKay and Burt-Gerrans identify the Eaton case as pivotal to the concept of parent choice because of the precedent it sets. Ontario Provincial Court first agreed with the Eaton family in regard to their desire to have their daughter receive her education in an inclusive general education setting only to have that finding appealed by the Ontario School Board. Rulings, later made by the Supreme Court of Canada supported the school board's recommendation for Eaton's placement in a segregated classroom, thus veritably silencing the voices of parents. As a result of that decision many parents have found themselves at odds with the education systems that are in place to serve their child.

Parents challenging their own social views – learning to make informed choices.

The evolution of education for students with special needs has been a difficult road one for many parents to follow. Many parents find themselves on a rapidly ascending learning curve that challenges their own historical perspectives in regard to the community inclusion movement and their hopes and dreams for their child within an inclusive, accepting and tolerant community. A parent's own history often has not included knowing of or having relationships with individuals with special needs. In short, the birth or adoption of a child with special needs does not magically open up a wellspring of tacit knowing and understanding about disability as a

difference. As such, many parents have struggled not only with learning how to have their voices heard by systems such as education, but also in finding the voice they want to speak out with.

To support this statement, studies have examined the differing perceptions of parents (with and without children with special needs) in regard to the educative services for students with special needs.

Ryndak, Downing, Jacqueline and Morrison (1995) conducted a study of parent perceptions of inclusive education for students with complex special needs. They concluded that the parents involved who had not necessarily requested or advocated for inclusive placements, but valued the development of social skills, communication and friendships, felt their child's placement in a general education classroom had been a successful one. Their findings also indicated that academic skills had grown to be more important to these parents only after their children were placed in general education classrooms. The conclusions indicated that most of the parents of children with complex special needs who participated in this study had grown to appreciate the benefits of a general education placement for their child only after it had been successfully implemented.

Parent perceptions and expectations in school have also proven to be an important element in how families learn to find their way. Fisher, Pumpian and Sax (1998) compared the parental impressions of two different schools, one inclusive and one segregated for high school students with special needs. They found that parent perceptions, attitudes and involvement within the school were crucial indicators of the success or failure of either inclusive or self-contained classrooms, "The present study revealed a relationship between a child's school experience and the range of expectation and perceptions their parents and caregivers held". (p.179). This study

surmised that parents whose choice of placement had been accommodated (based on their expectations for their child), had more active, positive involvement with the school.

Garrick Duhaney and Salend (2000) found that both parents of children with special needs and parents of children without special needs had similar concerns regarding inclusive placements for students with special needs. They identified a number of factors that informed their support; (a) parent perception of the effectiveness of the inclusion program and its impact on their children (with or without special needs), (b) their current level of satisfaction with the educational services the child was receiving (c) their beliefs about the importance of academics, (d) the age of child, (e) the type of disability, (f) the parent's age, educational background, socioeconomic status and experience with inclusive and self-contained programs. The findings of this study showed that parents (with or without children with special needs) who valued socialization in school tended to favor inclusion for students with special needs and parents (with and without special needs) who placed a higher value on academic goals were stronger advocates for specialized settings and services for students with special needs.

Parents, themselves, may not always be ready or even willing to openly challenge some of the larger educational constructs that tend to muffle the parent voice, but they do learn to speak out. Unfortunately even when they do, their voices are often only acknowledged when their requests fall in line with the expectations of the larger education system.

From the teacher's perspective.

One of the general themes within each of the three aforementioned parent studies was the concern and questioning by parents over the ability of the school system and the classroom teacher to meet the needs of their particular child. However, despite a growing movement toward

educational inclusion for all students, teachers themselves are sometimes confused about how to best meet the needs of a student with special needs in the general education classroom.

In 1996, Scruggs and Mastropieri found that most of the teachers they interviewed supported the philosophical tenants of inclusion but expressed nervousness in regard to its implementation in the classroom. Valeo and Bunch's (1998) interviews with six experienced elementary teachers indicated that they (the teachers) did not feel that modification and adaptation of grade level curriculum should be a requirement within the general education teacher's role. Treder, Morse, and Ferron's (2000) findings indicated that most teachers characterized effective teaching solely by an increase in academic test scores. Jowett and Baginsky (1988) revealed that many of the barriers to successful partnerships between parents and teachers were more teacher related than parent related. They found that teachers believed that they didn't have time to build relationships, didn't feel it was a priority in their jobs and were apprehensive about exactly how to develop the relationship.

In contrast, Stanovich (1999) researched another group of six women teachers (four general education, one special education and one resource). These teachers were highly committed to inclusion and had stated that they worked in concert to modify, adapt and support a number of students with special needs in their school to be successfully included in their general education classrooms. They reported that they felt supported by their school administration through such acts as being allowed planning time, during school hours, to meet and collaborate with each other. They acknowledged how, as a group, they had some individual areas of expertise that had allowed all six of them to consider different perspectives in planning for the students in their classrooms. Finally, although it was not mentioned in the Valeo and Bunch (1998) research, Stanovich's research indicated that the teachers in her study all actively

participated in professional development that extended their understanding of collaborating for inclusion.

Stanovich and Jordan (1998; 2004) explored the differing views of teachers in relation to role expectations and inclusion in two different studies. In their initial 1998 study they discovered two re-occurring predictors that would seem to define successful classroom inclusion (from a teacher's perspective). First, school administration played an important role in the success of inclusive classrooms. Teachers who had principals who supported inclusion and expected their teachers to adapt their teaching to the individual learning needs of all their students had a much more positive view of inclusion than those schools where the principal did not value inclusion. The second predictor of successful inclusion focused on the teacher's own beliefs and values of how and where students with special needs learn best. An examination of exemplary practices became the center of their second study in 2004. It indicated that teachers who reported supportive administration and an open minded view of inclusion also felt they had had positive experiences implementing inclusive strategies in their classrooms which they then extended to all students in their classrooms. As such, the overarching belief seemed to focus on helping students with special needs to become independent members of the classroom and school community.

It is important to note at this time that this study does not necessarily focus on education systems solely from an inclusive perspective. However, I must acknowledge that as the community inclusion movement gains momentum within the education system we must consider how the education system itself is responding. We must consider how the roles of both the parent and the teacher are being redefined.

Creating Change

Regardless of teacher perspectives of how students with special needs should be educated, or parent desires for where their children with special needs could be educated, the tensions continue in the course of who gets to make that decision. To date, history has proven that professional knowledge (education systems) seems to override parent knowing (as is best demonstrated through the ruling against the Eaton family by the Supreme Court). However, researchers who advocate for inclusion of all children with special needs into their communities, including their school classrooms, have presented potential models to better facilitate its success in schools through the introduction of parents as partners in knowledge.

Redefining the role of the teacher.

Early educational models for providing services to students with special needs (Reynolds 1962; Deno 1970) proposed specialized service delivery that promoted education using both segregated and inclusive classroom placements. These models redefined role expectations solely as being the teacher's responsibility.

Advanced by the American initiative of the 1980's Reagan/Bush era, entitled the Regular Education Initiative (REI), a significant amount of additional research into specialized education services resulted in numerous alternate methods for supporting students with special needs in their regular education classrooms such as Integrated Classroom Model (ICM) (Affleck, Madge, Adams & Lowenbraun, 1988); Class Within A Class (CWC) (Hudson, 1989); resource/consulting teachers (RCT) (Idol, 1989) and Success for All (Slavin 1990). However, all these methods continued to prescribe role definitions and responsibilities solely within the education system. As a result, the constructs that underscored curriculum development and

academic expectations continued to result in a separation between what was viewed as the general education stream and the special education stream.

Only the Adaptive Learning Environments Model, ALEM (Wang & Birch, 1984) emerged as a method for integrating the two. It called for not only a redefinition of general educators and special education educators but also collaboration, consultation and cooperation between them as well as other stakeholders. All of these stakeholders were expected to be equally informed and invested in delivering what would be considered an appropriate education for each individual child as opposed to the traditional method of teaching one way to an entire group of children. Wang and Birch's model was the first to officially suggest parents as participating partners and although the ALEM, as a model for education was not successfully implemented or accepted, the structure of a group of stakeholders has become the model to which other models for services have been built on today.

Recasting parents as partners.

Dettmer, Dyck and Thurston (1998) later identified who the stakeholders should be, and configured their interactions into a team approach. Their theories grew directly from Wang and Birch's ALEM, which was also the first method to propose the development of the Individual Program Plan or IPP (referred to in their document as an Individual Education Plan or IEP). This plan became the cornerstone of Wang and Birch's model for redefining the roles and responsibilities of both general education teachers, special education teachers and other stakeholders as they pooled their resources to best meet the needs of a student.

Under the Adaptive Learning Environments Model program, specialist teachers (e.g., reading specialists or special education teachers) and other related services professionals

(e.g., speech pathologists or school psychologists) work with regular classroom teachers in a coordinated system of instructional and related service delivery. (p.33)

However, Dettmer, Dyck and Thurston (1998) expanded that coordinated system to include administrators, educational assistants, special education and therapeutic specialists, the student (when appropriate) and the student's family, specifically parents.

As American authors, Dettmer, Dyck and Thurston cite the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 105-17) in legislating the mandate for increased family involvement in the process of becoming members of the team, "P.L. 105-17 strengthens the involvement of parents in all decision making involving their children" (p.98). Furthermore, Fisher, Pumpian and Sax (1998) found that the level to which parents get involved in their child's school experience as being the leading contributor to the success or downfall of school reforms in that country.

Turnbull and Turnbull (1990; 1997; 2004; 2006), Kerzner Lipsky and Gartner(1998) as well as Lupart and Andrews(1993; 2000) have written extensively of similar round table team approaches through open communication between professionals and parents. Andrews and Lupart (2000) state that parents as partners is a major goal of inclusive education. In turn, Gallegos and Medina's (1995) research findings that state, "The more extensive the collaboration between schools and families, the more successful children with exceptionalities are likely to be". (p.56) and Henderson's (1988) research indicate that student achievement is maximized though parent involvement. Even within Wang and Birch's original ALEM model, inclusion of family was an integral element to its success.

Lazar and Slostad (1999) cited the statements set forth by two American organizations, Goals 2000 in 1995 and the National PTA congress of 1997, to demonstrate how parent

involvement in school was seen as being critical to the academic and emotional growth of any child.

Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children (p.206).

Further to this, the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002), intent on decreasing segregated programs in schools, spoke of increasing inclusive classrooms for students with special needs by not only increasing teacher professional development in special education (p.54) and providing greater teacher access to consultation from specialists (p.54) but, most notably, by putting decision making mechanisms into place to facilitate greater parent involvement and empowerment (p.36). Although this document does not go on to provide a contextual definition of empowerment, Turnbull and Turnbull (2006) define it as, "Empowered people strive to have control over their lives; they take action to get what they want and need". (p.152). Swick and Graves (1993) describe empowered parents as problem solvers who seek out and use resources and maintain positive relationships with the professionals in their lives.

On the other hand, Burke (1985) argues against the image of the empowered parent in education. He believes that the hierarchal relationship, where teachers dominate parents, is too entrenched in our culture, so much so that it is rarely questioned. He also points out how teachers are rarely rewarded for their efforts in interacting with parents and have traditionally been distanced from parents.

Skrtic (1991) also challenges the image of empowerment. He states that, within the education system, empowerment for parents of students with special needs is a difficult if not impossible feat considering the hierarchal structures that society expects from its schools and

school systems. In a discussion of power within the education system, he points out the notion of professionalism and how it is perceived:

Professionalism is a key concept in the social disciplines because the professions have a special relationship with society, the essence of which is that professions are given greater autonomy than other social groups (p.87).

He continues to say that teachers, as members of a self-regulated professional organization, “sets its own standards, regulates entry into its ranks and disciplines its own members” (p.87), are thought to have a theoretical, practical and applied knowledge base that the general society views as being more valuable than the kind of knowledge a parent might have regarding their child.

The expectation that parents would or could be meaningful partners in the process of making decisions, choosing goals and planning for their child with special needs suggests that the education system acknowledges the knowledge parents possess, regarding their child, as being equally valued as the professional knowledge held by other professional team members. However, as Skrtic suggests, he does not see that as being possible. Likewise, Lightfoot-Lawrence (2003) makes a similar statement when she refers to Waller (1961) who portrayed parents and teachers as “natural enemies” (p.42). Although Lightfoot-Lawrence questions the duality of Waller’s portrayal she does pose an interesting set of questions. Her own research aligned the term natural enemies with the domain of insects, predators and parasites. As such, she poses the questions, “Who is the predator and who is the prey in the parent-teacher relationship?” (p.45) and later, “Are the parents, especially those who are aggressive in crossing school boundaries and actively advocating for their children, the “pests”, who need to be controlled?”(p.45). Interestingly, she makes no mention of the teacher’s position within Waller’s metaphor, however, Skrtic’s observations might indicate otherwise.

In keeping with the question of the gap between parents and teachers, Lake and Billingsley (2000) researched 22 parents and 16 teachers to examine what factors influenced conflict. Their findings produced eight factors that existed for both parents and teachers; (a) discrepant views of child or child's needs, (b) lack of problem solving or communication strategies, (c) lack of program options (d) constraints on financial resources, (e) communication, (f) trust, (g) reciprocal power and (h) being valued as a partner.

In an attempt close the gap between parents and teachers, educational researchers have suggested even more models to organize and categorize parents. Both Rizzo and Zabel (1988) and Ulrich and Bauer (2003) recommended classification systems for teachers to apply to parents. Rizzo and Zabel's method consisted of four categories (involved parents, overwhelmed parents, unresponsive parents and hostile parents). Ulrich and Bauer used levels of awareness to assign labels to different parents in their theory; Level one – the ostrich phase described parents who they felt lacked any awareness of disability. Level two – special designation was ascribed to parents who simply wanted specialists to fix their child. The third level – normalization, was typified by the parent who were attempting the minimize the effects of their child's special need. Finally, in self-actualization they reported that parents “recognize that children with disabilities need supports”. (p.23).

What this all seems to boil down to is the fact that the interactions between parents of children with special needs and their teachers are complicated and complex. They are influenced by history, parent perceptions, teacher training and role expectations of both parents and teachers. It becomes further complicated by differing educational ideals, the general culture of schools and the expectations, by society as a whole, of what education within the construct of disability as a difference can or should look like.

The reality of parents as partners – seen but not heard

Skrtic's conclusions about power and parents in a school hierarchy are not limited to American school systems. In Alberta, the *Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs* (1997) states that, "students are placed in programs where their needs can best be met"(p.12). However, a 2000 review of special education services in Alberta, *Shaping the Future of Students with Special Needs: A Review of Special Education in Alberta*, pointed out that many parents felt they had little input in the decision making process of where their child would be educated, "Parental choice for students without special needs is more respected and accommodated than parental choice for students with special needs"(p.35). In response steps, taken in 2002 towards reformation of the Alberta education system through recommendations by the Alberta Commission on Learning, identified a total of ninety-five different points for consideration. Of these ninety-five points, increasing family involvement and parent participation in home/school collaboration was recommendation number one.

Although the government systems that oversee education, both in the United States and Canada (Alberta specifically), have put into place constructs that suggest the portrayal of parents as partners, the realities of the hierarchal formations within the education systems seem to reduce these portrayals to being rhetorical. DesJardine (2002) examined the President's Commission on Special Education (2002) which at that time was a newly released document informing the delivery of special education services in the United States. Within that study, I was looking specifically at passages that spoke to expectations for family involvement. I concluded that well meaning statements regarding partnerships and empowerment between home and school seemed to have little to do with the actual act of make those empowering partnerships real. I found fourteen directives within the body of the document that mandated increased parent involvement

in planning for children with special needs at various levels. One directive mentioned increasing professional development for teachers in the area of parent/teacher relationships and no mention of how to educate parents on how to be effective members of these planning teams.

Regardless of these possible tensions (or perhaps in spite of them), education systems across all provinces and territories in Canada have mandated the role of parents, as partners, in the development of Individual Program Plans. This legislated relationship, between parent and teacher, is intended to “bring a community of adults together to work toward a common goal – helping students succeed” (Lazar & Slostad, 1999 p.206). Turnbull and Turnbull (1990) refer to it as, “a valued and time honored tradition” (p.17) and Andrews and Lupart (1993) promotes it as, “true partners in education” (p.269). In 2006 Turnbull and Turnbull defined partnerships between parents and educators as:

. . .a relationship in which families (not just parents) and professionals agree to defer to each other’s judgments and expertise, as appropriate for the purpose of securing benefits for students, other family members and professionals (p.141).

However, Coleman and Churchill (1999) carry on Skrtic’s critique of professionalism in education when they argue that oftentimes problems arise between teachers and parents since few parents and/or teachers can accurately define exactly what parent involvement really means or what it should look like (p.33). Skrtic counters this observation by pointing out that within a highly hierarchical structure like the education system there is little room for the acceptance of outside or layperson input.

Friedson (1970) reiterates the idea of hierarchal structures in his referral to the phenomenon he labeled as professional dominance. Seligman (1979) later described how professional dominance is demonstrated when parents of children with special needs become

dependant on the professionals in their lives for input into the decision making process regarding their children because of the high social status that comes with the expectations of a profession. Goodman (1994) reiterates this notion when he states that despite the fact that child and family support is moving away from a medical model perspective, many professionals tend to assume that a prescriptive, dominant approach still remains part of their role. Specifically in regard to teachers, Seligman and Darling (1997) also note that the extended time teachers spend with their students can put teachers, “in competition with parents for their children’s time, attention, respect or affection” (p.200) leaving the parent/teacher relationship even more strained.

The general theme the research is that representing is with education reforms, parents are now to be considered equally knowledgeable regarding their child as a student, as the teacher. Yet, might it be an ethical dilemma for some teachers to give up some of the power, dominance or control they hold, within the domain of education, in order to hear one parent’s voice?

Values And Beliefs That Determine Levels Of Collaboration

Just as society often places sole responsibility for children firmly at the feet of their parents, history shows us that society has also placed the sole responsibility for having children with special needs at the feet of their parents. Be it by death and eugenics, banishment, labeling (of both the child and the family) or extensive genetic testing and aversive investigation, society’s view that parents (primarily mothers) are the ultimate cause of a child’s special need paves the way for the unique experience of parenting a child with special needs. As such, the historical ghosts that have shaped society’s perceptions of what it means to parent a child with special needs also serves to shape the relationship between that parent and his or her child’s teacher.

As positive as the statements of partnership, equality and collaboration between parents of children with special needs and their teachers ascribes to, research into its actual success suggests a different view.

In a study conducted by Wilgosh (2002) for the Alberta Teachers Association Special Education Council, teachers were asked to rate a variety of aspects of their position in a nineteen point survey. Over 90% of respondents considered their involvement with parents as adequate. In contrast, research conducted with parents of children with special needs found a general level of dissatisfaction of the parent/teacher relationship from their perspective. (Ryndak, Downing, Morrison & Williams, 1997; Garrick Duhaney & Salend, 2000; Brett, 2002).

In *Entourage* (1997), The Roeher Institute asked the questions, “ Does a child’s experience in school depend on the parents approach or attitude?” and “Does the child of a polite, diplomatic mom have a better experience than the child of an angry aggressive mom?” (p.5) The responses they received to these questions were the same as many of the parents (mothers) I know from within the disabled community would offer. For the most part, parents believe that the special accommodations required to meet their child’s needs leave them in debt to the school and teachers. In turn, in order to ensure that their child continued to receive accommodations, most parents felt they needed to remain polite, friendly and always thankful for whatever their child might receive out of fear that to do otherwise would have a negative impact on their child. In short, returning to Lightfoot-Lawrence’s questions using Willard’s predator/prey metaphor, parents were less inclined to be considered pests as opposed to prey.

Even within the language of dealing with the educational system, different perceptions of the experience are evident. Philpot (2002) interviewed a number of mothers of children with special needs in the course of gaining a better understanding of their experience with the various

systems they encounter. In his conclusions he made reference to the metaphors he thought that best described a mother's experience. The metaphors all reflected a gaming theme, knowing the rules and understanding how the game is played. In contrast, many of the mothers I know often use more aggressive metaphors: they liken their experiences to a battle, fights or a war. They negotiate and compromise with their respective child's teacher based on "which hill they want to die on". They sometimes make choices about programs and placements for the child based on how much "fight" they have in them at the time. Sometimes they retreat so they can rest up for the next fight they know is coming. They speak of "striking new ground", "soldiering through" or feeling "defeated" based on the results of their battles, both small and large.

Perhaps Scruggs and Mastropieri's (1996) findings that identify the gap teachers felt between the philosophies of inclusive education and the pragmatics of it are reflected in Philpot's conclusions. Perhaps the metaphors that delineate game play from warfare are a good demonstration of how the gap exists between the emotional investment of the parent and the professional expectations of the teacher.

Are schools asking too much from parents?

Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that a measure of parent involvement, especially for mothers, in any parent/teacher relationship (be it as a game or a war) is an expected part of supporting any child within the education system, be it as a volunteer for a field trip or the president of the parent council. Henderson (1988), Chavkin and Williams (1988) and Hornby, Atkinson and Howard (1997) report parental involvement as one of the highest rated influences in determining student success in school. Furthermore, Gallegos and Medina (1995) concluded that there is a positive correlation between extensive parent involvement in school and the success of a student with special needs. Still, the Roeher Institute's *Entourage* article ((1997)

reminds us that, by high school, most parents only expect to see the teacher or principal when there is a problem.

This does not appear to be the case for parents of children with special needs in schools and classrooms. As is now mandated by IPP involvement, the expectation of parents is to be members of a support team that extends to every context of that child's daily life, including school. From the worries of adequate acceptance and socialization within the school community to concerns over appropriate academic achievement, involvement in and of itself becomes all-inclusive for these parents. From the Roeher Institute study (1997), "In attempting to open doors for their child, parents often have to become involved to an unusual degree in the school and with its staff"(p.5). Perhaps this professional expectation is best documented by the opening lines of a parent handbook on parent involvement in learning teams published by the Alberta Teachers Association Special Education Council in 2003:

As parents, you play an important role in ensuring that your child has a successful school experience. All children need the support of their parents, but students with special needs often require greater parental involvement, not only in the early years, but often right through high school, post-secondary and training (p.9).

The professionalization of parenting.

Despite the high expectations of parent involvement for children with special needs the form that involvement takes is often subject to the degree and style of coping strategies (Hill, 1958; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 1988) each individual parent has acquired over the course of their child's life. Conversely, research suggests that the success of the parent/teacher relationship is also contingent on how well the classroom teacher/school administration ascribes to a true philosophy of inclusion (Stanovich, 1999; Stanovich &

Jordan, 1998, 2004). Finally, research seems to suggest (Henderson, 1988; Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Gallegos & Medina, 1995; Hornby, Atkinson & Howard 1997) that parent involvement in school equates to a measure of good parenting. Vincent (2002) critiques the notion of good parents by noting how, parenting, which was once considered a natural act, now is seen as something that “has to be learnt, can be perfected or at least improved”. (p.23). In short, she concludes that parenting in itself is becoming more professionalized. If this is so, then parents as experts and partners at the education table, is certainly a good example of a professionalization of parents. However, how recognized are parents in this new role? Do teachers hold an ethical responsibility to recognize parents as peers, colleagues, fellow professionals? Teachers will easily state how they care about their students, but do they hold the same level of responsibility to care about that student’s family?

An Ethic Of Care In Education

Barsch (1968), in his early research, discusses how the degree to which some parents reduce their anxieties and develop an accepting attitude to raising their child is often catalyzed by the degree of empathy shown within the professional circles of support a family with a child with a special need requires.

When thinking about the level of empathy required on a professional level, for families with a child with special needs, most of the focus is directed toward the empathetic demonstrations by medical and social service professionals. Doctors often wrestle with the personal philosophies around sharing information in light of the degree of a child’s condition and the emotional state of the family. Social workers and other helping profession members build their professional philosophies and practice around empathetic reciprocity. Nevertheless, as Gartner, Kerzner Lipsky and Turnbull (1991) report, “many families receive information about

their child's condition from education professionals" (p.129). They continue on to note how, oftentimes, receiving this information creates a context of increased stress for parents. These authors state that the delivery of this information is, for the most part, profoundly colored by the negative interpretations by the professional of what having a disability might really mean for this child within the education system as well as within the community at large. The empathetic level to which a teacher shares information is determined by his or her own perceptions of disability itself and of the impact this may or may not have on the family. Should teachers have to step outside their own values and beliefs about disability when they have a student with special needs in their classroom? Or is that asking them to be something apart from who they are? Certainly as has been previously indicated in the study conducted by Stanovich and Jordan (2004), the degree to which a teacher's values and beliefs may be modified or solidified seems to be influenced by the success or failure of his/her previous experiences. Furthermore, here in Alberta, the Alberta Teachers Association states in their code of professional conduct:

The teacher teaches in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice as to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence, socioeconomic background or linguistic background.

and

The teacher treats pupils with dignity and respect and is considerate of their circumstances.

As these codes of professional conduct seem to suggest through their use of the terms "teaches" and "pupils", teachers need only to be considerate of a student's circumstances. Are

teachers equally responsible for respecting the dignity and rights of parents? Are they morally expected to care about their students and their student's families?

A moral responsibility to care.

Both Noddings (1992) and Campbell (2003) refer to the teacher as moral educators. Both authors claim the primary focus of education should be on the development of moral and ethical behaviour and values in students as they grow to become citizens of the world rather than solely on academic mastery. Both authors also state that moral and ethical behaviour and values are not taught directly through skill and drill teaching methods, but, more importantly, through modeling and a keen awareness of one's own values and beliefs:

Ethical knowledge relies on teacher's awareness of how their intuitive sense as moral persons seeking to be fair, honest, kind and respectful influences their treatment of students and others as well as the execution of their professional responsibilities.

(Campbell, 2003, p.56)

Modeling is important in most schemes of moral education. In this framework we are not trying to teach students principles and ways of applying them to problems through chains of mathematical reasoning. Rather we have to show how to care in our own relations with cared-for. . . So we do not tell our students to care; we show them how to care by creating caring relations with them. (Noddings, 1992 p.22)

Perhaps it is my own views coming forward, but in the process of unpacking this notion of ethical, moral thinking in regard to education, I tend to want to include both caring and empathy. When I examine both Kohlberg (1981) and Gilligan's (1982) models for moral

reasoning, care is an important aspect of both theories. Certainly Gilligan's feminist model of moral reasoning was built from the position of an ethic of care that Gilligan theorizes is predominantly a women's way of thinking. However, Berk (1997) suggests that although Kohlberg's model of moral reasoning emphasized justice over caring (which was criticized by Gilligan) within his model, her studies concluded that she felt both were equally acknowledged.

As for empathy, Webster's Dictionary (2003) defines the word as;

the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner (p.60).

I assume that one could not engage in such an act without feeling some level of caring toward the other. Eisenberg (1989) supports this assumption. Her examination and adaptation of Kohlberg's six stages acknowledged Gilligan's ethic of care, but also included moral decision making based on empathy and concern. In her model, Eisenberg presents six possible moral positions that individuals may evaluate a situation from. Within those six positions one of them was the empathetic response, where individuals show recognition of other people's feeling states.

Sergiovanni (1994) also makes reference to an ethic of care through the demonstration of four dimensions for professionalism in teaching. In discussing what components are required to build schools as community places, he states that teachers must commit themselves to practice in exemplary ways that result in valued social ends, that they must do so with a ethic of care and that they need to work to not only represent themselves but the entire practice of teaching. He

criticizes present day schools as working from a business or medical model where role expectations demand that the value of the end product supercedes the value of the person producing the product:

In the corporation relationships are formal and distant, having been prescribed by roles and role expectations. Circumstances are evaluated by universal criteria embodied by policies, rules and protocols. Acceptance is conditional. The more the person cooperates with the organization, and achieves for the organization, the more likely he or she will be accepted. Relationships are competitive. Not all concerns by members are legitimate. Legitimate concerns are bounded by rules rather than needs. Subjectivity is frowned upon. Rationality is prized. Self-interest prevails. These characteristics seem all too familiar in our schools (p.10).

He goes on to extend this business model to teaching:

It encourages us to view teaching primarily as a technical activity involving the delivery of expert services to clients. This view comes to shape how we view teaching practice. We come to believe, for example, that professionals enjoy a knowledge and skill monopoly. Teaching comes to be viewed as instruction involving delivery of expert knowledge to students (p.40).

Despite the fact that Sergiovanni's comments are now over a decade old, one needs to consider, despite ongoing reforms, whether the education system has changed all that much over the years. We need to ask how teachers see themselves and their changing responsibilities to the profession, to themselves and to students in contrast to the changing expectations they receive from the community, which includes parents of children with special needs.

Moral responsibility to the profession.

It is important to keep these general societal views in mind when considering the question of whether or not teachers have an ethical responsibility to the parents of the students they teach. Coombs (1990) emphasizes that one of the most important issues that pre-service teachers should address before they begin teaching, are their own beliefs, values and perceptions of students and their families who may be different from their own. This becomes a pivotal point when looking at the importance of communication and collaboration as tools in effective parent/teacher partnerships.

The professional code of conduct for teachers in Alberta clearly outlines how teachers need to act in relation to the students they teach. However, despite the encouraging statements, made by researchers and government, of parents as partners in education, the Alberta Teachers Association (2005), within its own code of professional conduct, does not make any direct reference to a teacher's ethical responsibilities in relation to parents or any other profession outside its own. As such, according to their professional code of conduct, teachers appear to only be answerable for their actions with students and their own colleagues. How does this encourage a cooperative or collaborative climate in schools? How can equal partnerships with parents truly be forged if teachers have no ethical responsibility to build them? Or perhaps more importantly, how can parents effectively be heard if teachers do not have an ethical responsibility to listen?

Looking At Parents And Teachers As Women

I find it important to mention that in the process of discovery, as a mother and a woman teacher, I purposely chose to include only women in this study. I have purposely engendered this study to reflect both my own personal position in the world and the positions of most of the

parents and teachers who engage in these relationships on behalf of children with special needs. The teaching profession, historically a predominantly female profession, is growing increasingly so. Statistics Canada (2005) indicates that the number of males in university education programs, has dropped from 41% in 1991 to 35% in 2003.

In addition, although all the literature cited within this study does not make reference to the gender of the “parents” or “families” taking part in any of the studies I have reviewed, Heller, Hsieh and Rowitz (1997) provide evidence that the parent who most often shoulders the responsibility of interacting with professionals is primarily the mother.

Therefore, it is important to appreciate that I am moving through this study with a woman’s eyes, a woman’s ears, a woman’s heart and a woman’s perspective on a woman teacher’s place within education and a mother’s place within the world.

Summary

Throughout this literature review, I have presented research that defines two significantly different points of view. Waller (1961) described these two positions as the difference between the parent who has only their own child’s best interests in mind and the teacher, who must accommodate for a the best interests of a large group of children. However, I have also given evidence that how a parent represents her child’s best interests is unique when that parent has a child with special needs. I have even demonstrated the gap in understanding between how professionals who provide service to families who have children with special needs perceive that family’s experience and how families themselves have documented the same event in their lives.

I have shown how the professional perception of grief and dependency for families who have children with special needs has been influenced by history, and therefore, has become socially established within the institution of education. I have given evidence of how the education system has taken steps to propose and implement changes to some of those previous social injustices.

However, I have also provided research that indicates how simply creating and legislating steps for change does not automatically effect change. I have shown how “old habits sometimes die hard” and that both teachers and parents are not always comfortable in their newly defined roles as partners in education. This is most evident in the move to involve parents in educational decision making and planning for their child with special needs. How can the differing perspectives of parents and teachers be brought closer together in the process of nurturing this mandated parent/teacher relationship? Might someone with intimate experiential knowledge of both perspectives be able to close that gap and create a more successful partnership with the parents of the students with special needs whom she teaches?

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Choosing An Appropriate Method

Goodson (1981) writes, “in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is” (p.69). In order to understand how teachers approach their professional work it is equally as important to understand something about how they construct their personal lives. Sikes (1997) states that, “becoming a parent is a major personal and social life-event which is likely to provoke changes in a person’s sense of self (p.14). If we ascribe to Galinsky’s (1985) theory regarding processes of parenting (image making, nurturing, authority, integrative, independent teenager, departure) then it seems the journey many women go through to redefine themselves, not only as mothers but as mothers of children with special needs, most certainly should provoke changes in how they see themselves as teachers. Does their knowledge as mothers inform what they know as teachers? If so, could that knowledge be shared with other teachers to help them better understand the complexities of being a mother of a child with special needs? Considering the fact that a great many mothers have put their thoughts and feelings about raising their child with a special need to paper, still, it seems that none of these mothers have really spoken with the voice of a mother who is also a teacher.

As a parent and a teacher myself, I found that I was often being forced to remind the educators in my own life about the unique demands on our family. Conversely, I found myself sharing those same lived experiences with many of the teachers I have worked with

professionally. Overall, it seemed that many of these teachers appreciated how parenting a child with special needs came with additional demands that needed to be balanced with the expectations education systems place on parents. For the most part, they were eager to know how they, as teachers could better accommodate both their students and those student's families. Although many of these teachers had little or no resources or experiences in the area of understanding what it is like to raise a child with special needs, most of them were eager to learn, to know, to understand. They cared. This sense of caring has repeatedly become apparent to me when, over the course of a number of years of attending various education conferences (mostly special education) some of the most highly attended sessions were on parent/teacher relationships. Still, most of the teachers I spoke to came away from these sessions disappointed. They knew that open communication through traditional monthly newsletters, daily communication books and phone calls helped to inform mothers of their child's day, but what they really wanted to know more about, specifically, was what parents wanted, even needed to hear about their child and how to find the best fit between themselves and the parents with whom they entered parent/teacher relationships.

Seligman and Darling (1997) state, "In order to be truly effective, the professional must learn to take the role of the parent". (p.220). As such, finding the most appropriate, respectful and trustworthy method to record and analyze those journeys from this unique perspective is pivotal to gaining answers to my question.

The approach I chose to use for this research was heuristic inquiry. It seemed to provide the goodness of fit, between my own experiences and the experiences of the women who agreed to participate, that my research question required. It allowed me to consider how my own stories fit within the stories of these women and what I could personally learn from asking that

particular research question. It also provided me an opportunity to add to the almost non-existent collection of unique stories of how women bring who they are and what they've learned, as mothers of children with special needs, to their professional positions as teachers.

However, I also wanted to acknowledge several additional research approaches in this study. Bearing in mind that how I approached my participants and examined their experiences was through the stories they shared with me, I wanted to be sure to be clear that these narratives accurately reflected the tenets of narrative methodology.

Finally, I felt I needed to also apply a feministic lens, not because I wished to examine this phenomenon from the perspective of oppression and injustice within the education system (although it might be considered to be present) but because this is a decidedly engendered study that looks specifically at this phenomenon from a woman's point of view. I did not want my discoveries to be generalized to the more politically correct social construct of parents when we really mean mothers or all teachers when we refer to women teachers. As a woman, a mother and a woman teacher I knew I personally could not successfully immerse myself in this process if my discoveries were meant to be interpreted as being gender neutral.

Heuristic Inquiry

Moustakas' (1990) methodology for research engages the researcher, directly involves the researcher, in essence centers on the researcher rather than simply on the research question. He first introduced this notion as a model in his work *Loneliness* (1961). After thirty years of using and refining this method, he consolidated it into a resource manual: *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodolgy and Applications* (1990). In this text, he described heuristic inquiry as allowing for a holistic collection of data that asks the researcher to include his/her own personal perspectives in the process of understanding and interpreting the information that is collected.

Inspired by Polyani's (1967) proposed notion of tacit knowing, "we know more than we can tell" (p.4), Moustakas' heuristic methodology addressed Polyani's argument that no research can be viewed as being completely unbiased and objective. As such, heuristic inquiry responds to this theory by embracing the researcher's subjectivity. It engages the researcher's personal viewpoints and opinions and encourages her to employ those personal attributes in the course of understanding. As Erwin and Erwin (2003) point out:

It relies on the tacit knowledge of the individual researcher during which the totality of the researcher becomes fully immersed in the study. The topic of research is studied and interpreted from an axis of tacit knowledge within the researcher. There is no pretense of an objective, unbiased observer who is separate from the observed (p.1).

It is important to note, however, that, in heuristic inquiry, the de-emphasis on researcher objectivity does not give the researcher permission to simply create or invent findings from her own subjective point of view. Rather, the rigor in the trustworthiness of the process is focused less on the discovery of a single universal truth and more toward the development of a deeper understanding of the particular phenomenon being studied. It may be viewed as a transformative process for the researcher, but the quality and depth of that transformation bears an equally disciplined approach as any rationalistic methodology. As Moustakas (1990) states:

From the beginning, and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration. When I consider an issue, problem, or question, I enter into it fully . . . I may challenge, confront, or even doubt my understanding of a human concern or issue; but when I persist in a disciplined and devoted way I ultimately deepen my knowledge of the phenomenon . (p.11)

Core principles of heuristic inquiry.

The core principles of Moustakas' approach addressed the heart of how he believed heuristic inquiry should be embraced and spoke to the rigor that defines this method. His view of heuristic inquiry was not simply a method with clearly articulated steps to follow and apply, but rather a perspective of how one exists in the world and makes meaning of her life. To that end, although he did organize and define steps for his model, the intent was that the researcher would constantly move back and forth within those steps constantly gaining insights, questioning those findings, only to circle back and eventually develop deeper understandings.

First, he believed that in order for a researcher to conduct true heuristic inquiry the question should come from within the researcher. He felt that the researcher should personally identify with the question and that it should be something the researcher had lived through and felt passion for. Hiles (2001) suggests that in heuristic inquiry the researcher does not in fact identify and ask a question but rather the research question actually chooses the researcher.

A second core principle to this approach is self dialogue. Moustakas said that the researcher should be open to his/her own lived experiences and that through self-inquiry, self-examination and self-reflection of those experiences she could acknowledge the impact those lived experiences would have on the research itself.

Tacit knowing was an important third core principle to Moustakas' method. His commitment to the notion of Polyani's descriptions of explicit and implicit knowledge, as a determining factor in how research is interpreted, underpinned the importance of the researcher being self-aware throughout this process.

Keeping this in mind, he identified intuition (which he identified as the acknowledgement of the implicit knowledge we all hold) as the fourth core principle. Moustakas believed that

intuition should act as the bridge between implicit and explicit knowing. He felt that any act that required synthesis and integration of thoughts and ideas could not be achieved without the use of intuition. As such, he considers that the researcher who could surrender to her intuition would be able to explore a deeper level toward understanding.

Beyond what is tacitly known and intuitively discovered, Moustakas referred to a conscious and deliberate process he called indwelling. This process asked the researcher to “turn inward and seek a deeper, more extended comprehension”(p.22) of the experience as a whole or of one aspect of the experience being examined. In the course of indwelling, he then asked the researcher to maintain an inner attention on whatever central themes emerged. This phase he referred to as focusing. Focusing, “enables one to see something as it is and to make whatever shifts are necessary to make contact with necessary awareness and insight”. (p.24)

The final core principle speaks to the very nature of heuristic inquiry as a transformative process for the researcher. The internal frame of reference principle states that the researcher should look to find a way to place the outcomes of his/her research within a personal context that will allow the researcher to re-establish what she already knows and reshape it to include what she has learned.

Phases to conducting heuristic inquiry.

With a clear identification of the core elements that drive the process of heuristic inquiry, Moustakas laid out seven phases to actually implementing his approach. Each of the phases demands that the researcher engage in continuous self checking to ensure that s/he remains true to the reflexive nature of the core principles.

He begins the process by asking the researcher to look inward to discover the research question during a period of ‘initial engagement’. Moustakas states that the researcher’s question

should grow from an intense interest or passionate concern already held by the researcher. The question that eventually emerges should be something the researcher holds personally relevant and that she feels having a greater understanding of would be socially meaningful to her.

The second stage in this process then calls for 'immersion'. At this time Moustakas (1990) asked the researcher to seek to gain insight into the question from any and all sources, in essence, to saturate herself with information regarding her question. He suggests that virtually anything connected with the question holds the potential of being raw material for the study. Erwin and Erwin (2003) list possible sources of raw material as being, "interactions with people, places, things, meeting, reading, nature, self, hunches, dreams, intuition and so on". (p.2)

According to Moustakas (1990), when the researcher believes there is little new information coming forward, she should then step back from data collection and enter the 'incubation' phase. Incubation suggests that the researcher retreat from gathering more information and immerse herself in the information she has already collected in order to expand her understanding of what she has gathered.

Through the process of incubation, returning to the information, reflecting on and deepening ones understanding, Moustakas suggests that an illumination phase will occur if the researcher remains true to the core principles and open to the potential that tacit knowing and intuition can reveal. Illumination occurs when the researcher develops a new awareness, modifies an earlier understanding or makes whole a previously fragmented kind of knowing.

Through explication, the researcher then organizes this new way of conscious understanding into comprehensive themes that are both common and singularly unique. By then examining these themes the researcher begins to deepen her personal understanding and absorb this new point of view into her own perceptions.

It is at this point that the researcher should be taking part in a creative synthesis phase. Basically, the researcher attempts to outwardly communicate her newly acquired inward way of understanding into a permanent product. In the process of creating this product the researcher uses the final phase of Moustakas' methodology. Through validation of the inquiry the researcher works to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. She returns repeatedly to the data and revisits previously held conclusions. The researcher engages in a constant self check of the accuracy of her interpretation of the stories collected. In addition, the researcher should follow up with participant validation by seeking constructive feedback from the participants in her study to confirm or clarify her conclusions.

Considering a Narrative approach

Denzin (1989) describes biographical research as, "studied use and collection of life documents that describe turning-point moments in an individual's life" (p.69). Although Cresswell (1998) states that there are a number of styles of biographical writing (biography, autobiography, life history and oral history) that help the researcher to address different questions, all forms, in essence, attempt to construct the history of a life.

In theory, the biographical approach does not wholly fit within this study as it should be conducted in a way that looks at a whole life rather than just a particular period in a life. If I had been using a biographical approach, I might have wanted to know more about questions such as what kinds of experiences my participants had encountered growing up that might have contributed to their decisions to become teachers, or become mothers. I might have even explored early experiences that would have shed more light on their values and beliefs as it pertained to disability. However, Denzin's (1989) term, "turning-point moments"(p.69) drew me

to consider how I could incorporate a biographical approach to the stories of these women's lives.

Cresswell (1998) describes interpretive biographical research as, "in part, written autobiographies of the writers, thus blurring the lines between fact and fiction and leading the authors to create the subject in the text". (p.50) Although I rejected the idea that I could retell the stories of these women's lives to fit into this study, I could not reject what he goes on to say, "Biographers cannot partial out their own biases and values; thus, biographies become gendered class productions reflecting the lives of the writers" (p.50). I knew, by interviewing these women, hearing their stories and revisiting their stories through my research, that they were, in part, my story, eight times over, and I could not divorce myself from that fact. The parts of their story that were relevant to my question became my challenge to consider, interpret and include.

Acknowledging A Feminist Lens

Considering the fact that I chose to address the issue of mother's knowledge and teacher knowing solely to women teachers, it became clear to me that I needed to consider some of the aspects of feminist inquiry in this study. It was not my intention to conduct this study using feminist methodology, but it was important to acknowledge the feminist method in this research.

Brayton (1997) suggests that what makes feminist research unique is that it "actively seeks out to remove the power imbalance between research and subject" (p.4.). Maguire (1987) identifies a three pronged definition of feminism:(a) a belief that women universally face some form on oppression or exploitation; (b) a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression in all its forms and (c) a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression" (p.69) .

In essence, feminist research endeavors to remove the hierarchal relationship that traditionally exists between researcher and subject. It strives to make visible those issues that are invisible to the greater social construct (most notably as they pertain to women). Harding (1987) argues that in looking at women's issues from a women's perspective, the feminist researcher takes into account how her own beliefs and values can have an influence on both the relationship between herself and her subject and on the outcome of the study. She states how, by remaining aware of the traditional hierarchal dynamics between researcher and the subject, the feminist researcher strives to flatten out or make the relationship more equal. Ralph (1988) expands on the idea of a flat relationship between researcher and subject by reminding us that feminist research recognizes participants rather than subjects in the act of, "actively working to change the conditions of their oppression" (p.139).

Brayton (1997) makes note of three important elements that make up a feminist approach to research. Through the acknowledgement that the feminist researcher brings her own lived experiences to the process, Brayton highlights the location of the researcher as playing a significant role in the research process. She points out how the inequality that may exist between researcher and participant, due to a variety of elements, can undermine the dynamics of the interactions between researcher and participant. Therefore, although both individuals, as women, share a common location in the social world, based on their gender, other issues such as class, race, position and orientation of researcher to participant all play a significant role in the creation or destruction of a relationship based on equality.

Despite what seems to be an interesting lens to apply to this research study, it is equally as important to acknowledge that feminist inquiry as a research method is not without critique and how applying a feminist lens could impact this particular study.

Millen (1997) considered what can undermine feminist research by focusing on two important elements of feminist methodology, empowerment as a result of the research and the equality of the relationship between the researcher and the participant. She points out that a large part of feminist research depends on a shared definition of power and empowerment between the researcher and the participant. There is an overarching assumption, she claims, that individuals of the same gender would or perhaps should share the same experiences, perceptions and beliefs about power and empowerment. However, she goes on to argue that there is no way to determine how power and empowerment is perceived regardless of gender, within each individual. As such, because of the potential for differing views of power or what is meant by empowerment, when the researcher undertakes a study in the act of empowering the women s/he interviews, s/he may, in fact, be disempowering them.

In any event, what we as researchers and as feminists might see as empowering women by giving them the tools to analyse their situation in terms of gender and power may actually dis-empower them in the short term by undermining immediate coping strategies which do not involve any long-term structural change for women and which the researcher has therefore judged as being based on sexist or non-feminist beliefs or actions. (p.2)

Millen's second critique of feminist research addresses the issue of equality between the researcher and the participant. Similarly, Kelly, Burton and Regan (1994) argue that the very fact the researcher is using his/her knowledge, skills and time to ask questions sets up an unequal relationship:

It is we who have the time, resources and skills to conduct methodical work, to make sense of experience and locate individuals in historic and social contexts ... it is an

illusion to think that, in anything short of a participatory research project, participants can have anything approaching 'equal' knowledge to the researcher. (p.37)

Oakley (1988) maintains that the key to interviewing women from a feminist perspective requires that, “the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship”. (p.41). In contrast, Oakley examines more traditional methodology for conducting interviews that focus on “the acceptance by the interviewee of the interviewer’s research goals and the interviewee’s active search to help the interviewer in providing the relevant information”. (p.35)

Mies (1983) states that feminist research must serve the interests of women rather than be a tool to support the dominant masculine world view. By considering the fact that most research is conducted by men, for men and on men, addressing the issues inherent to motherhood within the context of teaching seemed to speak to Mies’ interests. This leads to Brayton’s final point. What makes feminist research feminist, Brayton says, is that it is not simply women doing research on women, but rather that it puts women’s experiences and viewpoints out into the world, into a public domain that has traditionally been controlled by the male perspective. The stories of the lived experiences of teachers has traditionally been told from a woman’s perspective, the stories of the lived experiences of motherhood is told from the unique perspective of a woman. Therefore, putting these lived experiences to paper maintains the stories and adds to the small but ever growing collection of research on woman’s ways of being in the world. Keeping in mind what had first led me to this question, the issues that could assist me in establishing an equal position in the data collection and the fact that this research would

document women's experiences from this unique perspective meant that applying a feminist lens was important to me.

What I Actually Did

The initial approach for discovering links between the lived experience of a parent of a child with special needs and its interpretation in teacher knowledge at the proposal level was primarily based on using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological methodology, as described by Cresswell (1998), seemed to fit well with the objectives of this study since all of the participants shared a single unifying experience or a phenomenon, of being mothers of children with special needs working with a variety of professionals. They also shared an additional unifying experience or phenomenon of being teachers, currently engaged in working with parents of children with special needs. It wasn't my intention to quantify or list the particular attributes to which the participants adhere, but rather I wanted to give voice, where there had been no voice, to the individual and collective experiences of the unique viewpoints of these women as mothers and woman teachers.

In addition, the hermeneutic principles that spoke to the importance of the researcher being aware of her own perspectives within the interpretation of another's experience (Lye,1996) was an integral part of this study. In fact, it is my own experiences, as well as my informal field testing, suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), of other teacher/parent perspectives that provided the initial direction or passion for this study. Or as Hiles (2001) might have thought, it provided the opportunity for the research question to find me.

However, in the process of preparing for this study I found that Moustakas' heuristic design became increasingly relevant. I connected with the research question when through self-reflection I discovered that it was at the heart of my choice to teach at a post-secondary level

rather than to continue on in elementary classrooms. Even as I grew in my understanding of Moustakas' theory, I found myself circling back and drawing deep connections between the histories of the women I interviewed and my own. I even began to form deeper understandings of my own perceptions of mothering and teaching based on responses to my questions. I could not simply include my stories or let my stories inform how I interpreted their stories but I began to develop new insights into my own life because of their stories. I became as much a participant in this research as I was the researcher. Erwin and Erwin (2003) refer to the importance of tacit knowledge within the context of heuristics and in recognizing that I did possess tacit knowledge in relation to this work this method became pivotal to the study.

In addition, I used the framework of a narrative life history in order to understand where the links between the personal and the professional fell. I believed that by asking my participants to "tell their story" it might allow similar story arcs to develop across each participant (which in turn might lead to more opportunities to compare data). Heilbrun (1988) described how women reflect and retell their lives as being like reading a good book or watching a classic movie. She says that most women are visual thinkers and like to recreate the events of their lives through story. As an avid reader and a highly visual thinker, I understood what Heilbrun was implying. As a decidedly spatial learner I was also fascinated by Strauss and Corbin's (1990) likening of narrative research to studying architecture. Cresswell (1998) in reference to Strauss and Corbin's metaphor encourages the asking of the following questions, "Do you come away with an idea like walking slowly around a statue, studying it from a variety of interrelated views? Like walking through the rooms of a house?" (p.167). Since I identified with both of these acts, I felt compelled to incorporate it into my process.

Finally, because all the participants were women and the nature of my questioning was directed toward the role of being a mother or what Freud (1952) refers to as primarily woman's work, I believed it important to apply a feminist method to this study. I did not necessarily use a feminist methodology to analyze and interpret stories, nor did I take an overtly feminist perspective in my line of questioning. However, I did pay close attention to the feminist method of conducting an interview with another woman. I followed Harding (1987) and Oakley's (1988) suggestions of an equal or non-hierarchical position between myself and my participants. As such, although I had well established general categories of questions, (experiences as a mother of a child with special needs, experiences as a mother with the education system, experiences as a teacher, with other parents and values and beliefs about how effective their parent/teacher relationships are) I let the participant set the tone and direction of the interview. I tried hard not to so much interview my participants as to encourage them to choose stories and share them with me. I was, however, constantly aware of Kelly, Burton and Regon (1994) as well as Millen's (1997) critiques of the flat relationship and therefore I was prepared with a line of possible questions under each category in case any participant expected to be 'interviewed'. This stance also became additional data that I included in my own reflections.

Gilligan's (1982) and Noddings' (1992) perspectives on an ethic of care, both within moral reasoning and through the act of teaching became a pivotal point to the direction of my data collection. As mothers, I assumed that these women would hold Noddings characterization of care as engrossment, "the soul empties itself of all its own content in order to receive the other" (p.16) in reference to their own children. However, since Lather (1991) describes feminist research as an attempt to, "correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (p.71). I wondered if these same

women, as teachers, would extend Noddings' characterization to their students and those students families or resign themselves to many of the rules and regulations of teaching from the professional code of conduct position. Therefore, I specifically asked each woman to share with me what she felt her professional responsibilities, as a teacher, to parents was and how it might have been influenced by her own experiences as a mother with teachers.

Participant Recruitment

The process for establishing connections with parents of children with special needs who are also teachers was through a criterion based sample of convenience (Cresswell 1998). The criterion set for participant involvement as was stated in my proposal was: (a) Each participant must be the mother of a child or children with special needs, (b) Each participant must be a certified practicing teacher, (c) Each participant should be currently, or recently, within the last two years, worked within an environment where she has regular contact with her student's parents and (d) Each participant must be willing to participate in recursive one on one interviews.

I used other teacher referrals, as well as disability focused service agency referrals, to approach and invite individuals to participate in this study on their own time (as opposed to school board time)(Appendix A). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) cite the enormous time and effort spent on transcription when they advocate for fewer participants and shorter interviews when collecting data through interviewing, "Pick a reasonable number of subjects and spend an amount of time in each interview that makes sense in terms of the work involved in transcribing it" (pp.131-132). Therefore, my initial intention was to limit the study to no more than five participants. I had seven women initially respond to my request, however, two of these women reported that they were teaching assistants rather than teachers, therefore I chose not to include them in the study.

After I began conducting initial interviews with the first four women I recognized two different, somewhat dichotomous, trends coming forward. I continued to be approached by women who did meet my criteria, so after referring back to Bogdan and Biklen (1998) I chose to expand the study to include three additional women in order to discover if my first impressions of a trend was accurate.

Informed Consent.

Those teachers, referred to me via mutual teacher colleagues or by service agency personnel, received a personal invitation via an initial phone call followed by a face to face meeting. In addition each participant received a formal letter (Appendix B) that gave a brief overview of what I was studying, invited them to take part in the study and outlined their expected level of participation. The stated expected level of participation included two to three hours of interviewing followed by a transcription review. Guba (1981) lists member checks as an appropriate method for checking the truth value or credibility of the data collected. I hoped to achieve this level of trustworthiness by asking my participants to read and confirm the authenticity of my transcriptions of the interviews they gave.

In addressing the ethical considerations of this study, I followed a number of guidelines accorded by the University of Calgary to protect the privacy of each participant as well as potentially provide professional support for any participant who felt she might require it as a result of my research.

Each participant was informed ahead of time, in writing, that the interviews would be tape recorded and transcribed. They indicated their approval of this condition by signing the informed consent form (Appendix C) I provided to them prior to the onset of any interviews. In addition, on the informed consent form, each participant was invited to choose an alias for

themselves as well as any family members or other individuals they might refer to. Although all participants did provide me with alternate names for themselves and their child(ren), only a few provided me with alias' for their partners or other individuals they might have referred to during the interviews. Nevertheless, in all cases, throughout this study, any proper name found within the interview tapes that had not been identified within the informed consent form was either changed or replaced with asterisks in the transcription.

All tape recordings and original transcripts are stored in a locked file cabinet in my home. I emailed a copy of each participant's transcript directly to them following each interview. Each woman agreed to receive these emails and also agreed to remain responsible for keeping or deleting them from her computer after our interviews were completed.

Direct contact with participants.

Although it was stated within the informed consent forms that participants would be taking part in one to two interviews, not all eight women required two interview times. One of the eight women addressed both her personal and professional experiences in one interview. She then followed up by confirming the accuracy of the transcripts but did not offer any additional insights to me after reviewing her transcript. Of the seven remaining women who required a second interview, all indicated that they had reviewed their transcript by confirming its accuracy during our second interview and in closing correspondence by phone and through email. Only two women offered additional information following a review their second transcript. These two messages as well as any questions I posed to all the women following the final interview, (regardless of whether or not they were answered) were the only forms of email communication included in the data. All other email correspondence was simply for the purpose of organizing meeting times and sending copies of the transcriptions to the participants. I concluded my

research relationship with each woman by contacting her by phone and thanking her for her participation.

In order to ensure that the participants in this study would not be emotionally compromised by their inclusion in this study, I contacted a number of agencies that offered counseling and support, prior to the onset of my data collection. I particularly chose organizations that specialized in the provision of services or access to services for families of children with special needs (The Children's Link Society, Calgary Family Voices, Community Living Association of Calgary). I felt strongly that the themes within my questioning would not be aversive to these women, however, as I had no preconceived notions of how any of these women would respond to my questions, and in keeping with University of Calgary requirements for thesis application, each participant was given contact information for each of the aforementioned agencies (Appendix D)

Data Collection – Approach to Interviewing

I followed Bogdan and Biklen's (1998) guidelines for conducting interviews by choosing a semi-structured format for addressing my questions to ensure continuity in the data across all the interviews. The general structure of the interviews asked the participants to reflect on and describe their personal experiences in relation to four areas: (a) The personal experiences of being a mother of a child with special needs, (b) Their specific personal experiences, as a parent of a child with special needs, within the education system, (c) Their personal experiences, as a woman teacher, with students and parents within the education system and (d) Their values, beliefs and perceptions of how satisfied they feel the parents of the children they teach are with the parent/teacher relationships.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) make mention that in semi-structured interviews the researcher can be, “confident of getting comparable data across subjects, but loses the opportunity to understand how the subjects themselves structure the topic at hand”(p.95). In order to attempt to address this, I followed Oakley’s (1988) advice for interviewing women by remaining aware of my position as an interviewer. I conducted the interviews in a fashion where I invited each woman to begin our relationship by sharing whichever theme of stories she felt most currently connected to, either her personal stories or the professional perspectives.

In addition, I maintained two forms of personal written notes. In an ongoing journal, I explored my own responses to the same questions I had been presenting to the participants. I also followed-up each interview with a personal reflection of my impressions of how the interview had unfolded. Within these post interview reflections I maintained notes on body language or voice tone that had been overtly obvious to me during the interview. I also noted what questions seemed to be avoided, or what things I might consider revisiting in a different way in an upcoming interview. I did not take any notes during the interviews since I felt it would not only undermine my attempt at creating an equal relationship with the women I was interviewing, but that it would also divert my attention away from actively listening to their stories. Both of these reflective approaches (my personal journal and the post-interview notes) were effective in informing this study from the hermeneutic perspective as a means to delineate and assimilate my own experiences with those of my participants.

Data Analysis

I personally transcribed all the interviews in order to revisit them on a deeper level. Through the process of transcription I began by reviewing my post-interview notes and journal entries regarding that interview. Then, while transcribing, I correlated the elements of the interview that I had noted in my post-notes with the actual sections of the tape. I kept a record of

the tape recorder's counter for these correlations, as well as other pauses, changes in voice tone and word choices that were not evident to me in the face to face encounter. After transcribing the entire interview, I listened to it a second time and included these elements in my copy of the transcription document only. The copies sent to each respective participant did not include these additional observations.

In the actual analysis of the data, I used two similar approaches to organize and study it. First, I followed the steps outlined by Moustakas (1990) to immerse myself within the stories of each individual participant and to let them incubate. Second, I employed Moustakis' modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of clustering, as presented by Creswell (1998), to find units of meaning across the various stories. As such, analysis of each series of interviews included the following steps:

Before I began looking at any of the transcriptions, I reviewed the journal response I had completed, which was in essence an interview with myself. I organized my stories into clusters; (a) mother stories with education professionals – positive and negative, (b) mother stories with others – positive and negative, (c) teacher stories in general –positive and negative, (d) teacher stories with students – positive and negative, (e) teacher stories with parents – positive and negative. I then looked at various statements I had made that personally reflected a behaviour, or a value/belief and considered how those statements might have been influenced by the stories I had chosen to tell or the experiences I had reflected on.

I studied each individual transcript from each of the women using a similar approach that followed Creswell's (1998) description of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (pp.147-150).

“Horizontalization of data” (p147) – I organized the stories from each individual woman into clusters and looked for similar statements that reflected a behaviour or a value/belief within each cluster of stories.

“Texturally describing statements”(p.150) – I created meaning units for each cluster of stories and then looked for additional information within the body of the transcript that might reflect a behaviour, or a belief/value that was consistent with that meaning.

“Imaginative variation and structural description of the phenomena” (p.150) – I researched and explored a number of possible theories and perspectives that could enlighten me in understanding how this experience was perceived for each woman and for the women who’s meaning units were similar. I was careful, at this point, not to become too attached to professionalized theory in deciphering where each woman was coming from but rather I chose to step back and try to see each individual experience as a whole.

“Description of the essence of the experience” (p. 150) – I created a composite of each woman’s experiences based on the stories she shared with me, my impressions of how they had been shared with me and my acknowledgement of how my own experiences resonated with each woman either positively, negatively or in neutral manner. I then looked for common themes across all eight composites to base my discussion and conclusions on.

Maintaining Trustworthiness.

Perhaps because I come from the medical model with a positivist or rationalistic research mindset that demands verification of the validity of a study’s findings, I understood the importance of trustworthiness within this research paradigm, or maybe it was simply because the content of this study was so deeply personal for me. Regardless, I paid a great deal of attention to

ensuring that I understood, valued and could implement the same aspects of qualitative study that I was already so familiar with in a quantitative approach

Guba and Lincoln (1981) describe four major concerns that relate to the trustworthiness of any qualitative research method. These four concerns include truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Guba (1981) organizes these four aspects into the following terms. The truth value of the data is measured by its credibility or the authenticity of the researcher's interpretation. Applicability is assessed through the transferability of the collected data across participants and/or contexts. Consistency, according to Guba (1981), "implies not invariance (except by chance) but trackable variance – variance that can be ascribed to sources: so much for error, so much for reality shifts, so much of increased instrumental proficiency (better insights) and so on" (p,81). Finally the issue of neutrality is described as confirmability. I addressed each of these concerns within this study in the following way:

Truth value or credibility was addressed by having each woman review her own transcript and voluntarily respond to any questions I posed.

I addressed applicability or transferability by first, reflecting on my own lived experiences (both as a mother and a teacher), second, conducting extensive research on the focus of this study of mothers and teachers and then reflexively moving back and forth between the stories shared by my participants, the research I collected, and my own experiences.

The reliability or dependability of the data and my interpretation of it is trackable through my own reflections, the notes I took before and after each interview, the transcripts themselves, the email responses each participant had sent to me, as well as all my recording from the analysis process.

Finally, although the method I chose to apply to this study suggested that I could not remain neutral in relation to the data, as Guba refers to Scriven (1972), “naturalists shift the burden of neutrality from the investigator to the data, requiring evidence not of the certifiability of the investigator or his or her methods but of the confirmability of the data produced” (p.81). As such, I consider that the steps I purposely took to ensure the accuracy of the information shared with me by the participants confirm the authenticity of the phenomena.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The Participants

The eight women, who so graciously shared with me their stories of being mothers of children with special needs and teachers, each brought their lived experiences to my interviews. Be it as relatively new teachers or highly experienced administrators, be it as mothers of young children or of grown adults, who these women were was reflected in the narratives they shared .

Angela has been an early childhood educator for twenty years of which she has taught for twelve, all within the special education system. She is married with four children, her youngest daughter, Amanda, lives with Down Syndrome.

Bea has been teaching for four years in both early elementary and special education. She is a married mother of three sons. Her second son, Simon, was diagnosed with autism at the age of three.

Bonnie has worked in education for fifteen years and has worked as a classroom teacher for twelve years. For the last three years, she is working as a parent/school liason in a rural school district. She is a single mother with one child (Adam) who has Cerebral Palsy

Claire, a teacher for eighteen years, returned to teaching physical education and grade three at the elementary level just three years ago after staying home with her children for eight years. She is married and the mother of three children. Her second child Christine has CHARGE Syndrome.(an acronym that stands for Coloboma of the eye, Hear defects, Atresia of the choanae, Retardation of growth and/or development, Genital and/or urinary abnormalities, and Ear abnormalities and deafness).

Helen's teaching career has spanned more than twenty five years. Her experience is primarily in special education and behaviour classes. She is a divorced mother of three natural born sons and two adopted daughters. Both daughters were diagnosed after their adoption with Fetal Alcohol Disorder and emotional/behavioral disorders. One of Helen's daughters is an adult and the other daughter is deceased.

Joanne has been teaching in general and special education as a reading specialist for nearly thirty years. She is a single mother with three adult children. Her youngest son and daughter (twins) have significant learning disabilities which were identified in early elementary school.

Margaret has been teaching for over twenty years. She is married with two children, her first child was adopted. Now a teenager, Margaret's son, Billy, was diagnosed with emotional and behavioral challenges prior to his adoption.

Pat is a teacher, guidance counsellor and junior high school administrator. She is married with two sons. Her youngest son, David, has Down Syndrome.

Eight Women's Stories – A Thematic Summary

Do teachers who are mothers of children with special needs have the tools to be more successful at bridging the communication gap with other parents?

This question became a touchstone for me throughout the data collection and data analysis process. It was at the heart of my questioning of what kinds of knowing take precedence in the parent/teacher relationship. So I returned to this question during my analysis, a number of times, in a number of different ways, considering how it might be interpreted by each of the women I interviewed, as well as how I viewed it.

Transformative Events

The suggestion by Lewin (1994) and the theme to Sikes (1997) work, that motherhood is a transformative event in the lives of all women, became an important thread in my explorations. I wanted to hear the stories they told about their personal lives, with their children, and see if I could follow the threads of those stories into the stories they told about their professional lives. However, unlike Sikes, who explored how the transformation as a mother affected teacher relationships with students, I wanted to know if the transformative event of being mothers of children with special needs extended out to how these women, as teachers, related back to the parents of their students who had special needs. As such, I first started looking at my results by locating the themes I had organized my interviews around.

Transformation as mothers.

I began looking at the transcripts through an examination of the stories each woman told about becoming a mother of a child with special needs. All but one mother, Bonnie, had other children who did not have special needs, which I believed was an important element to acknowledge towards understanding not just the transformative experience of being a mother, but the different transformation in being a mother of a child with special needs. I wanted to try to see how closely aligned any of these women were to some of the professionalized theories (Kubler-Ross 1969, Moses 1987, Rolland 1993, Bruce et al 1994, Seligman & Darling 1998, Bruce & Schultz 2001) that had been developed to better understand parents with children with special needs. I wanted to examine if the women in this study personally identified with any of these models or if they had merely adopted the professional language.

The stories these women shared with me suggested that each had mastered dealing with their responsibilities as mother of children with special needs. In particular, all eight of the

women told stories that reflected a strong level confidence in their process to procure services for their child. Even Claire, who's demeanor seemed tentative about the various decisions she had made on her daughter's behalf, was highly capable at securing services once her decision was made.

Helen and Angela were the only two women who made direct reference to the term grief in the stories they told about learning of their child's condition. Helen spoke of personal grief, not so much in terms of learning of the label her daughters were eventually diagnosed with, but rather, to learning about some of the experiences her daughters had endured prior to their adoption. She admitted that she grieved for her daughters and the abuse they had lived through, not for herself or any sense of loss on her part.

We knew we wanted to adopt children with behaviours, we were prepared for that. But we had also been clear, crystal clear, to social services that we didn't want to adopt children who had been abused. . . I didn't grieve that, not one bit, I was pissed at them (social services), I felt we'd been duped.

She was also the only one of the eight women who made reference to the grieving in terms of the parents she worked with. In our discussions of how she approached her work with parents she mentioned that she always allowed them "that time to grieve".

Angela used the term grief in a very different manner. She, too, stated that she grieved for her daughter prior to her birth when she learned that she would have a child with Down Syndrome. However, she felt her grief was more rooted in the fact that as a teacher of children with Down Syndrome, she was already familiar with the challenges individuals with Down Syndrome face in their lives. "I knew how hard these little ones work and I had watched how committed their parents had to become. . . It was going to be so hard for her. . . I wasn't really

sure I had it in me to do what I had seen many parents doing”. When I asked her whether she felt she grieved for herself or her sense of loss, she reflected for a moment and then chose the term “fear” rather than grief: “ I knew something of what to expect and it scared me”.

Bonnie and Bea both laughingly spoke of how they were probably in denial of their child’s label at the beginning. Each of these women told stories of how, as mothers, they more or less grew into their understanding of their child’s limitations as their children grew. Bonnie’s son’s premature birth resulted in a physician’s early suggestion of cerebral palsy, when he was still in the hospital, and a confirmation of it later, when he was fifteen months old. “I knew it was a possibility right away, when he was still in an incubator, so it wasn’t really a shock when they confirmed it for sure, it was more like okay, so what’s next?”

Bea described her middle son, Simon, as “always seeming to be the shy one who liked to be alone”. She shared that he had always been the one who didn’t talk or respond to the people around him and although they sensed he wasn’t developing typically and were deeply concerned about it, they grew to see it as part of his personality. “Even after they told us he had autism, it was hard to see it, to say, that’s why he’s like that. . .we kind of had just grown to love him as he was. . .that was Simon just being Simon” .

Claire referred to being in a state of shock, both during the first year that her daughter was being treated for severe health conditions in the hospital, and later when they finally brought her home to stay. Although she too reflected how she was growing in comfort of her daughter’s condition and her expectations as Christine’s mother, like Angela she seemed to indicate a fear of the future. Although, unlike Angela, who feared for what she felt she already knew, Claire’s fears were more rooted to the “flying blind” notion. “When we had Melissa (older daughter), I wanted to think ahead and have everything planned, I mean everything! . . . We couldn’t do that

for Christine. I mean, for the longest time we didn't even know if she would make it from one day to the next".

Margaret and Joanne reflected on the relief and validation they felt when their children were finally diagnosed with conditions they (as professionals) had already suspected. Pat, whose son was diagnosed with Down Syndrome in utero, spoke of the "work they did to prepare for his birth".

Of the various stages that different professional models ascribe to, only the emotions of anger and frustration was present in all eight women's stories. Helen related a number of situations that had occurred with various social workers and other professionals, within the social service system, that had "incensed" her. Angela admitted that, after the birth of her daughter, her mother in law had encouraged her and her husband to "give her up and try again". She told me that this had caused her to feel anger and distrust towards her mother in law for some time. She then rationalized it to the fact that her husband's mother was an immigrant from Eastern Europe who had not grown up with people with disabilities. Finally, she shared that grandmother and granddaughter now had a very close relationship. As far as the relationship between herself and her mother in law, although she had forgiven her for her comments, she could not forget them.

Bonnie's stories of anger centered primarily on a physician who had painted a decidedly bleak picture of her son's future, "He basically gave me a grocery list of things Adam would not be able to do" and one particular teacher who had questioned how Adam's power chair could fit into her classroom arrangement, "I'm sure she really didn't want to be bothered with the extra work she thought he would be. I don't really think the chair was the issue, but she made it seem that way".

Claire also spoke with anger about some of her interactions with various professionals from the medical community: “I know they needed to tell us everything, I get that, but it was done in such a cold way. . .they said things no parent should have to hear about their child”. She also spoke of her frustrations with strangers now that her daughter is a teenager: “It makes me just crazy when I tell people that she’s blind, deaf and mute so then they start talking really loud to her and get in her face”.

Bea told early stories of one psychologist who had suggested that she and her husband consider institutionalizing their son. She also spoke at length of her anger and frustrations over her recent interactions with professionals within the Person’s with Developmental Disabilities board. “It was like we were begging them”.

Margaret’s anger had also been directed toward social workers and social services in the course of adopting their son. “They promised us all this support for him but after we signed the papers they were gone”. She also reflected on a number of different teachers who had “quite literally thrown up their hands and said, I don’t know what to do with him, he doesn’t belong here”.

Joanne’s reflections on anger were also directed to the education system. She shared how she had repeatedly asked her twins’ school administrator to assess them for learning challenges in their first couple of years of school. “When they finally coded them I wanted to phone up that principal and blame her for all the time we had lost”.

Pat’s only reflection of emotion involving anger was toward her son’s first kindergarten teacher. “I thought I had set things up for her, but she didn’t follow through . . .I learned from that experience”.

Of the eight women I interviewed, only Claire come across as being rather unsure of how or what to expect for her daughter. Within the context of our interview, she probed me with questions about the various services I was aware of or was involved with. She indicated that she felt confident that their choice to place Christine in a segregated setting was in her best interest (she also seemed to take solace in knowing that I had chosen a segregated setting for one of my children), but she also stated that she felt guilty at “not being able to do more for her”.

Guilt became another key term for Bonnie, who, as a single mother had relied on her own mother for assistance when her son was very young. “In some ways I think my mom was more the primary care giver for Adam than I was back then”. It also showed up in Helen’s transcript in regard to her younger daughter’s death, and in Joanne’s interview: “Sometimes I feel guilty, I think I really should have pushed harder to get them assessed earlier”. Angela also commented “I had those moments y’know, when you go over everything and question if you did something wrong that could cause this”..

Within each of these stories, I also found the war metaphors that seem so common to the parent perspective.

Bea spoke of the process she and her husband had taken to ensure that their son has access to day services after he had graduated from high school. She spoke at length about the long and drawn out “fight” to secure funding from the PDD board:

I have never had to fight as hard for anything for Simon before. It was back and forth, writing letters, making phone calls, being told yes you’re good, go ahead and set things up, and then having that yes decision revoked. . .I tell you, we were this close to going to the media about it.

Both Margaret and Helen told similar stories of how they had “fought” for themselves and their children with a wide variety of professionals both before and after their children were officially adopted. They both also made reference to the battles they had had with the justice system on behalf of their children.

Angela also used the term battle when she spoke of the work she does with the Down Syndrome community for the benefit of her daughter and the other children she knows, “Sometimes it feels like a real battle, getting people to see them as more than just eternal children”.

Pat, Joanne and Bonnie talked of the steps they had taken to ensure that their children remained in inclusive educational settings after they had been identified for Individual Program Plans. Pat spoke of being “strategic” in her planning with her son’s teachers, Joanne used the terms “advancing” and “retreating” in terms of her role as the parent in her twins IPP planning. Bonnie also spoke of the ‘fights’ and ‘battles’ she had toward having her son’s physical needs met in an inclusive classroom.

Claire, used the term “standing my ground” when it came to choosing against the recommendations of a speech pathologist and electing to have her daughter learn American Sign Language(ASL).

In overlaying any of the professionalized grief models onto these stories, it could be argued that the high degree of mastery, as mothers of children with special needs, that each of these women displayed was akin to the acceptance of their child’s condition. However, although each woman made reference to personally experiencing emotions that are included in the grief model, none of them suggested that they had experienced them in the linear way that most professional models prescribe. In term of emotions that stem from an image of a lost child, only

Helen applied that in her professional discussions, but did not feel she had felt it in her personal life. “We felt we were entering into this adoption with our eyes wide open, we wanted children with behaviours, parents don’t sign up for that when they have children”.

Becoming a different kind of mom.

I directly posed the question, “Do you feel this has been a unique mothering experience for you?”, that being, an experience that might be decidedly different from their experiences as mother with their other children. Six of the eight women admitted that they felt what was expected for them as mothers of their other children was different from what they felt was expected for their child with special needs. Bonnie could not respond since she has only one child. Margaret felt the transformation had occurred after they had their second child: “It was kind of a surprise since I had become so used to staying up all night with Billy”, and Pat stated that she did not feel it as a unique experience in terms of her son’s special needs, she felt it was simply unique, “because he’s a different person”.

When I asked if they felt they had been transformed because of their experiences with their children with special needs, again, all but Pat emphatically agreed. Pat still remained uncomfortable with the notion that her son’s condition might impact how she cared for him as a mother.

Nevertheless, seven women admitted that they were probably better advocates for their other children because of their experiences advocating for their child with special needs (Bonnie only had one child). Ironically, it was in this portion of the discussion that the metaphors of game play came forward. (Helen, Margaret, Pat, Joanne). Both Pat and Joanne referred to the “tricks” they had learned as teachers, but both also considered that knowing these “tricks” was more useful to them in their professional as opposed to their personal lives. Helen and Margaret both

used the same metaphor “knowing the rules of the game”. They told decidedly similar stories about their experiences with adoption and how their current knowledge of how the game is played has helped them.

The metaphor that Claire used to describe her new found abilities in advocating for her daughter was, “I’m like the mother tiger, or no, like a dog with a bone, that’s a better one. Once we decide what Christine needs I make sure she gets it”.

Claire also felt that she was a “different kind of mom” because of her experience with Christine, “I’m more laid back with Brian (her third child), not so worried about every little thing like I was with Melissa. I know because of Christine that I’ve learned to take one day at a time”.

Both Joanne and Pat reflected that they were not sure if they had been transformed as mothers. Although Pat was clear that David’s Down Syndrome had not changed who or how she saw herself as a mother, “I was his mom before he was born and I’m still his mom now, nothing has changed”, Joanne was less sure. “I’ve done this type of work (advocating) on behalf of other kids for a long time. . . it was different doing it for my own kids. . . I’d like to think I didn’t do it any different just because it was my kids though”. When I questioned if she didn’t feel more dedicated in advocating on behalf of her own children, she agreed that she probably was, but remained unsure if that had actually transformed her as a mother.

Although Bonnie could not reflect on how she might have changed in regard to how she mothered other children, she stated that, “I don’t think I’m the mom I ever imagined I would be”. When I pressed her to expand on the notion of who she had imagined herself to be as a mom, she identified her social activism as the trait she had not planned on possessing. Bea agreed that her social awareness and active involvement in the autism community was not something she had intended as a mother role. “I was going to be the hockey mom, the one who brought the snacks,

you know, not someone who started stuff, someone who changed things. I had never been that type of person before. I mean I'm still the hockey mom, for Tom and Jerry, but I'm kinda a different kind of mom for Simon".

Transformation As Teachers.

I wanted to continue to expand my exploration of my question of transformation by considering whether or not being a mother of a child with special needs had made an impact on how these women approached their professional lives as teachers. Had possession of what might be considered a unique type of knowledge, as mothers of children with special needs, allowed them to construct a different kind of knowing as teachers?

Perhaps the most notable story of transformation from mother to teacher was told by Bea who shared how she had become a teacher because of what she knew as Simon's mother:

After I got my degree in psych, I wasn't sure how I wanted to use it. Education had occurred to me but then Peter and I got married and then I got pregnant with Tom almost right after we moved here. . . After Simon was diagnosed my time was pretty wrapped up, what with having three boys under five and all the things we needed to do to meet his needs, the idea of getting a job or going back to school didn't seem like an option I could handle. . . So then, when Simon started school, I started working as a volunteer so I could, I guess, keep an eye on him. But a funny thing happened over the years that I did it. Being a volunteer and then being a teacher assistant with some absolutely amazing teachers it made me really want to be a teacher. That's why I went back to school.

Still other mothers also made reference to bringing a different kind of knowledge to their teaching after the birth of their children. Bonnie spoke of how being a single mom impacted her work as a beginning teacher.

I got pregnant during my second year of teaching. You know young, unmarried, stupid . . . and my relationship with Adam's father was complicated. Then he (Adam) arrived way earlier than was expected and that was kind of scary. . . I really couldn't afford to take extra time off so I am lucky that my family is here, I'll sure say that . . . I don't know how families who have no close relatives around do it. You know, I learned to appreciate how parents do it so much those first few years. . . Adam wasn't, officially, diagnosed until he was about fifteen months but I had been warned of it right from when he was born . . . even then, it wasn't so hard until he started to get a bit older . . . I wonder sometimes if I would have sensed things earlier, helped him a bit more, if I wasn't working fulltime y'know. . . but those first few years after Adam's birth, it changed how I taught . . . like from how I had started. . . at the same time I was learning how to be a mother. And then he was diagnosed with CP . . . and that changed things too.

I asked Bonnie what changed after Adam was diagnosed with CP. She commented that things became "more structured. . . and more busy . . . I sent him to GRIT for early intervention. . . It was hard to send this little tiny bit of a boy off to school. . . That kind of rocked my world for a while". I then asked if she felt her values as a teacher had changed more by becoming a mother or by becoming a mother of a child with special needs. She responded that she felt that as a preemie, Adam had had special needs right from the beginning. "Even before he had the label CP he had the label 'preemie'".

Claire told me a story of transformation as a teacher because of her experiences as a mother, that she hadn't initially recognize as one until she shared it with me:

Everything about her life was so difficult, she was so sick and it was so hard and we needed so much help. A lot of our family wondered why God had allowed her to live. It

didn't seem fair. But when I held her and looked at her, I loved her so much . . . its funny because when I went back to school I looked at those kids, the ones I wasn't sure belonged there, and suddenly realized, somebody really really loved them too. I think a lot of us (teachers) had always wondered who could possibly love those kids?

Both Helen and Angela were teachers of children with special needs before they became mothers to children with special needs. Both women also found the experience of becoming mothers of children with special needs was transformative to their teaching practice. Helen spoke of her discovery, as a mother, of what happens after kids leave her classroom.

When we decided to adopt we wanted kids with behaviors. I figured I had worked with behaviour kids for years, there wasn't anything I couldn't handle. But, boy, it didn't take me very long to find out it's completely different when those kids are your own.

I asked her how it was different:

Well, I mean in school they are with you for what, six hours a day? That leaves how many hours left? And you're invested, I mean really invested. That doesn't mean I wasn't invested in these kids as a teacher, but its so much different as a parent . . . as a teacher I think I get that now.

Angela also saw her students differently after learning she was to become the mother of a child with special needs:

We knew before she was born that she would have Down Syndrome. I had had an amnio and it showed up. After that I had to take a couple of weeks off, I couldn't go back to the classroom, I didn't think I could look at the kids. I had to wrap my head around it. . . I remember the day I walked back into that classroom. It was like I was looking at those kids with totally new eyes.

Margaret, who had also worked in behaviour classrooms prior to adopting her son, wondered if she might have a deeper commitment to her students because of her son. “I always thought I was pretty in tune with these kids, but maybe I get it more now because of Billy. . . I suppose I do”.

Joanne, yet another teacher whose professional teaching responsibilities (reading specialist) mirrored her children’s special need, shared how she felt more committed to her work as a result of her twins. “Literacy has always been my passion in teaching, but it became more important to me when it became clear that the kids were both struggling”.

Pat remained rather distant in both her oral and body language regarding the question of change. She offered, “Yes, I suppose it’s given me another way to look at it, but I don’t believe it changed how I teach”.

Finally, Bonnie shared a story of change in terms of career direction that she claims came about directly because of her experiences as a mother of a child with special needs. This story closely resembles Bea’s story that opens this section:

Three years ago my administrator came to me with this new job description . . .for the home/school liaison. They didn’t call it that at first, I can’t remember what the title was, but it was basically working with the school and the home. It was like it was tailor made for me. I mean, I had been doing the job now for almost twelve years, teaching kids and then advocating for parents, it had become just part of what I did as a teacher.

When looking at this collection of stories, it seemed to me that I was beginning to find similar results to what Sikes (2003) had reported, that becoming a mother did change how one taught. Although Sikes had indicated in her conclusions that the purpose to her study was that she merely wanted to discover if other teachers felt the same way she had, I wanted to

understand more about how the women in my study had used these transformative events to inform their lives.

Finding the Balance Between The Mother And The Teacher

Bateson (1994) speaks of the unique complexities of being a working woman. Although she does not refer specifically to the balance between teaching and mothering, she does draw reference to the multiple roles women can play to the variety of people in their lives:

Women must be one thing to one person and another to another, and must see themselves through multiple eyes and in terms of different roles. Women have had to learn to be attentive to multiple demands, to tolerate frequent interruptions and to think about more than one thing at a time. (p.107)

Repeatedly, I found stories in my transcripts of the woman who works to meet both the needs of her family and the needs of her students.

Margaret talked about long days and even longer nights:

So when Billy came to live with us, he would scream until he would pass out from exhaustion at nighttime and this went on for months. I think I slept in a recliner for, what, five months straight . . .and I would just get him up when he was screaming at night, because my husband couldn't sleep, I couldn't sleep and I just couldn't leave somebody there and I used to wrap him in a blanket, the psychologist told me this is bonding therapy, but I didn't know it at the time, and I was black and blue from him because he would strike me, and . . .that's why I would wrap him in the blanket. I'd just rock him, and I would just try and dodge his head as much as possible. . . After a while I went back to teaching in the day and I still did the night thing. So I think that I went for three or four years with only two or three hours sleep at a time.

Claire spoke of finding a solace in teaching:

After it was clear that Christine was not going to be coming home for a while yet our doctor suggested I might consider going back to work until she did. I thought she was crazy at first, but then the school I was at had a mat leave they needed to fill until the end of the school year and I realized I just couldn't spend all day at the hospital anymore, I needed to have somewhere else to go. . .Melissa was already in school like all day then. . . It seemed for that time I never saw the house, except maybe to sleep. I'd spend the day at school teaching and planning and then rush madly to pick up Melissa from school and go to the hospital each day. Sometimes I was so anxious to get there I'm surprised I didn't get picked up for speeding. . . Still, when I think back on it, going back to the classroom even for that short time, kept me from losing my mind . . .and the funny thing . . .I think she knew . . .because the very day after school let out, the doctor told us she had gained enough weight to come home.

Joanne referred to it as "burning the candle at both ends". "I remember spending my days teaching other folks kids to read and then spending all evening teaching my own kids to read".

Angela and her daughter learned about school together:

Crystal and I went back to school together. She in the baby room because she had just turned two and me in my old kindergarten class. In some ways I think it was easier on me because she rode to and from school with me everyday so I didn't have to put my baby on a school bus like so many of the parents who sent their kids to our school did, but in other ways it was hard. I'd hear the little ones in that class cry sometimes and they all seemed to sound like Crystal. At first I had to keep my classroom door closed, just to keep me focused on the kids in my class.

Bonnie struggled to find a balance:

When Adam started in early intervention it was hell. I mean, he seemed to get everything that would ever go around his school. I mean if I wasn't getting a phone call in the middle of my teaching day from his school to pick him up because he was either throwing up or had diarrhea, I was calling for subs because I had to stay home with him.

Helen learned what life was like after school let out.

Some days were really hard. If one or both of the girls went out at night and then missed curfew, we'd have to go out looking for them. Sometimes it took most of the night . . .but I still had to teach the next day.

Countering the balance.

Still, despite these commonalities in the daily struggles of being a mother of a child with special needs and the responsibilities of being a teacher, there seems to be an interesting division between the small group of women I interviewed. There were those women who acknowledged how their personal lives had guided and informed their professions, and then, other women who seemed to want to distance their personal lives from their professional ones. I wondered if this second group of women had placed the attainment of the goal (their profession) on an equal scale as the transformative event in their lives, therefore drawing boundaries between themselves as mothers and themselves as teachers. Heilbrun (1988) categorized this as placing higher value on what she referred to as the more masculine qualities of professionalism (career, education, upward mobility and independence), versus her view of the more feminine qualities involved in parenting (caring, nurturance and dependency). I wondered if that was indeed the case or if it was a more of a desire to maintain professional objectivity versus acknowledging personal subjectivity.

In order to examine this difference in viewpoints, at this point in my analysis, I organized the transcripts into two groupings: *Mothers Who Are Teachers* and *Teachers Who Are Mothers*. My analysis towards organizing these groupings looked at the stories and the language the eight women had used that reflected to me a sense of either; women who brought who they were as mothers to their classroom and women who brought who they were as teachers to their children. This organization began as an intuitive sense of how each woman had shared part of who she was with me in our interviews and I wanted to follow my intuition in the course of understanding how each woman positioned herself in between her personal and professional life.

To accomplish this, I looked at the stories each women told me about the relationships they had with their students. The primary relationship teachers have is usually with their students and all eight of these teachers reflected that, to various degrees, in their interviews. So much so, that in some cases it was challenge to redirect them away from placing the focus of the interview on the student/teacher relationship and back onto their parent/teacher relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE

Analysis and Discussion

Mothers Who Are Teachers

Within the transcripts of the women I identified as mothers who taught I looked for indications that these women deeply valued how their personal experiences as mothers and as mothers of children with special needs was reflected in their practice as teachers.

For the most part, the women I organized together in this group came across to me as having nurturing personalities, the kind of woman who might be considered everybody's mother. Although it was never my intention to explore or examine the personality traits of the women within this study, I did chose to follow certain leads to discovering more about how each of these women approached her work as a teacher.

"My kids"

I found within an examination of Bea's transcripts the first suggestions of this sense of a mother who teaches. She had reflected on her progression in the education system from volunteer mom to paid educational assistant and finally to classroom teacher. Throughout these reflections she repeatedly referred to the students she taught as 'my kids', "I quickly began to start thinking about the kids I was an aide to as my kids". "I tell you, these kids, you become so attached to them, I start to feel like they are my kids. . . not sure if I'm ready to let them leave my classroom let them go to someone else". She also acknowledged how who she was as a mother had a profound impact on who she saw herself as a teacher. "How can I not bring that part of me to school everyday, its just part of who I am. I mean, when its all said and done, even if I stop teaching, I'll always be a mom, that part just stays with you always". Finally, she shared with me her belief of how her use of the knowledge she had as Simon's mother had originally helped

her enter the profession of education, “I think that’s maybe why they hired me (as an aide), because I already knew so much about autism”.

Although Bonnie’s history was unlike Bea’s, her recollections seemed to suggest a similar nurturing or caring response in her relationships with her students, “Even before Adam was born, sometimes I just wanted to bring some of those little ones home with me”. and, “I was always drawn to kindergarten and early elementary. . . Some of my teacher friends who taught in higher grades would say ‘ooohhh that’s not for me, it’s too much like babysitting’ but that was kind of the part I loved about it”. When I asked her whether or not that perspective had changed after Adam’s birth she replied, “No, it probably increased. I think when he was real little I kind of felt guilty about not being home with him and so it made me feel good to still look after kids”.

Angela shared with me what was clearly an emotional experience when she reflected on her inability to return to her classroom after learning that her daughter would have Down Syndrome. She too, used the term “my kids” in reference to her students:

I had to wrap my head around it. I mean, as a teacher I thought of these kids as my kids but they always went home to their mom’s at the end of the day y’know. They were mine for that part of the day. . .When I think back on it now it really bothers me how I was freaked I was, y’know?. . .Anyway, when I returned back to class I saw them with a whole new set of eyes”.

When I asked her what she meant by that, she responded, “I think I felt more protective of them, I didn’t consider myself just their teacher anymore”.

Claire did not use some of the language that had drawn me to include the previous women in this grouping, but she was one of the women who spoke at length about the students in her classroom. In our second interview she spoke of their accomplishments and their challenges

with what seemed to be the same passion, pride and concern as she had used to tell of the experiences with her own children in our initial interview. I also noted that during both interviews (held in her home as she felt it was important that I meet and get to know Christine), the house was full of her children's friends and our interviews were periodically paused so that she could administer to their needs.

As a school administrator, Helen spoke less of her direct relationships with students but did refer to the portion of her role that places her as a coordinator of the students and the staff within "my school", "Sometimes it feels like I'm the mother hen, right? Making sure that everyone is happy and getting what they need". She also placed a deep importance on the significance that her role as a mother of children with special needs had on her professional life, "I feel a responsibility to bring what I know about that to my work". And later, "Families know what kinds of experiences I've had. . . I think that is why they send their children to this school".

Teachers Who Are Mothers

I located the remaining three women within the grouping of teachers who are mothers because analysis of their transcripts revealed much less of the "fuzzy boundaries" (Lightfoot-Lawrence, 2003 p.193) between mothering and teaching that seemed present in the previous five women's interviews. It also struck me as interesting that only these three women arranged for me to interview them at their place of work, as opposed to their homes or other neutral settings. At first, I rationalized that these women were perhaps more interested to protecting their privacy or personal space, or as Margaret had explained to me, "Billy becomes very agitated if he thinks I'm talking about him when he's around". However, I also discovered some common qualities amongst these three women that reflected a different approach to their thinking.

Again, I looked at language and stories to provide evidence of placement of each transcript within this grouping. None of these three women told me particular stories of the students they taught, but rather spoke in more general terms about the work they do and the programs they had developed and ran. They also each made more references between their teaching practices and their own children's success in school.

I am a teacher, it's who I am.

What cued me into an analysis of this grouping was first initiated by Joanne's recollection of why she became a teacher. Although I never asked any of the women, directly, why they had become teachers, some of them spontaneously told me stories such as Bea, who said she became a teacher because of her experiences as a mother. In contrast, Joanne offered, "I always wanted to be a teacher, always, it's just who I am". Pat even went so far as to seem to dismiss her maternal credentials when it came to our discussion of her approach to teaching: "I don't feel who I am in my personal life impacts how I teach". Nevertheless, she was quick to acknowledge that her experience as a teacher did have an effect on how she cared for her son.

Of course, being a teacher helped us to organize and plan David's education. Teachers know how to talk to one another, and I was able to tell his teachers exactly what we wanted for him.

Joanne and Margaret were perhaps not quite as direct in their delineation between themselves as mothers and who they were as teachers, however, when speaking about their personal lived experiences, they were quick to acknowledge how their professional skills as teachers was an asset in raising their children with special needs. Joanne believed that the advances her children had made in their reading abilities could not have been accomplished in

the same manner had she not been a literacy teacher, “I really don’t believe my kids would be as successful at reading today had I not been a literacy teacher”.

Margaret considered the knowledge and skills she had developed working in behaviour classrooms was also an asset as a mother, “Of course I knew what to expect from Billy, I had been teaching kids like him for years”. Unlike Helen, though, Margaret did not feel adopting a child with behaviours had given her an all that different a perspective, “I’ve just gotten better at it, I do it 24/7 now. . .I better be good at it”.

Both Pat and Joanne accentuated the fact that they felt the success of their children’s school experience was, perhaps in part, a result of their ability to communicate with other teachers on a level that parents, who were not teachers, often could not. Joanne told me:

I knew very early that both kids weren’t grasping how to read. Almost right from the beginning they both seemed to struggle with the same issues, phonemic awareness, word recognition . . .stuff like that. At first we thought, well they’re twins, they feed off each other . . .so we asked the school to split them up for grade one. But still, they seemed to have the same challenges, even though they had different teachers. Neither of them was diagnosed back then, but I knew they needed extra help. By the end of grade one and into grade two, I spent a lot of my own time working with the kids, gathering information on them and talking with the school. . . Finally, at the end of grade two, I got the new principal to agree to have them assessed. . . I’m pretty confident they would have let them struggle for quite a while longer, but the principal knew what I taught so I guess she wasn’t so quick to dismiss me. I don’t know, either way, they were pretty quick to get them into resource once the assessments were done.

Pat referred to how her professional relationships with other teachers acted as a support for her son.

I knew the teachers who taught David, and they knew me, so it was real easy to build that relationship. We spoke the same language, we knew how to talk to one another and I think they really valued my input because some of his teachers had never had a student with Down Syndrome. I don't think we've really ever had a bad year with David because his teachers see me on the same level.

My reoccurring thoughts when interviewing Pat, Margaret and Joanne and then, again, as I reviewed the transcripts, was the picture of the woman who saw herself as a teacher first and foremost. But as I visited and revisited their transcripts one very important message emerged. It was most directly stated by Pat when she made reference to the fact that, as a teacher, she felt she was able to communicate with her son's other teachers. Her statements seemed to suggest that there was an underlying camaraderie, acceptance and understanding between herself and her son's teachers simply because of their shared profession. Joanne suggested the same type of sense, "Their teachers knew what I was, so they trusted that I would be carrying out a good reading program at home". In thinking on this more deeply I began to understand and appreciate their position in terms of how they were easily able to fit into the culture of school. For these mothers, as teachers, they seemed to be virtually in their element once their children began school. To test this observation, I looked for the stories that directly pertained to their experiences with professionals outside of education. I wondered if the same ease they exuded in relation to their children's education was typical of all their relationships with professions and professionals in their lives.

Joanne had not shared anything, in particular, prior to her twins being school age since they were identified with learning disabilities in school. However, she did recall what she referred to as her “split personality” as she and her children went through the process of being tested by the school board psychologist:

It was a very weird situation. I had sat in so many of those meetings as the teacher, knowing what the results of the testing were and hoping the parents wouldn't break down or get upset. So there I was, as the parent, knowing from my own observations, what the results would be and hoping that I wouldn't break down or get upset.

It seemed that giving birth and raising a son with Down Syndrome had not had any exceptional effect on Pat and her family. She did not share any specific details of David's birth, diagnosis or treatments. She did indicate that her son's condition was revealed to them during her pregnancy, after a “routine amniocentesis”, and that upon learning of his condition, both she and her husband took steps to educate themselves about their new baby's “potential condition”. She stated that her son did not experience any of the medical afflictions that can commonly be associated with Down Syndrome and that therefore, she felt they “did not spend any more time with doctors for David than they did with Michael”, her older son. I had asked her if she put David into any early intervention programs or specialized extracurricular programs, to which she adamantly stated that they had never felt the need, “David has always been fully included for everything. We wouldn't have it any other way. As a teacher, I was committed to inclusion, why should I feel or act different as a parent?” When I asked if keeping him included was difficult, she simply responded that “we work very hard to make sure it happens”.

Margaret's first experiences working with teachers on behalf of her son mirrored Pat's in that she felt her credentials as a teacher seemed to give her status with her son's teachers.

However, as Margaret recalls, it was not her intention to use her credentials:

When Billy started kindergarten I had to go in with him everyday. They didn't know what to do with him. I'd do things with him and then get the teacher to model it. I don't know, but at first I'm sure she wasn't too impressed with my giving her directions, but then, oh I don't know, I'm sure I never told her, but suddenly one day she seemed to know that I had worked in a behavior class and suddenly she was asking me all these questions.

Their place in the world

For the mother of a child with special needs, who also happens to be a teacher, the phrase "knowing your child best" perhaps holds the potential to be more than just a rhetorical statement. It holds the possibility of a flat or equal relationship between parent and teacher. A relationship that, perhaps, does not come with the same baggage that Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) eludes to as the "ghosts in the classroom"(p.3):

Every time parents and teachers encounter one another in the classroom, their conversations are shaped by their own autobiographical stories and by the broader cultural and historical narratives that inform their identities, their values and their sense of place in the world. (p.3)

I wondered about how a sense of place in the world for both these *mothers who are teachers* and *teachers who are mothers* might have an impact on how they each approached their relationships with the parents of the students they taught. In her discussion of ghosts in the classroom, Lightfoot –Lawrence (2003) goes on to say, "The parents come to the meeting, sit

facing the teacher in the chairs that their children inhabit each day, and begin to feel the same way they felt when they were students – small and powerless”. (p.4)

As my literature review has indicated, parents of children with special needs sit in those chairs and face those teachers far more often than the parent of a typically developing child might. In turn, each of the women in my study has been the parent who has repeatedly sat in those chairs. Some women indicated that sitting across from the professionals in their child’s life had made them feel small and powerless, others had even felt this way sitting with their child’s teacher even though they too were teachers, and still others had indicated that by being teachers, they had never felt that way. Still as teachers, I wondered if these women’s lived memories of that sense of powerlessness with any professional might assist them, guide them or inform them when they entered into relationships with the parents of the students they taught.

In Relationship With Parents

Lawrence-Lightfoot’s (2003) suggestion that who we become as teachers is often reflective of our own experiences with education in childhood is interesting if only because it appears to be at odds with Sikes (1997), whose research suggests that who we become as teachers is radically changed when we ourselves become mothers. Lawrence-Lightfoot herself, points out other differing views when she overlays Freud’s (1952) insistence on boundaries between mother and teacher with Bateson’s (1994) very different view:

In order for the work of teachers to be productive and the conditions for learning optimal, argues Freud, mothers must distance themselves from teaching, remove themselves from close engagement in classroom life. Bateson sees it very differently. She relishes the fuzzy boundaries, the overlapping roles, (p.193)

Within the context of her writing, Lightfoot-Lawrence situates both Bateson and Freud's positions in relationship to that which teachers enter into with their students. However, I wondered how this notion of a more objective, distant view of relationships in teaching or more subjective act of engagement by teachers might also impact the relationship between the teacher and the parent.

Fuzzy borders.

The suggestion by Lightfoot-Lawrence of fuzzy boundaries when she refers to Bateson's (1994) view of blurring the edges between the personal and the professional lives of women also drew me to a view presented by Heilbrun (1999) that women live lives of improvisation. The notion of improvisation, in terms of women's lives was also presented by Bateson (1994):

It is not easy to use the crises of ones' own life as the stimuli for new ethnographic insights, yet we all arrive as strangers at the moments of crisis in our lives, having to improvise responses from previous learning. (p.27)

For me, Heilbrun's and Bateson's comments suggest the act of using what is around you or immediately at your disposal to move forward in other ways: to take what we have lived and use it as a resource for the future. On further examination, Bateson (1994) writes that teachers should remain open to any "sources of insight" (p.109) that they can draw upon in the act of teaching. As I move forward with my examination of these women's stories, I imagine both Heilbrun and Bateson might very well be referring to the experiences of a lived life as those sources of insight and improvisation.

Both Bea and Helen told some of the most compelling stories of how their own personal experiences as mothers had informed how they engaged with parents .

Bea told a story of reviewing the results of a psychological report done on one of her students with his mother:

It had horrible wording, so I said to her, 'don't read it, skip to the recommendation part, go through it and just read the recommendation part, don't look at it, you know what it says, don't read it.' So she says to me 'But it bothers me, everywhere he goes for the rest of his school that piece of paper is going to go along with him and they're going to read that and think that of him.' Well then I became the mom, and I said, 'I know exactly how you feel, and I did that same thing when we got my son's reports. Those numbers mean no more to me than they mean to you and the child is what's important.' I'm sure if I hadn't lived through what I've lived I could not have done that.

Helen reflected on how her perspectives changed after adopting two daughters and becoming a parent of children with special needs:

So as things got really really different with the girls, as they got used to us and the honeymoon was over and more and more disabilities were becoming more evident, I began to think 'I'm not dealing with this very well'. It's quite a humbling experience. And that really changed my perspectives when I interviewed the parents. Like when you're talking, having parent conferences, discussing challenges with kids, you become more of a listener and less of a director.

Angela also showed how she uses her lived experiences as a mother when working with parents who bring their children to her school:

I have lots of pictures of Crystal on and around my desk area, family portraits and other ones. I find that when I tell parents that I know, I get it, they can see that I mean it.

Bonnie spoke of how her own experiences did help her to be able to establish good working relationships with the parents of the children she taught:

I remember my first year of teaching, in one of my kindergarten classes I had this little girl who was deaf. . .sorry, had a hearing impairment. The school arranged for her mother to come to class and kind of like be her aide, like signing and stuff. I felt really intimidated by having this mom in the classroom all the time. It really rattled me and I didn't know how to relate to her because I felt like she was judging me. I labeled her as one of those overprotective moms who hadn't really accepted her daughter's disability. . . Anyway, I guess it would have been four years later, yeah, it was maybe the year after they had confirmed Adam's CP, this little girl turns up in my classroom in another school, except she'd had a cochlear implant so she didn't have someone to sign for her . . .I mean she still signed, but I used the AP microphone . . .anyway. . . When I met her mom I apologized to her because I felt like I had treated her really badly that first year. I told her about Adam and we spent a lot of time talking over the whole school year. . . I think everything I know about working with parents started by sharing stories with that mom.

Claire did not share stories about any particular interactions with parents, but rather she talked a lot about how much she had grown to appreciate other parents of children with special needs. "Pretty much all of Christine's school teachers have been good at listening to me and not looking at me weird when I suggest certain ideas for goals. . .I try to be that kind of teacher for the parents I work with".

I continued to draw out the stories that reflected to me the values and beliefs these women had developed as teachers, in relation to parents, as a result of their lived experiences.

Bea spoke at length about what she felt was important to her work in regard to parents. She talked about how she kept communication lines open, but not in the traditional way. She said she approached everything from the point of view of how she would have wanted to hear things about her son. As such, she talked about how she used the traditional forms of communication in alternative ways.

On report cards:

One thing I think is really important is how I do paperwork. It's way different and I know for an absolute fact that it's based on my experiences with Simon. Report cards are so base for regular kids and I think they should be thrown out for kids with special needs. I tell the parents that, right away. I tell them, the mark I've been told to put in is a C because it's not grade level and everything is modified and whatever, so I say, just ignore that part of it, don't read it, read my little computer comments for what its worth because that's what I get to pick from. But here's my nine page overview of what your child has done over the past three months. Read this and know that this is what your child has done.

On communication books:

If I did not have a child with special needs, I would have no clue what this communication book was about and simply write 'good day'. If there was something going wrong then I would write the problem and that's what I totally don't do because I think that's exactly what parents don't need. . .to get a little note that says your child had a bad day. I mean you can do that if you've done a hundred 'your child's had an awesome day and did you know the neatest thing that happened today' or 'My God you should have seen the story he wrote' you know all those kinds of things, then as a parent

you can handle the note that says ‘You know he had a really tough day today’, and then say what it was.

On parent conferences:

In most of my own conferences I always felt the teacher was there to sort of give the bad news so I work very hard to become support for mom. Like where you sit and how you talk and move. I’m sure I instinctively do it because of the experience of having gone through that y’know, where everyone sits on end of the table and you sit on the other.

Likewise, Helen acknowledges that her first experience of becoming a mother had a “blatant and profound change” on her teaching. In her words she became gentler, more receptive, she laughed more. Yet she also reflected how becoming a mother of children with special needs transformed her in additional ways:

. . .when these other two came in, and then them having special needs, my relationship with parents became more of a bonding relationship. It was less of a teacher/parent relationship and more of a ‘we’re in this together.’

However, Helen’s expectations of how she interacts and communicates with the parents of the children she teaches was again greatly influenced by the challenges her daughters presented to her in her day to day home life. She noted how she became more receptive to the parent perspective as a parent rather than as the teacher:

I’m far more receptive to the dynamic of what’s going on, the struggles that are going on, the psychological mental play that goes on between these kids with a disability and that parent. I’m much quicker to get on the phone and say ‘What happened last night’ like, tell me what’s going on in the home. I’m far more interested in the dynamic of what’s

happening for the child, rather than just taking a situation, an incident and dealing with that incident.

Helen claims she grew to become overtly aware of the family within the context of her relationships with parents because of the events that were happening in her own family:

I know what that is like, what it can be like, and what happens with the dynamics between husband and wife, like it isn't just kids and parents. There's many cogs to that that trying (*sic*) . . .there is always one person who is always trying to keep it all together. It might be dad, it might be mom. . . just to save the sanity and the mental health of that person, because those people don't take the time for themselves because they're so busy trying to keep everyone else together. I think it because I've been there and I know that that I'm far more receptive to those parents when they come in. It's actually a dynamic that I listen for in those IPP meetings. Who is it that needs to be sent the 'You're okay' card , the 'Keep it up' card.

Finally, Helen spoke of how her current role as an administrator also meant that she not only forged relationships with parents, but also was responsible for supporting the growth of relationships between parents and the teachers on her staff:

Teachers will get mad at me. Mad at me?, no mad with me. They'll say, 'I don't agree with this, this is the home's responsibility' or 'No we're not going to do this' and I'm thinking, 'No' and I'll say that we're part of a team. 'No, they (parents) can't do that, just trust me, they are not able to do that right now. Maybe later, but right now, they can't do that. Right now they can't deal with homework, don't send homework home.' and they'll ask 'Well then when are they (the students) supposed to get it done?' and I'll say 'No,

what can you do differently so that they can get it done?' There's always a different way to get it done.

Claire, who has only fairly recently returned to teaching after spending an extended time away from the profession in order to accommodate her daughters special needs discovered this:

I used to pity them, yeah, I think the best word would be pity, I mean, I was always, always one of those people that would sit across from a mom or the parents and think there was no way I could do that, no way. You know, now that I'm doing it, you know, its kind of like a weight lifted, or that dead horse in the living room thing is gone. I can sit and connect with the parents because I know what its like.

She too, shared with me how her views on tools such as IPPs and communication books had changed:

I remember I had a student in one of my first classes who needed an IPP. The school also wanted me to write in a communication book everyday. It was just so much more work for me . . . I saw it as just an extra burden. But when Christine started school, I remember, because I always love to hear my kids tell me about their day . . . especially when they were little, but of course Christine couldn't, that communication book was the very first thing I would pull out of her bag. I couldn't wait to read what she had done. Since I've gone back to school, I remember that feeling. . . I've had the same little guy in my class for two years now, some teachers get their aides to write in the communication book, but I think about what he would want to tell mom when I do it.

For Angela, a teacher who had spent time teaching young children with Down Syndrome, sharing something in common with the parents of the children she taught was, as she remembers, both a blessing and a bit of a curse. She spoke of her reactions when she and her husband first

found out that their fourth child would be born with Down Syndrome. “I took a short leave of absence from the school. I couldn’t look them (students) in the eye”. However, as her story unfolded, she spoke with glowing pride of being part of a community that she felt she had always thought she took part in (as a teacher) but soon realized she had only stood on the sidelines:

Before Crystal was born I thought I understood parent’s concerns because I worked with their children everyday, I spent time teaching moms about working with their children, I thought I got it . . .but it was kind of like being the coach of a team, you can tell the players what to do, but you don’t play the game. Now that I’m a player too, I think I’m also a much better coach (laughs).

Finally, I returned to Bonnie’s stories of how she had left the classroom in favor of a new position as a home/school liaison. In her interview, I had been interested in her evolution from classroom teacher to home/school liaison worker simply because I wondered how she had felt she grew into this role. What influences had shaped her philosophies, and for whom did she feel most beholden to in regard to advocating? Did she feel she was a better advocate for parents with the school, or a better advocate for the school with the family? At first she couldn’t answer for me and she requested that I ask her again at our next interview. I did:

It’s really weird that I couldn’t give you an answer last time . . .really bothered me. But then I thought about it and realized that I kind of grew into these values like while Adam grew. Hmmm, maybe that doesn’t sound right. Lets see, here’s how it goes . . .when I had Adam and went back to work, I was committed to helping parents work with their children. My big idea was, I’m a teacher, if I can teach the child then I should be able to teach the parent. So I would send home ideas and strategies for the parents to use with their kids at home y’know?. I thought that’s what parents needed. But as Adam grew up .

. .because you know, when their babies everything seems so much easier right? As he grew, came to school, all that, I started to feel, whoa, I teach all day, and now I need to fight with my own child to teach him, right? It was too much, I just wanted to be mom when he was home . . .he knew I was a teacher in the school even though he was never in my class, so I didn't want to be the teacher at home. That was really what I learned from Lisa's mom (little girl with hearing impairment) too. She told me how hard it was for her to come to that kindergarten class every day. That she had to get childcare for Lisa's little sister and everything . . .It was like a lightning bolt for me, because I started to wonder if these parents who worked all day would rather come home and be parents to their kids rather than be teachers.

Bonnie had gone on, talking about striking a balance, she felt it was her job to equally represent both parents and teachers in her new position:

Parents want those teaching strategies and ideas, they ask for them and love to tell me when they work, but they also want teachers to know how hectic their lives can be. I sure know what that's like. I've been doing that all Adam's life and that's what I try to do now, give parents tools, but also listen to how they can or cannot use those tools.

Clearly defined boundaries.

In contrast to Bateson's view, Freud's (1952) view of clearly defined borders between the personal and the professional seemed to underscore how the other three women in my study approached their relationships with parents.

Pat, in particular, was very clear in her beliefs that there were distinct boundaries between what she had experienced as a mother, and what the parents of the children with special needs in her school were experiencing. Also an administrator, she too was responsible for providing

insight into how the teachers on her staff should engage in parent/teacher relationships.

However, her advice to them was very different from Helen's:

I will suggest to a teacher that a parent might be feeling a certain way, but it is never based on a personal feeling, to try and layer my experiences onto someone else would be highly unprofessional.

Margaret's responses reflected a similar attitude of maintaining objectivity in her parent/teacher relationships. However, her reluctance to not be forthcoming with the parents of the students she taught also seemed to be a protective response:

I don't tell parents that Billy went through the same program. I mean, some of them already know, but I don't reveal it, if they find out I don't deny it, but I don't reveal it. I believe in this program, and Billy was a success in it, but some parents come and say, well if your son did well in it then so should mine. I can't work with those kinds of expectations.

Joanne indicated that she too rarely, if ever, informed the parents of the children whom she taught about her own children. She seemed rather baffled at the notion that other teachers would reveal so much of their personal life in their professional contacts. "I've never taught at their schools . . . I don't go by their father's name so it's never come up".

Both Pat and Joanne also seemed to rely more heavily on their knowledge as teachers, who also happened to be mothers of children with special needs, to inform how they related to the parents of the children they taught. They both did, actually, draw on their personal experiences, but in a more narrowly defined way. Joanne was committed to the idea (like Bonnie's earlier position) that sending teaching information home for parents was the key to supporting them:

I provide lots of support to these parents. Give them lots of information about how to sit and read with their child, even have a small resource library about teaching literacy that parents can access. Some parents are great, they jump right in and soak it all up, and some parents don't seem to care much. They have different priorities I guess.

When I suggested to Joanne that some parent's priorities might simply be to be parents to their children rather than teachers, she responded rather curtly that parents then shouldn't expect teachers to do all the work.

Pat, also made a comment that seemed to reflect the same sentiment. "These parents come in and expect inclusion, like it's their right, but they aren't committed to working with the teacher to make it work, they just expect the teacher to do it all". She then went on to explain how she had worked very diligently with her son's teachers, that she and her husband were "committed to the hard work of making it happen". When I reminded her that she had already pointed out the good relationship she held with David's teachers was an asset, she agreed that that might be a drawback for some parents, but she offered no further thoughts on that subject.

All three of these women seemed to, in different ways, work to find ways to distance themselves from their own experiences as mothers in order to maintain the objectivity they believed was important in professional relationships with the parents of the student they taught. Pat, in her endeavor to be less subjective, more open to the individual experience of each parent, seemed to instead, be divorcing herself from some of the experiences she recognized from her own life. But, in fact, in the narrow dimension she drew around how she had defined success with her son, she was, perhaps, being more subjective than she realized in that she seemed very focused on what the theory of inclusion represents rather than what it can be. Her apparent reluctance to consider the benefits of support groups and organizations appeared to be her

choice, and although I wondered if she considered if it was her son's choice also, I felt it inappropriate to ask.

Margaret had found self-disclosing her personal experiences as a mother seemed to place undue pressure on her from parents who might come to expect the same success for their own children. I asked her if she feared this might become a reflection of her efficacy as a teacher. She replied that although she was confident in her own teaching skills, she did not like to set herself up to be perceived as a "failure" in the eyes of the parents. Finally, Joanne's take on home/school relationships seemed to reflect the "banking" philosophy proposed by Freire(1981). Her position that success for the child is dependent on how much information she can provide for them, seemed to also extend beyond the student and include their parents as well.

Reflecting on my findings

The emotions that Kubler-Ross (1968) and others have identified in their models of grief were found within the stories of the women in this study. However, they were experienced in different ways, at different times and as a result of varying circumstances.

Where the most common threads were located was in the stories of transformation, from women, to mothers, to mothers of children with special needs and as teachers. Yet still, these transformations were not linear or progressive, but rather reflexive and cyclical.

Therefore, although all eight women's transcripts verified to me a reflective approach to their lives and work, not all of the women followed the same process in being reflective.

As I said in chapter 2, this research was meant to explore the internal relationships within mothers who teach and the external relationships they build with parents. I wanted to gain a better understanding of how they construct meaning in their lives, both as mothers of children

with special needs and as teachers. I wanted to understand how, or if, the experiences from one life informed the other.

When referring to how women construct meaning in their lives, Heilbrun (1988) refers to the quest plot (which she identifies as a masculine trait). She calls the quest plot the action of setting and attaining goals that ultimately become the very definition of moving forward and building meaning to a life. In contrast, she claims, women who strive to pursue the same masculine types of goals or quests live in “storyless times”, (p.48) not paying attention to the already emerging story of their lives that serves to inform and enrich their already existing accomplishments.

For the most part, I found no evidence of women who might be considered solely focused on professional goal attainment to define their lives. Rather, all eight women ascribed more to Bateson’s (1994) view of the multi-tasking woman. Furthermore, since I was applying a feminist method to my data collection (Oakely 1988) but not feminist methodology to the analysis, I chose not to study power imbalances from the masculine/feminine perspective or the presence of social injustice or oppression found therein. Therefore, although my literature review demonstrates the presence of power imbalances between parents and teachers (not gender specific), the focus of this study was to consider if shared personal experiences amongst women could reduce that power imbalance in the professional field. It was not my intention to label any of these women as being anything less than truly committed mothers and teachers. None of the women I interviewed appeared to be unaware of their history, or unresponsive to their experiences. None of them seemed to be living a storyless existence. What I did realize was that not all the women in this study seemed to be as open to letting the experiences of their lives cross over each other. Even Pat, who seemed to draw the greatest boundaries around her professional

and personal lives, was aware and responsive to her history, her choices to remain as completely objective as possible, in her professional life, was done purposefully and with thoughtful reflection. How she approached her life, and my interviews, was perhaps most telling when she suggested to me that she might feel more comfortable completing a questionnaire or survey in our second interview “rather than just talking”.

What I also discovered was that despite Oakley’s referral to the equal or flattened relationship that develops between two women who share their stories, Brayton’s (1997) and Kelly, Burton and Reagon’s (1994) critiques were also evident in my interviews. The sense of a flat or equal relationship was something I attempted to create by sharing a little of my own experiences as a woman, a mother of children with special needs and as a teacher, but it was not always extended back to me. I found that some women seemed to put on their teaching hat and assume their teacher role during our interview. They tried to think ahead of my questions and give me the answers that they thought I might be looking for rather than simply reflecting on their experiences and openly sharing them with me. They seemed to assume what could be considered the more powerful teacher role in response to what they perceived as my power filled position as interviewer. As such, a few of the women I interviewed preceeded their responses to my questions with statements like “I think this is what you are looking for”, “Here’s the part that might be of help for you”. or “I think this is a story that will work you’re your research”.

In considering why some women seemed to have adopted this stance, I wondered if they actually felt more powerful within their teacher role, or if it simply represented the role of storyteller that so many mothers of children with special needs become with the professionals in the lives of their children. I reflected on how I had presented myself to these women and if they might have considered me just one more professional wanting to hear their stories. In turn, it

occurred to me that I had not actually directly stated what I had planned to do with my findings from this study. I had prefaced myself at the onset of each relationship by explaining what my personal thoughts and feeling were that had led me to this question, but I had not articulated what I ultimately planned to do with my results. As such, I considered if some of the women had assumed that I required specific data in order to better generalize my findings to other mothers and teachers who were not included.

I also began to consider the notion of what kind of knowing came first in their lives and if the length of time each woman possessed a certain kind of knowledge meant she gave it precedence over the other. I wondered if, for some women, the knowledge they had acquired by formal means through the process of a quest (education degree) was more valuable to them than the knowledge they had acquired through living their lives as mothers. As I returned again to my beginning assumption that teachers who are mothers of children with special needs might have the tools to be more successful in their professional parent/teacher relationships, I reflected on what value the women in this study placed on the different types of knowledge they had.

Knowing and Knowledge

Hiles (2001) reports that Polyani in his theories on tacit knowing originally used the terms knowing and knowledge interchangeably, but eventually referred to the word knowing as a verb and the term knowledge as a noun. I found that in *Tacit Dimensions*, Polyani (1967) did not ascribe greater value to one over the other, but considered the development of knowing as being dynamic, an action oriented process and knowledge as being more static and outcome oriented.

In using Polyani's notion of knowing as more of a process and knowledge as being more of an outcome, I again reflected on Heilbrun's (1988) observations of goal attainment and acknowledgement of lived experiences. I had not found, within the narratives, anything that

might suggest to me that any woman overtly placed her teacher acquired knowledge above her current level of knowledge as a mother. Therefore, I thought it would be interesting to look at some of the dynamics of the interviews that did not necessarily involve their narratives.

As stated earlier, as a strategy for developing an equal relationship, I invited each woman to choose the setting for our interviews and to choose which part of her life (personal or professional) she wished to begin our interviews. Because I conducted these interviews from the beginning of June to the end of September 2005, some of our meetings had to be held in settings away from school. However, the three women I identified as Pat, Joanne and Margaret all chose to meet me in their workplaces. All five of the other women set up both our initial and follow up meetings outside of school, primarily in their homes, even before school had let out for the summer and after they returned in the fall.

Five of the eight women began our interviews by reflecting on their professional practice. Included in those five, again, were Pat, Joanne and Margaret. Helen and Bea also began our interviews with their professional lives. Helen indicated to me that since she was in the process of year-end IPP meetings she had become very self aware of her interactions with parents in anticipation of our interviews and was eager to share her reflections. Bea and Joanne both made reference to their year-end reporting and although neither Margaret nor Pat gave any indication as to the motivation behind their opening topic, I considered the fact that their choice of meeting place (classroom and school office) might have influenced their thoughts.

I then looked for any indication in my notes that might provide me with insights into how each woman responded to my questions across the two aspects of their lives(a) any drastic change in tone or inflection, (b) their non-verbals, and (c) what questions they seemed to evade.

Bea and Bonnie were clearly excited and animated about their new professional experiences. Although their voices and body language were consistent with the pride a mother uses when referring to her child, some of the stories about diagnosis and professional interactions took on more of a rote tone in the discussion of their personal lives. This seemed to fit with the fact that both women were involved in relatively new career directions and had also been exposed to rather extensive treatment programs for their children over a long period.

In Angela's interviews I found constant referrals to her position as a mother in both our interviews. Although I never met her daughter, she showed me numerous pictures of her in family situations and in her school setting. She seemed almost in wonder and amazement of the fact that she had given birth to a child with Down Syndrome after spending significant time teaching children with Down Syndrome. I observed that she seemed to speak of her daughter, her work as a teacher and her involvement with a parent organization that supports families with children born with Down Syndrome with equal dedication and passion.

Helen and Pat both had an air of authority and confidence in their responses about both their professional and personal lives. Rarely did either woman pause or take any extended time to respond to any new question I posed. Both women made reference to theoretical research that informed their professional practice (primarily around inclusion) and their choices for their children. I attributed this sense to the fact that both women, as administrators, had advanced in their professions and were accustomed to being forthcoming in their responses. As an extension of the concept of advancement in their careers, both women also were the only participants, in the study, to hold graduate degrees.

This sense of authority fit well with Helen who seemed to easily move between the experiences of her personal and professional life, however, it was a bit of a surprise to me that

Pat showed the same type of confidence in both interviews. As someone who had appeared to draw broad boundaries between her two lives, she became the first person about whom I reflected whether she was actually not as objective as she claimed to be in reference to how she drew on what she knew as a teacher in mothering her son. It was at this point that I also began to, again, revisit my own bias toward the constructivist view and how that might be influencing how I examined the women in this study who seemed to hold a different philosophy. I became troubled by the fact that Pat's assuredness had been a surprise to me so I went back to her transcripts, in particular, but also Margaret and Joanne's to ensure that my interpretations of their narratives were accurately represented in this study and were not evolving into value based judgments on my part.

Still, I found that Margaret and Joanne seemed to relate the stories from both aspects of their lives with similar tone and body expressions. I did not note any of the dynamic changes in their attitudes or demeanor across the interview topics that I had recorded with some of the others. Although it must be said that Joanne met me for an extended time and covered both aspects of her life in one meeting, which could explain this observation, she also revealed to me that she worked with student teachers and had answered many questions, like mine, for them. I asked if she had revealed, in those conversations, the fact that her own children had learning challenges and she admitted that occasionally she did. "It depends on the nature of their questions, I don't do it to give myself credibility, if that's what you're thinking, but sometimes it does come up". In Margaret I recognized the same tone of a woman who had repeatedly told her personal story that I had heard with Bea and Bonnie. Still, as opposed to our first interview, where she had easily spoken at length about her professional position, I sensed an initial reluctance as she began to tell of her personal experiences. I found that she quickly recited to me

the numerous difficulties and challenges she had experienced with her son and seemed less willing to talk about his successes. It was also Margaret and Joanne who had seemed to consider and chose their stories based on what they assumed I wanted to know. Considering that Margaret's approach to telling her personal story was not unfamiliar to me, I recognized the parent strategy of only giving the information that you feel the professional wants or needs to hear, therefore, it also occurred to me that both Margaret and Joanne had assumed I would use my findings in a different way than I had intended to.

In Claire's interviews I have lots of notes about the barrage of questions she posed to me, throughout both interviews, about the choices I'd made in both my professional and personal life. As such, even though I constantly remained aware of the fact that my data collection was intended to be an interview and not a conversation, which Oakley (1988) points out can be a challenge in interviewing women, from that perspective, Claire's interviews became the biggest challenge for me to conduct. Although she readily recited to me the story of Christine's birth and subsequent accomplishments with that same tone that I knew and had seen in previous interviews, she seemed to be still questioning how to make sense of it all. The difference in her tone and body language between the two interviews was quite decisive and although I considered the possibility of it simply a reflection of two different days, I also feel it was part of her process. She readily shared with me that although she loved teaching as a profession, she was unsure if she was as devoted as she once had been. She informed me that she felt she was at, "a very transitional time . . . unsure of a whole lot of choices".

As I reflected on how each of these women had represented themselves not just in what they said but how they said it, the notion of value placement in terms of knowledge began to sit uncomfortably with me. I could not ascertain or conclude, through my own bracketing, if any of

these women actually appeared to place greater value on one type of knowledge over the other of if they simply drew from one type to inform the other. I considered if each of these women viewed one type of experiences as ongoing, in process, the development of knowing, and the other experiences as grounded in an already achieved type of knowledge, but my immersion in their stories didn't reveal anything close to being conclusive or more importantly, enlightening to me in that regard. I tried to immerse myself in the whole masculine/feminine dichotomy but I could not rationalize or internalize it to what I felt I needed to understand. There just always seemed to be alternate possibilities for why a woman might have acted or said something a certain way. Therefore, I decided to consider the concept of knowing and knowledge from another perspective, a woman's perspective.

Woman's Ways Of Knowing

In looking at how women perceive themselves and approach the world, Belenky, Clinch, Goldberger and Tarulet (1997) developed five theoretical categories for how women construct and apply meaning in their lives. Of these five categories, none of the women in this study seemed to fit into any of the first three; (a) Silence: where a woman blindly follows authority, sticks with stereotypes and is challenged to define herself. (b) Received Knowledge: where she listens and is informed by the opinions of others but does not internalize them to herself. (c) Subjective Knowledge: where she acknowledges her own views yet continues to act according to others views.

What I did find is that all the women seemed to fall somewhere within the final two categories, either within Procedural Knowledge or Constructed Knowledge.

The authors of this theory further divided the fourth category of procedural knowledge into two sub-categories, connected knowing and separate knowing. This is where I found it easiest to begin to understand the approaches the eight women in my study took to their lives.

Belenky, et al. (1997) describe women who follow a separate knowing style as being highly conventional, driven to excel and to conform to certain expectations. Contrarily, they also describe them as violating non-conventional feminine stereotypes, “Separate knowers refuse to play the conventional female role, choosing instead to play a game that has belonged traditionally to boys – the game of impersonal reason” (p. 104). For women like Pat, Joanne and to a lesser extent Margaret, the idea of seeing themselves in charge, purveyors of information rather than support may in part be a reflection of their teaching positions, as both Pat and Margaret taught in higher level schools, but I also saw it as a response to how they approached life. All three women seemed to emanate a disdain for “mothering” their students or “sugar-coating” (Margaret) the information they gave to parents. All three also seemed to be fairly questioning, distrustful or perhaps defensive about themselves or their profession in relation to parents. Belenky, et al. (1997) state that at the heart of separate knowing is critical thinking, they also quote Elbow (1973) who says that the separate knower is an objective observer who often plays, “the doubting game” (p.104).

Evidence of the doubting game that Pat and Joanne play was located within their responses to our discussion on their philosophies for working with parents:

I rarely expect much from my home reading programs, I set them up hoping they’ll be implemented, but I know that most of the time they won’t. (Joanne)

I don’t put much weight in what a kid’s parents say they’ll do, I generally wait to see if they’ll do it. (Pat)

In addition, Belenky et al. say that the separate knower listens more heavily to the voice of reason in the name of maintaining their objectivity. For Margaret, Pat and Joanne, remaining objective with students and parents alike seemed to define their professional practice.

I don't tell parents how well Billy or any other students did in the program, their success shouldn't have anything to do with how well their child may or may not do. (Margaret)

I can suggest to a teacher how the parents might be feeling, but I would never project my own thoughts or experiences onto that parent . . .its my job to remain objective. (Pat)

I give parents home reading programs, but I don't ask them about them anymore. . .I put more trust in the results of the reading assessments. (Joanne)

In contrast, Belenky, et al. (1997) described an alternative way of using procedural knowledge where a woman makes sense of her surroundings through what they described as connected knowledge:

Connected knowing builds on the subjectivists conviction that the most trustworthy knowledge comes from personal experience rather than the pronouncements of authorities. Connected knowers develop procedures for gaining access to other people's knowledge. At the heart of these procedures is the capacity for empathy. (p.113)

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule go on to again quote Elbow in saying that to be a connected knower one needs to play "the believing game"(p.104). Although Joanne's comment about trust and reading assessments could be interpreted in her belief in standardized testing, in terms of relationships with parents, I located evidence of the believing game being played through relationship building rather than relying on standardized outcome measures:

I sat with this mother . . . I didn't know what it was like to be in that situation, not exactly that situation, but I imagined what I would think about for Simon if I knew I was dying.

(Bea)

I had this mother in an interview one time, she started telling me what her evenings usually looked like . . . she told me how her husband worked up north so he wasn't home a lot. . . and there she was with five kids, three of them are in our school and all of them have IPPs. I tried to think about what that might be like . . . (Claire)

When families tell me they need help . . . that they are in crisis, I believe them. Its hard for families to admit that so if you doubt them you'll lose them. (Bonnie)

I know what its like to have a kid who's perception of something that happened is whacked . . . or not exactly how it really was. I call the parents and get their end of it too.

(Helen)

I always tried to listen to moms, like when they'd talk about their kids . . . I was a mom too so I'd think about things like "what if that was my baby" now I really believe them because it is my baby . . . I won't say I always agree with them, but I can imagine how they might be looking at things (Angela)

Taking the perspective that all the women follow either a separate or a connected way of knowing as opposed to a goal oriented type of knowledge versus a process type of knowing allowed me to step back from my own value judgments of what kind of knowledge was important. I began to understand how very different separate knowing is from a masculine (Heilbrun, 1988) or outcome (Polyani, 1968) viewpoint. Heilbrun typifies the masculine perspective by suggesting that, within that mindset, points of view need to be attacked or

defended, that positions need to be proven and others should be converted in order for one argument to prevail. Conversely, according to *Women's Ways of Knowing*:

As is in all procedural knowing it is the form rather than the content of knowing that is central. Separate knowers learn through explicit formal instruction . . . connected knowers learn through empathy". (p.115)

In reflecting on this, I found that it was not necessarily a value based decision these women consciously chose to either draw from their wellspring of knowledge as mothers to inform their teaching or vice versa, but rather it was simply the way each woman made sense of her world, how she constructed meaning from her experiences.

Still Not Satisfied

As neatly as *Women's Ways of Knowing* theory seemed to fit with the data I had collected, I was still troubled by the fact that I seemed to be rejecting professionalized models that categorized how parents deal with their children with special needs, but then was applying a theoretical model to how women make sense of what they know. I wasn't solely satisfied that I had explored all the possibilities in the transcripts.

So I considered how Goodman's (1980) types of adaptation were represented amongst the eight stories. I wanted to know if the type of adaptation each woman had followed was reflected in her philosophies for interacting with parents.

In reference to adaptation, it appeared to me that all eight women were communicating to me, at present, a sense of normalization with their family lives. I acknowledged that fact that Seligman and Darling (1997) might attribute this adaptation to the opportunity structure within the Calgary region (all eight women were accessing services, to various degrees), however, I also

located evidence that within the process of achieving normalization, some women had adopted different styles in their process of achieving normalization in their families.

Only Bea and Bonnie indicated to me that they had taken on the crusadership role by creating and/or leading programs that could better meet the needs of their child. Bonnie mentioned that she had attempted to involve herself on the board of Adam's early intervention program, as a way to "stay involved with his program", however, she confessed that the demands of working full time and being a single mother had made it impossible for her to continue. Bea's work as a volunteer and as a educational assistant both originated from her desire to make sure Simon's needs were met in school. But she also took on the crusadership role outside of school by initiating a family-centered agency (that remains active today) to meet the needs of families who have children with autism, "We did it because STA couldn't give us the kind of information we wanted".

To a certain extent all eight women, by virtue of their profession, fit into the altruist adaptation. However, how they had adapted as altruists seemed to be reflected in their professional practice. Bea and Bonnie had both made career changes, not to benefit their own children, but because of their involvement through their children. Bea also indicated that until she returned to university, she had devoted countless hours to the agency she had helped create, even after it had met all her family's needs. Helen, Angela and Margaret expressed that they advocated on behalf of their students because of what they believed was possible for them. Although both Pat and Joanne also indicated that they were strong advocates for their students, their statements seemed to suggest that their advocating was based more on a value system rather than for individual students. Pat made a comment about her commitment to inclusion and how far she was willing to go to achieve it for all students, but then checked herself by stating that

inclusion was not necessarily right for all kids. Joanne also gave me examples of what lengths she had taken to develop “family friendly reading programs” because “my heart believes that all kids can learn to read”, yet she too qualified her beliefs by mentioning how some families don’t seem to place the same value on literacy.

It was a little unclear to me just where Claire fit within these categories of adaptations. Her transcripts suggested to me that through access to the various services in the city, she had adapted a normalized family lifestyle. However, I also noted a certain sense of resignation to a lifestyle that she didn’t always seem totally comfortable with:

We can’t do . . . er . . . we don’t do a lot of the things we imagined we would do with our kids, we had always assumed we would travel . . . take them places like that. Christine’s health problems make it so that we can’t do that though . . . so we generally spend summers in the city. . . its okay though, its not like things were one way before she was born and then changed after. . . the kids don’t seem to miss it. . .

For everyone but Claire, their altruistic involvement as leaders and advocates for their children was reflected in how they approached their professional responsibilities. Bea, Bonnie, Angela, Margaret and Helen admitted that they had learned to advocate on behalf of students through their own experience advocating on behalf of their children. Pat and Joanne also advocated on behalf of children who were not their own, however, they both seemed to suggest that the values and beliefs that had driven their actions for their own children were more consistent with their professional beliefs about all children rather than a personal belief about their child. Finally, Helen and Margaret were both clear in pointing out that they also felt their ability to advocate on behalf of their own children was rooted in their professional experiences as teachers.

There was no indication in Claire's transcripts that her possible struggle to balance normalization with a sense of resignation was reflected in her professional work. Rather, she seemed to be quite surprised at how similar her experiences were with the parents of the students she taught, "They tell me the same things Patti, their children are nothing like mine and they still say the same things". Goodman had also suggested that parents who become resigned tend to isolate themselves, which also seemed to fit with Claire's recollections. "I didn't keep in touch with the neighbor ladies after she was born like I had when we first had Melissa, the house was always full of nurses and therapists and other people for Christine. . .they became the folks I had adult conversations with."

A Full Circle Moment

And yet, I still felt I had not quite considered all the aspects of how these women's stories could help me answer my question about the relationships they built with other parents of children with special needs. Then one day I was having a conversation with a colleague about this research. She was interested in what my conclusions would be. I shared with her how I seemed to have developed groupings of women that perhaps suggested differing perspectives to how they made sense of their lives. Her response took me back to the beginning of this study, "I wonder if that is their coping mechanism for dealing with the grief?" The little hairs went up on the back of my neck at her reference to grief and I became very defensive of myself and the women I had been interviewing.

I suddenly became very aware that the approach I took to bracketing myself had meant that I considered the story of my personal and professional lives as a ninth set of data. However, I was always very aware of how my experiences had created personal biases and assumptions about mothering children with special needs and working as a teacher with parents of students

with special needs. I had tried to be diligent in my efforts to not layer my process onto the stories of the other eight women. I remained aware that the very fact that I asked this particular question, and that I approached it from that specific position in itself, suggested both how I made sense of it and therein, a bias. Therefore, I considered how my own personal rejection of the professional theories that apply a grief model were perhaps more reflective of my own biases against such preset models and, therefore, a poor demonstration of bracketing myself out. I wondered how many of these women applied these professional models and personally identified with them.

Circling back to professional plans.

I have no doubt in my mind that my image of grief is completely informed by my experience with the actual loss of a child rather than simply the imaged loss of one. In considering the notion of grief and how it might play a role with each of these women, I discovered that I needed to be very careful about how I placed myself and my own perceptions in relation to the experiences of these women. It was not my place to judge whether or not they had grieved the loss of an imagined child, or as some might say, the loss of the dream. It was my intent to try to gain understanding of how their image of grief might influence their interactions with other parents.

Of the eight mothers I interviewed, only two shared with me experiences that mirrored my own, in terms of actually losing a child.

Claire indicated to me that she had experienced a late term miscarriage prior to her pregnancy with Christine. Although she claimed that she had an “uncomfortable sense that something was wrong” during Christine’s pregnancy, she brushed it off to the grief she still felt over the miscarriage. With the birth of her daughter, Claire felt she had little time to grieve the

loss of any imagined child. Christine's immediate, life-threatening condition and impending major surgery left little opportunity for Claire to feel anything but fear, worry and concern for her new daughter's future:

When she was born . . . they could get her breathing right then and they said "Oh we're just moving her over to do some suctioning" and I just said "I can't believe something could be really wrong here". And then they just totally took her out because they couldn't get her to breathe. Everything was happening fast and you know it was just like our world kind of caved in . . .there was just this blanket that descended upon us.

Her need to stay in the moment and never take anything for granted in regard to Christine's health and condition forced Claire to "never look at things like with a 'what she could have been' view. "If I had allowed myself to do that, I might never have come out".

For Helen, the sudden death of her teenage daughter brought forth feelings of anger and bitterness at a system she (Helen) felt had let her daughter and her family down. A strong believer in a stage theory that suggests parents do grieve the loss of their ideal child, Helen also acknowledged that a large part of that belief system was developed as a result of her daughter's death, "I found myself agonizing over all the things they could have done, or should have done to support her and us, things that might have kept her alive". She then says:

Later, I recognized those feelings in the parents of the kids, how they agonized over the fact that the kid they had wasn't the kid they thought they knew. It wasn't the same, not in the same way, but they went through those steps. They got angry, they dismissed me, they bargained with me to get them help but not to label them, they felt guilty and blamed everyone from here to there . . . all of that, it fits you know.

As for the other six women, Bea, Joanne, Bonnie and Margaret all indicated that they had felt (to some degree) more relieved that the diagnosis they received for their child was real and not just part of their imagination or mother's intuition. In telling stories about their experience receiving a diagnosis, all four indicated that they knew something was different with their child. The sense of loss over the imagined child was only a shadow behind the sense of relief, validation and access to help for their existing child just as Turnbull and Turnbull (1990) had suggested.

Both Pat and Angela indicated that they knew relatively well in advance that their children would have Down Syndrome. Although Angela acknowledged that she did experience a significant grief period upon learning of her baby's condition, she felt in many ways her grief was linked closer to her knowledge of how their lives would change (as opposed to a fear of the unknown). Conversely, Pat's responses seemed to suggest that she and her husband took the news of their son's condition in stride or covered any sense of grief with action. She indicated that they had educated themselves on Down Syndrome, talked to people and felt quite prepared even before their son was born, "Of course we felt sad, but we couldn't change it, so we just had to accept it".

It was not the intent of this study to prove or disprove whether these women had or had not experienced grief in regard to their child with special needs, but rather to discover how their personal experiences/responses and the development of their personal perceptions from those experiences/responses might influence their professional thinking. Nor was it my intention to prove or disprove the accuracy of professional models that are built around the grief model. As such, I attempted, for the moment, to remove the emotion from the event and simply consider

how having a child with special needs might be a critical incident in the lives of these women and how that might alter the experience.

Critical incidents.

Horn (1997) makes note of the importance of the critical incident and how one in particular changed her view on how she approached her research with abused women. She recalled how becoming triangulated in a series of incidents between a woman and her abusive husband changed her perception of how the women she was studying coped with their situation. I wondered if a similar type of triangulation between the woman as a teacher and a mother of a child with special needs with the parents of her students with special needs might be evident.

Theories that assess stress and coping mechanisms in individuals and families also acknowledge critical incidents as the initiator to the process. Hill's (1958) ABCX model and later McCubbin and Patterson's (1983) Double ABCX model each make note of a stressful or critical event that precedes a crisis. In both models, it is the existing resources and the perception of the event as being stressful that creates a sense of crisis and adaptations for coping with that crisis. Patterson's (1989) Family Adaptation and Adjustment Response (FAAR) model is also dependent on a critical event as an antecedent to adaptation and adjustment.

Critical incidents or events also have their place with mothers of children with special needs. Mothers can oftentimes recreate, with impressive detail, the pivotal moments in their child's life when, they received their child's diagnosis, learned news of their condition, or of their current level of performance or function. These critical moments often include a professional (physician, social worker, psychologist, therapist or teacher) and leave enduring marks, even wounds, on the parent who experiences them. How that event is perceived, what resources the parent already had access to (perhaps through their lived experiences) and how that

incident or set of events creates connections between who that parent is and how they interact with others created yet another question for me. I wondered if any of these women might have indicated the presence of wounds that would, in turn, have an impact on how they entered into their relationships with the parents of the children they taught.

I discovered that all eight women, indeed, told stories of critical incidents, in either in great detail, or just in passing from their personal lives, that seemed to have an impact on how they related professionally to other parents.

Bea's story involved the diagnostic testing of her son by a psychologist after he had already been diagnosed with autism:

I don't remember exactly what he said, just that it was bad, I remember him saying something about it being very bad . . .like "Do you realize just how bad this is?" Gary remembers . . .I don't remember this, but Gary says the psychologist even suggested that we consider putting him into an institution.

In later pieces of her transcript, Bea's commitment to making sure the parents of her students hear from about what their children can do as opposed to what they can't do seems to be reminiscent of her own memories:

All we ever got was what Simon did that was bad, or what he couldn't do that day . . .I never do that, if there is something a little negative that I have to talk with them about I always start off with something like "Do you know what he did today that was awesome?"

Helen stated that she felt many of the students who come to her school are there because of their parents' knowledge of her own personal experiences with the adoption system:

I know what its like. I remember how they were at us to sign. But they weren't honest with us, they didn't tell us everything, and then when we did sign they admitted that it was a possibility that the girls had been abused. They knew that was the one condition we had and they withheld that from us. . . Now, parents come to me and tell me how they're being pressured to sign and I tell them NO!

Claire recalls how many of her daughter's early physicians were unsupportive of her and her husband's decision to teach their daughter sign language:

The hospital wanted her in hearing aides. At that time they did not promote the use of sign language. So I think I ran into a lady there, a mom, who had come in with her daughter. She said that they used sign with our daughter and gave me the contact information for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Society. Still, I got nothing, no support, nothing, from the hospital. They wanted her in hearing aides, which we got fitted eventually, but they wouldn't support us on the use of ASL. I took my own sign language and paid for it at Churchill through the city, continuing education, and we continued our signing that way. Then, a friend of mine, who I had met when my daughter was a baby, she said to me, you know I used to teach deaf preschoolers. So when Christine was two she came to the house twice a week and she worked with Christine and myself on signing.

This experience seemed to inform her relationships with the parents of her students, "I never question the decisions a parent makes . . . I may not always agree with it, but I never question it".

I directly asked Angela about the pivotal moments with her daughter:

There are so many, one for sure, definitely, that first day when I came back to school after the amnio. I had been so worried, so scared, y'know, could I really do it? And I got so much support from the families at our school. . .they saved me, really they did. Funny because as a teacher I had thought I was doing so much to help them, and then they turn around and be the ones to help me . . .

Angela not only continues to teach at the same school, but also is actively involved in family programs for parents of children with Down Syndrome.

Bonnie cited her commitment to her new position, as a family liaison worker, as coming directly from her own frustrations with all the professionals in her life who insisted that she carry out programs on her son at home. "Teachers" she recalled "were the worst. They knew I was a teacher so they just assumed I'd want to teach him when we got home". Helen, also had told stories of how her strong insistence with teachers on her staff of being aware of how much homework parents could handle was based on her own experiences

Pat's decision not to divulge much about her private life made it difficult to discern any particular critical incident(s). Her reluctance to engage with me in a comfortable or mutual way became a constant source of self-examination for me. However, within her transcripts I located numerous referrals to the research she and her husband did prior to her son's birth, "He read everything he could get his hands on".. "I had never had a child with Down Syndrome in any of my classes, but I had many friends who had, I talked to them and we met parents through them". "By the time David arrived we were both prepared for him".. I also found passages where she had indicated how hard they worked at home on schoolwork with him in order to keep him included in his grade level classes. Therefore, her comment "Some parents just assume we'll do all the work". seemed to suggest to me that she felt that all parents could or even should adapt

their lifestyle in the same manner that she had. I questioned her on this statement, to which she denied that she felt parents should respond, in similar ways, however, she added “It takes hard work, I’m not sure all parents are willing to work that hard” then she paused and added “ Or aren’t ready to work that hard yet”.

Most of Joanne’s memories of critical incidents involved her recollections of when one or both of her children made important steps towards their reading progress. However, she also included her relief over the confirmation of their learning disability. In the retelling of her frustration with the administrator who had refused to assess her children, I sensed a tone of satisfaction, or validation in the confirmation of the label. When I carefully pressed her on this, she responded that she had felt both relieved and a bit vindicated, “She became someone I could blame”.

When I asked Joanne, later, about her beliefs about working with parents her memories of that moment seemed to be reflected in her response:

I try to frame everything in the positive. It’s hard to feel proud when you know your child is struggling, when you just get negative reports on their progress but have no way to know why. I try to give parents ideas they can use and positive information that they can celebrate with their child, and feel proud about because I think that label really scares them.

Margaret’s transcripts were full of stories that could be considered a string of critical moments. From the balance she maintained staying up all night with her adopted son, and still working by day, to her struggles with his emotional and behavioural challenges, she openly shared a great many pivotal events in their lives. Yet throughout her stories, I felt a common thread of no nonsense, common sense, a very straight ahead and don’t look back perspective.

This philosophy seemed to fit well with Margaret's acknowledgement that she rarely shared her experience as a parent herself with the parents of the students she taught. This was perhaps most evident in her quick ability to talk about her professional practice in the sense of what she does and hopes to do, in contrast with her initial reluctance to be reflective about her personal life. In addition, her comment, that since she works with young adults, her focus was on building relationships with them, "not babying them" and if the parents are supportive then it was a bonus, was also indicative of her straightforward style:

I'm clear about what our program can and cannot do for these kids and I don't hold back when I tell them that. If they're willing to work hard then we can be a success, but not all parents get that. If they're kid gets fired from the job we found for them they blame us. . . I focus on getting the kids through the program though, not their parents. . .By the time the kids get to me, they (parents) should be stepping back.

Finally I felt I had exhausted every possible avenue for understanding the stories each woman had shared with me. I felt confident that the lived experiences of each woman had influenced how they approach their profession. What is most interesting to learn was where their stories converged and diverged. I found myself asking if it is human nature or academic thinking to assume that common experiences beget common responses. Truly, all of the women involved in this study (including myself) know something of the complexities of raising a child or children with special needs. One might even consider those complexities, en masse, to represent a common or shared critical event or stressor, however, both Hill (1958) and McCubbin and Patterson (1983) have demonstrated that common stressors do not generate common responses. When I considered all the various points on the circle that I had taken to look at these women's stories, that point became my own critical incident. Still, from both Hill's and McCubbin and

Patterson's professional model perspective, anything outside a common response is generally considered maladaptive, or requires additional labels within a stage theory. And yet each of these women have found ways to apply their life knowledge, in either direction (personal to professional or professional to personal) in productive ways. Ways that differ from my own are not wrong, they most certainly are not misinformed, and most notably, as this work has shown me, they are not unaware of their past experiences. I have learned, quite simply, that the pieces of our past that we choose to retain and use to inform our future is different for each individual. Common experiences, common resources and common values do not . . . necessarily beget common responses. It increases the opportunities for shared perspectives, but it does not seem to guarantee it.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

When I originally shared my research question with a number of my teacher friends and colleagues, they were very excited about what my conclusions would be. Those who are not parents of children with special needs, but work in concert with the parents of their students with special needs, expressed an interest in my research. It was almost as though they felt I would be able to uncover insights into the parent mind that would enable them to connect with these parents on a deeper level. I might develop another professional method of understanding that they could then generalize across all parents. I didn't achieve such a formula, nor did I set out to create one. As such, I feel rather uncomfortable drawing conclusions to this study. Conclusions, in my mind, seem part of the positivist perspective that draws together findings and consolidates them into single truth-filled statements. Although, I repeatedly found myself falling back to a way of thinking that enticed me into creating dichotomies to which I could deduce conclusions, the lessons that I learned, the conclusions that I did achieve, came from my repeated purposeful rejection of that way of thinking.

Insights more than conclusions

In the process of working through the stories all eight women shared with me I've tried to find ways to slot this information into theoretical perspectives. My initial response was to follow Heilbrun's (1988) thinking and look at the feminist versus the masculine perspective and try to see if these women fell into either of those dichotomies (if they are indeed dichotomies of one another). However, although the feminist perspective does suggest a more reflective, response to lived experiences and to constructing meaning, I could not locate, to my satisfaction, whether or

not being reflective and responsive was limited to solely a woman's perspective, or a mother's viewpoint.

I was also interested in Goodman's (1980) work (cited in Seligman and Darling 1997) on the adapted roles that parents of children with special needs learn to play (crusadership, altruism, resignation) in regards to their children. Again, Seligman and Darling's interpretation of Goodman's work did not make reference to whether or not his study of parents was engendered, however, bearing in mind Heller and Factor's (1990) and Heller, Hsheish and Rowitz's (1997) findings, I felt it was appropriate to consider Goodman's work with parents in this study of mothers. Still, I found the image of the altruistic parent (one who acts on behalf of children who are not their own) could not be directly applied to these women teachers since the associations they made with parents would not necessarily have been done out of choice, but rather as part of their job description. At some point it occurred to me to go back and ask these teachers if any of them were actually uncomfortable teaching students with special needs (and ultimately working with their parents). However, I quickly rejected the idea as being possibly insulting and most likely the kind of question which I would not necessarily receive a truthful answer.

Still, in order to better understand my original question, how these personal relationships ultimately influence how a woman, as teacher, relates to the parents of the students with special needs whom she teaches, I needed to examine a couple of other possibilities. In considering how people know what they know, and what is considered knowledge, I began to question if any of these women actually valued one type of knowledge as mothers over their knowledge as teachers or vice versa. To accomplish this I applied Polyani's (1967) explanation of knowing as a process and knowledge as an outcome, by attempting to remove my own value judgments of each of these terms. However, I still could not find evidence that any of these women overtly placed a

higher value on one kind of knowledge over the other. In exploring the notion of how and what one knows, I returned back to the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1997) and their theories on women's ways of knowing

By looking at the transcripts with a view to ways of knowing, it became clearer to me how the various women in this study might have assigned priority, not to the different kinds of knowledge they possessed, but rather by the different way they organized that knowing in order to construct meaning for themselves. For the connected knowers such as Bea, Helen, Angela, Bonnie and Claire, the personal experiences as mothers of children with special needs seemed to become a rich resource which they drew from as teachers. As such, the relationships they developed with the parents of the students they taught were responsive to the needs of the parent. As teachers, these women appeared to remember their own experiences as mothers. They acknowledged both the good and the bad stories they had lived through and they worked to recreate or remove those experiences as teachers, for the benefit of the parents of their students.

For the women who seemed to follow a more separate knowing approach to procedural knowledge, rational thought and explicit formal understanding was the priority in developing relationships. This separateness was probably most notable in Margaret, Pat and Joanne's conscious choice to not divulge personal information or shared experiences with the parents of the students they taught. It also seemed to explain the more positivist approach that Pat wanted to take to our interviews through her request to complete a survey. It provided a good explanation for why Joanne seemed to rely on standardized testing to measure reading progress and it certainly provided a good foundation for Elbow's (1973) notion (in Belenky et al.) of "the doubting game" that each of these women applied to their relationships with parents.

In my literature review, I included research on the ethics of our practice as teachers. I considered this in context with Skritic's critique of the structure of school systems, and Sergiovanni's suggestions of how schools should be run. I also was deeply influenced by both Coombs (1982) and Parker (1998) whose writings had been the foundation for how I was taught to teach.

What makes a good teacher is a highly personal matter having to do with the teacher's personal system of perceptions or beliefs. (Coombs, 1982, p.3)

Good teaching cannot be reduced to a technique; good teaching comes from the identity and the integrity of the teacher. (Parker, 1998, p.2)

In my reflections on what I valued and believed about what makes a good teacher, or how a teacher practices her craft ethically, I had automatically assumed that both Coombs and Parker were stating that good ethical practice meant I must bring all of who I am as a person to my classroom everyday. Therefore, I assumed it would then mean that I should expect to bring all of whom I am to my interactions with parents. Since I am a woman, a wife, a mother who has lost a child and a mother of children with special needs, it makes sense to me that I would be able to draw on all of those aspects of myself in both my teaching and my parent/teacher relationships. However, through this study I've also realized that, in terms of placing myself within the findings of this study, I am an intensely connected knower. As such, being conscious of that, as part of who I am, also demands that I use that part of me in my practice.

What I had not considered, prior to this study, was that women who make sense of their world, who construct meaning, feel emotions and find ways to adjust and adapt through separate knowing must also acknowledge that part of themselves in their practice. For a woman whose

identity and integrity rises up from a more rationale, formal reflection of her lived experiences should also expect to bring that aspect of herself to her teaching practice.

It seems to me that the only risk that comes from bringing who one is as a separate knower to the practice of teaching is grounded in how our society is evolving. In general, we have become a society that values self-reflection and connectedness in our lives and between the lives we live. Especially in education, this shift from the clear boundaries between the personal and the professional that researchers such as Freud (1952) and Willard (1961) promoted seem to have fallen aside in favor of more interdependent life approach such as Coombs (1990), Bateson (1994) and Parker (1998) promote. Where the risk lies is in our own assumptions. Is it unethical practice for a teacher to maintain distance between who she is as a teacher and a mother if that is how she approaches meaning making, or is it simply unethical of us to view her practice that way?

Limitations

As this research was first constructed as my response to the mounting research that suggests parents of children with special needs are often dissatisfied with how their child's teacher responds to them, (Jowett & Baginsky,1988; Ryndak, Downing, Morrison & Williams, 1996; Fisher, Pumpian & Sax,1998; Garrick Duhaney & Salend, 2000; Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Brett 2002) it would have made good sense to interview some of the mothers who liaise with the women in this study. I did not include that as a parameter of this study and in hindsight I can see how it might make another interesting research question that would allow me to delve further into the didactic relationships that exist between parents and teachers. Nevertheless I have gained an uncompromising appreciation for the complexities of how women make sense of what

they know professionally and personally as teachers and as mothers of children with special needs.

Another limitation, inherently built in to this study, is the fact that the stories from eight women does not represent the stories of all women who are teachers and mothers of children with special needs. Although it was never my intention to suggest that the findings from this small data group could be inferred to a larger population, it might limit how those findings can be used.

A third possible limitation to my findings is the impressions each individual woman had of how my research would be used. I took overt steps to create and nurture an equal relationship with each woman in the interviews, however, how each woman responded to me was beyond my control. How each woman interpreted my questions, how she perceived my purpose and ultimately how she chose to engage with me during the interviews had significant bearing on what stories she may have chosen to share and how I interpreted them.

Final Thoughts – A Place to Stand

I began this study by asking if parent knowledge informed teacher knowing. In doing so I feel I layered on my own bias of a decidedly one sided set of values (and a then unknown insight into my own perspective) that parent knowledge should take precedence over teacher knowing. I presumed my own linear process (mother first then teacher) was the same process all women would follow even if the process itself was not linear for them.

And so we come to the final construct that *Women's Way of Knowing* promotes. Constructed knowledge marries both the separate and the connected aspects of procedural knowing into a form that integrates the subjectivity of the constructed thinker with the objectivity of the rationalistic thinker. In applying constructed knowing, a woman blends what she feels is

personally relevant and important and integrates that with what she has learned or responded to in others.

I believe that all of the women in this study were able to both look outside and inside themselves to construct a sense of knowing. They were able to choose what they felt was important to them, personally, (be it from a mother or a teacher perspective) and apply it in the way that best met their personal approach to constructing their meaning of being both a teacher and a mother of a child with special needs, be it either by separating out and isolating the various types of knowledge one has from each other, or by looking for connections between the various pieces of their lives.

So, does parent knowledge inform teacher knowing? Who really gets to be the expert in these relationships, the parent or the teacher? The dynamics of each relationship is influenced by a great many complex conditions and contexts. The individual definitions of what counts as knowing and what it means to have knowledge becomes part of those dynamics. The covert decisions between parent and teacher, of what might be given privilege becomes part of the dance between parents and teachers. I can imagine that within the didactic dynamics of a relationship between parents and teachers, there would also be parents whose ways of knowing fell in line with Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1997) theory. As such, mothers who construct meaning through connectedness would most likely achieve that sense of empowerment, that research and legislation seeks to generate, with teachers who bring who they are as mothers to the partnership and vice versa. Mothers as separate knowers would forge more effective relationships with rationale, formal thinking teachers. Perhaps the most unsuccessful relationships actually exist between parents and teachers whose ways of knowing differ. If so,

who within the relationship must be asked to change or might it be possible to gain insight into one's own self and the other and find common ground regardless of those differences?

Ulrich and Bauer (2003) consider the idea of mismatches in levels of awareness and their recognition in building better relationships in the conclusions to their study. Their suggestions for more successful partnerships included a deepened awareness of ourselves and the changes that occur that can advance our levels of awareness. Perhaps then, the highest ethical practice of caring as a teacher is through creation of the final level in *Women's Ways of Knowing*, constructed knowledge. Constructed knowledge acknowledges the procedural process of how we each individually make meaning in our lives and then asks us to balance that with how the person we are in relationship with, constructs their own meaning. In so doing, what we know as mothers of children with special needs and what we know as teachers ultimately informs each other.

When women accept the responsibility for evaluating and continually reevaluating their assumptions about knowledge, the attention and respect that they might have awarded to the expert is transformed. They appreciate expertise but back away from designating anyone an "expert" without qualifying themselves. True experts must reveal an appreciation for complexity and a sense of humility about their knowledge". (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule 1997, p.139)

Implications for the future

In thinking about how the insights I have gained, in the course of answering my research question, might effect how I move forward in my career, I am excited and a little troubled by my findings. It excites me that I have discovered a way to consider the different and diverse viewpoints that other teachers take in working with parents of students with special needs, how

they construct meaning in their lives and how they orient themselves in relation to that meaning. However, it troubles me that in the course of discovering a way to orient myself in relation to other teachers, I might have simply learned to apply yet another professional model. I suppose my own forthcoming challenge will be to find ways to use what I know about Belenky et al's theory to inform my own interactions rather than as a way to label and categorize the people within those interactions.

On that note, I also feel compelled to continue to explore my own struggles with the balance between the separate knower and the connected knower. I see myself as someone who can easily find meaning through social constructivist theory (which perhaps is why I found myself drawn to Belenky et al), however, I am continually fascinated by the arguments that lie between the scientific and naturalist approach to truth.

Within my academic career, I hope to be able to incorporate both of these aspects into my own teaching. Although it was never my intention to be able to generalize the stories of these eight women to other teachers who are mothers of children with special needs, I feel the wider insights I have gained about understanding others, learning to work together with others and being willing to work together even when you don't fully understand one another would be a great benefit to my own students who work with individuals with disabilities.

As an extension of this work, I think it would be intensely interesting to, in essence, turn the tables, and explore how parents of children with special needs position themselves in relation to their children's teachers. It seems to me that a significant number of studies have found that parents are dissatisfied with their parent/teacher relationships, but few have actually asked the question, why? I might want to consider how a mother's experiences with other professionals

effects her interactions with members of the teaching profession. Where she feel her responsibilities lie within the parent/teacher relationship and who she really feels is the “expert”.

Dance lessons

One of my favorite metaphors in helping the students whom I teach to appreciate the complexities of parent/professional relationships comes from Fialka and Mikus (1999) who liken it to a dance. In explaining their metaphor, this parent/professional writing team draws reference to a number of issues that need to be resolved in order for two people to be able to dance smoothly and comfortably with one another. Issues like whether or not they even want to dance together, whether or not they are listening to the same music, agreeing on what type of dance to do, the experience each one has in performing the agreed upon dance and finally making decisions on who will take the lead, and when. By extending their metaphor, they propose that once all those issues have been resolved there is no end to the possibilities of creativity that can be choreographed between the dance partners. I imagine what I have achieved, through this study, is a deeper understanding of that dance and the greater potential in teaching others how to perform it.

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APPENDIX A

April 15, 2005

Dear Colleague,

I am currently preparing to begin my research thesis in completion of a Masters of Science with the Graduate Division of Educational Research at the University of Calgary. The title of this project is **“How does parent knowledge inform teacher knowing?”**

In this project, I hope to share in an examination, with women, of how their experience of being a mother of a child with special needs informs how, as a teacher, they interact with the parents of the students they teach (in particular, those students who are identified with special needs).

I am currently recruiting women to participate in this study. My only two criteria for participation are:

- That she be a mother of a child with special needs – there are no restrictions on age of child or type of special needs.
- That she be a teacher who does currently, or who has recently (within two years) had direct interactions with the parents of the students in her class/school.

Participation in this study will require, at the most, approximately 6 hours of volunteer time consisting of 2 interviews with myself and review of the written transcripts of those interviews. The time frame of these interviews will occur between May and Oct of this year.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in taking part in this study, could you please forward a copy of this letter or my contact information on to her as soon as possible.

I thank you in advance for your consideration in this recruitment search.

Sincerely,

Patti DesJardine BCR, B.Ed

Home: 403-239-6067 cell: 403-399-4855
Bus: 403-440-6448
Email: padesar@ucalgary.ca

APPENDIX B

May 28, 2005

Dear _____,

Please consider the following letter as a formal invitation to take part, as a participant, in my thesis research towards the completion of a Master of Science with the Graduate Division of Educational Research at the University of Calgary.

The working title of this project is **“How does parent knowledge inform teacher knowing?”** In this work, I hope to explore both the personal experience of being a mother of a child with special needs and the experience of being a teacher of children who may or may not have identified special needs. In particular, I am interested in gaining a greater understanding of how, as a teacher, a woman uses her own history as the mother of a child with special needs, when she engages in home/school relationships with the parents/guardians of her students.

This research question is particularly relevant and personal to me. As I am also, both a mother of children with special needs and a teacher, I am most interested to learn from my peers and colleagues how they let their lives inform their work. As such, this research will be entered into in a highly reflective manner where you will be invited to consider and reconsider various aspects of both experiences (mother/teacher).

To that end, should you agree to participate, I will be planning to conduct two (2), one on one, audio taped interviews with you. Each interview should last approximately one hour. The period of time I hope to conduct these interviews is between June 2005 and Sept.2005. Following each interview a written transcript will be professionally prepared and delivered to you. I will be requesting that you review that transcript with two particular intentions; to verify the information found therein, both in the accuracy of the information itself, but also for the

authenticity of the tone and intent behind your statements. I would also be requesting that you make note of anything in the transcript that you may want to expand on in subsequent interview(s).

The themes my questions will be originally driven by two aspects, 1) your life history as a mother of a child with special needs, and 2) your values, beliefs and experiences as a teacher, in building and maintaining home/school relationships with the parents/guardians of those students in your class or school. Four guiding experiences will be visited and revisited throughout the research.

- Your personal experiences of being a mother of a child with special needs.
- Your specific personal experiences, as a mother, specifically within the education system
- Your personal experiences, as a teacher, within the education system.
- Your perception of how satisfied you feel the parents of the children you teach are with the parent/teacher relationships.

Please note that throughout process your identity will remain anonymous and confidential . If, at any time throughout the study, or on completion of the study, you choose to withdraw, you may do so. Should you chose to withdraw, any data collected up to that point will be destroyed (see next paragraph). As researcher, I also reserve the right to terminate your participation within the study. If this is necessary, I will be sure to debrief you on the reasons why.

All audio tapes of the interviews and all transcribed copies of the interviews will remain in a locked file drawer within my home residence (335 Hawkcliff Way N.W. Calgary). They will remain there for a period of three (3) years following the completion of the thesis (as per University of Calgary regulations).

Please review this information as well as the attached consent form, carefully, as although I would be deeply honored to have you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to commit to a personal time investment of approximately 6-8 hours (including the actual

interviews and transcription review). The donation of your time and effort must be completely voluntary and will not be remunerated.

If you have any further questions or comments regarding this project or your participation, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or my thesis supervisor at:

Patti DesJardine – 335 Hawkcliff Way N.W. Calgary, T3G 2W7

Home phone: 403-239-6067

Email: padesjar@ucalgary.ca

or

Dr. Anne Hughson – University of Calgary, Faculty of Education, Graduate Division of Educational Research, Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies Program

Phone: 403-220-2985

Email: hughson@ucalgary.ca

I thank you in advance for taking the time to consider this work, and look forward to, possibly, collaborating with you on this project.

Sincerely

Patti DesJardine BCR, B.Ed

Graduate Student

Faculty of Education

Graduate Division of Educational Research

Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies Program

University of Calgary

APPENDIX C

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Patricia DesJardine, Faculty of Education, Graduate Division of Educational Research, Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies Program, home phone: 403-239-6067, email: padesjar@ucalgary.ca

Supervisor:

Dr. E Anne Hughson, Hughson@ucalgary.ca

Title of Project:

How does parent knowledge inform teacher knowing?

Sponsor:

none

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of mothers of children with special needs have in their professional practice as teachers, with the parents of the students they teach. This study is particularly significant for me as I am both a mother of children with special needs and a teacher, myself. I would like to gain a greater understanding of how others might use their personal life history to inform their professional practice. I feel this type of information could be of assistance for other teachers in also gaining a greater understanding of how to better support the parents of the students they teach.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

By taking part in this study you will be asked to volunteer approximately six (6) hours of your personal time. For this study you will be asked to take part in two (2) audio taped, one on one interviews with me. Each interview will last approximately one hour. Following each interview, you will receive a typed copy of the transcript of that interview (prepared by myself). I request that you review the transcript for verification of the accuracy of the information and authenticity of the tone and intent of your comments. In addition, I will be asking you to take note of any topics or events you might like to add or further expand on in a subsequent interview. As such, the planned process for your involvement will be:

- First one on one audio taped interview

- Approximately one-two weeks later you will receive a transcribed copy of the interview.

- After a mutually agreed upon time (negotiated during the first interview) following delivery of the transcript I will contact you (by phone) to arrange for a second interview.

- Second one on one audio taped interview
- After approximately one-two weeks, you will receive a transcribed copy of the second interview.
- Following a mutually agreed upon time (negotiated in the second interview) following delivery of the second transcript, I will contact you (by phone). At this time, if I have further questions we can discuss them or if you wish, I will email them to you. If both of us feel confident in the quality of the information shared in the two interviews your participation in this study will be concluded.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

The main focus of all interviews will be guided by two basic themes: Your personal experiences as a mother of a child(ren) with special needs and your professional experiences as a teacher. These themes will be explored specifically through four lenses:

- the “story” of your child(ren) and family
- your experience as a mother of a child with special needs within the education system
- your “story” of your history as a teacher
- your values, beliefs and perceptions about the home/school relationships you have (and have had) with the parents/guardians of the students in your classroom/school.

Therefore, although personal information will be shared during the interview process, all personal information will remain anonymous and confidential. No proper names of people or places will be used with transcriptions or in any subsequent writing.

I grant permission to be audio taped:

Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

The pseudonym I choose for my child is: _____

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There is the very slight risk, through the interview and transcription review process, that this type of self-reflection could create or stir up thoughts and/or feelings that might require additional support. If it does, I will help you contact any of the following agencies, all of whom provide services specific to the needs of families of children with special needs:

- Calgary Community Living Society - 403-245-2666
- Family Voices Calgary – 403-717-0361
- Children’s Link Society – 403-291-5038

If, following the conclusion of your participation in this study, you feel the need to seek outside support, I will remain available to help you contact the aforementioned support services.

Participation must be done on a voluntary basis. No monetary benefits will be provided.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. No one except yourself, the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any of the answers to your interview tape or transcripts. Each participant will have access only to their own transcripts. All audio tapes, transcriptions and researcher field notes/journal will be kept in a locked cabinet only accessible only by the researcher and

her supervisor. The anonymous data will be stored for three years at which time, the tapes will be destroyed and all written material will be professionally shredded.

The interview data will be analyzed individually and collectively. Specific anonymous quotes that best represent both unique and common themes will be included, for illustrative purposes, in the thesis.

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Patricia DesJardine

Graduate Division of Educational Research, Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies Program

Phone: 403-239-6067, email: padesjar@ucalgary.ca

And

Dr. E. Anne Hughson, Graduate Division of Educational Research, Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies Program

Phone: 403-220-2985, email: Hughson@ucalgary.ca

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact Patricia Evans, Associate Director, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-3782; email plevans@ucalgary.ca

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

APPENDIX D

The following list of agencies provide access to services for supporting families who have children with special needs.

- The Children's Link Society –
Suite 245, 720 - 28th Street N.E Calgary, Alta. T2A 6R3
phone: (403) 230-9158 fax: (403) 230-3252
email: child@nucleus.com
Contact – Jan Mason or Blythe Gunn
- The Calgary Community Living Society –
#202, 501 - 18 Avenue SW Calgary AB T2S 0C7
Phone: 403.245.4666 Fax: 403.228.2132
Email: ccls@telus.net
Contact – Christine Leach
- Family Voices Calgary
202, 501- 18 Ave. SW Calgary.
Phone 403-717-0361
Contact – Lori Adamchick

APPENDIX E

UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

CERTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW

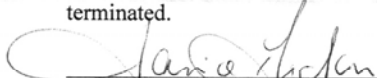
This is to certify that the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary has examined the following research proposal and found the proposed research involving human subjects to be in accordance with University of Calgary Guidelines and the Tri-Council Policy Statement on "*Ethical Conduct in Research Using Human Subjects*". This form and accompanying letter constitute the Certification of Institutional Ethics Review.

File no: **4319**
 Applicant(s): **Patricia A. Desjardine**
 Department: **Graduate Division of Educational Research**
 Project Title: **How Does Parent Knowledge Inform Teacher Knowing?**
 Sponsor (if applicable):

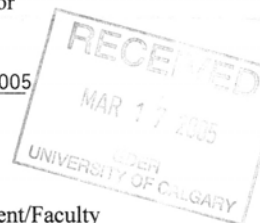
Restrictions:

This Certification is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the project and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modifications to the authorized protocol must be submitted to the Chair, Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for approval.
3. A progress report must be submitted 12 months from the date of this Certification, and should provide the expected completion date for the project.
4. Written notification must be sent to the Board when the project is complete or terminated.


 Janice Dickin, Ph.D, LLB,
 Chair
 Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board

15 March 2005
 Date:



Distribution: (1) Applicant, (2) Supervisor (if applicable), (3) Chair, Department/Faculty Research Ethics Committee, (4) Sponsor, (5) Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (6) Research Services.